

The Saga of Tuffy the Alligator

*From David Key to Dick Risk
July 29, 2006, recalling an event in 1959*

Hi Dick,

The clipping (Tulsa World or Tribune) is attached.

We actually made about three trips to the zoo before we were successful. There were several guys involved in one or another attempt; Chas Wilder, Mike Lloyd, Gary Radford, Jerry Hines, even my little brother, Charles Key. Of course, you were an "accessory before the fact!"

Most of us had morning paper routes which, on a pretty spring morning, required little time to complete and provided an opportunity to rendezvous at Mohawk. We tried lassoing on the ground and, later, in the water. But the gators were too smart for that. At last, Jerry Hines (a big fellow, if you remember) dropped off the wall onto Tuffy and brought him out without much struggle.

We secured his mouth, loaded him into Mom's station wagon, and headed for school. The rest is history.

.....d.

Gator Goes To School; 3 Youths Don't

Three seniors at Will Rogers high school were suspended Wednesday after "pilfering" a 100-pound, 6-foot-long alligator from Mohawk zoo and turning him loose in a school hallway.

R. W. Knight, Rogers principal, said the students will remain suspended until O. A. Zeigler, park superintendent, and Hugh Davis, zoo director, decide if charges will be filed.

"If charges aren't filed," the principal said, "we will have the parents bring the boys back to school and ask for reinstatement."

Knight said the action will not affect graduation plans of the three students.

"All are intelligent boys, have never caused us any trouble before, but they just didn't think this through," Knight said. "Someone could have been seriously injured."

The alligator—Tuffy by name—came out the worst for the wear, getting bruises on the body and a cut neck. Davis termed the act cruel and hazardous.

Knight said the boys went to the zoo about 5 a.m., put the alligator in a car belonging to the mother of one student and then came back to school.

The seniors first planned to release him on the Rogers lawn, but later decided to dump "Tuffy" in the swimming pool. When they found the doors were locked they left him in the hallway.

Knight said the alligator had been captured before most students arrived for the start of classes.