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## **BUILT ON THE SHOULDERS OF VETERINARY GIANTS DEETS AND BIG MAN AND TIM**

**BY: DR. STEVE JOSEPH, KCVMA HISTORIAN**

Dr. Charles Deets Pickett (1910 – 1990) was an important figure in the history of the Kansas City Swope Park Zoo and the zoo's Great Ape House.

One of the many adventures Dr. Pickett and his wife Regina shared was saving the life of a gorilla named Big Man during a trip to Cameroon. Big Man was a mere baby at the time. A native had killed his mother and was about to kill Big Man when the Picketts stepped in and saved his life.

Big Man returned to Kansas City with the Picketts and was donated to the zoo in the late 1950's. The gorilla was two years old. Later the Picketts added two female gorillas – Jungle Jeannie and Kribi Kate – to the zoo's collection. That's where the second adventure begins.

We turn to Terrible Tim and a story published in several newspapers in April 1960. Tim had been a "resident" in the Pickett's home in the loving care of Mrs. Pickett. He had grown from a puny five pounds to 22 pounds in a few months. Now was time for Tim to move to a new family.

It was supposed to be Terrible Tim's wedding night when he turned into Timid Tim at the sight of the brides-to-be. Weeping and wailing, Tim obviously wanted to return to his surrogate mother, Regina. After all, it was asking a lot of a fellow to cut the apron strings when he was just 13 months old.

It started when Tim was introduced to the previously mentioned Jeannie who was now 22 months old and Katie who was three months older. Some of us may recall a time when such a rescue might have been welcomed. Tim apparently was having second thoughts about older women, because upon introduction he knew he was overmatched. The two females weighed 38 to 45 pounds and were described as "muscular trumps."

The wedding night was interrupted when a zoo attendant called the Picketts pleading for help. Tim was crying and having one temper tantrum after another. He was returned to the Pickett's home and their loving attention until he would pull himself together and face life's challenges as a gorilla.

Dr. Pickett received his veterinary degree from Kansas State University's College of Veterinary Medicine in 1933 and his masters in veterinary science from Colorado State in 1948. He practiced in the Kansas City area from 1934 until he retired in 1973. Dr. Pickett was a captain in the Army's veterinary corps during WWII in Southeast Asia.

Among his numerous accomplishments in Kansas City, Dr. Pickett helped to establish Animal Haven to care for and find homes for stray animals.

