

## PROFILE

# Linda Barcklay

Founder, Mindy's Memory Primate Sanctuary



I've had the honor of helping Linda for the last 12 years. When we met, Mindy's Memory was just getting off the ground. In just over a decade, Mindy's has grown from a shoestring operation with only a few monkeys fed with food prepared in Linda's home kitchen to having almost 100 monkeys and all the infrastructure to support them.

In July, we joined forces with several other groups to rescue a group of macaque monkeys from a bankrupt New Jersey lab. Eight of these monkeys, known as the Magnificent Eight, now call Mindy's Memory Primate Sanctuary home. Since then, and with much less fanfare, we have taken in another 10 monkeys—from research, a closing sanctuary, and the pet trade.

Mindy's Memory is one of the very few sanctuaries in the country that takes in research monkeys, and provides lifelong care for them. I am honored to be able to work with Linda Barcklay.

*Bob Ingersoll, Board President, Mindy's Memory Primate Sanctuary*

### **AAVS: The obvious first question is: who was Mindy?**

**LINDA:** Mindy Sue was the first rhesus macaque that I accepted. She came from research, was sold to a broker, and brought to us. She was with us for five years. She had severe health problems, she vomited constantly, and the only way I could keep her rehydrated was with electrolytes. The vet said that was the only thing that kept her going. Mindy had a stroke after five years and passed away, and that made me realize that these animals from research need a place to go to.

### **Did you have other monkeys?**

I had two capuchins who I had purchased as pets, and that's really what made me realize they weren't meant to be pets. I had been completely ignorant about how they take them away from their mothers. But I learned in a hurry. I don't believe they should be pets. I don't believe any wild animal should be a pet. And that's how this started.

### **Why was it important to you to name the sanctuary after Mindy?**

I think she deserved it after what she'd been through. And she was the reason I started it. I could have called it anything, but I did it in her memory. She'll always be in my memory.

### **So, what leads someone down the path from having a pet monkey to being in charge of having a sanctuary for countless animals who have so many different needs?**

It's total dedication, believe me. And once you start this, there's no turning back. And once you start building cages, there are more and more and more. We've taken in 18 monkeys in fewer than two months. And I turn them away every day.

### **Can it be hard to give wild animals the distance they need?**

Well, they're not my pets; they're no one's pets. Nobody is allowed to touch them. They have the company of each other. They groom, they play, they wrestle, they sleep. We feed them and we care for them, but that's all. They're entitled to spend the rest of their lives in peace, and not be asked to perform for somebody or to be used in any kind of experiments.

### **Many people don't really know what goes into starting a sanctuary and keeping it running. Does it take more than just good intentions and a few bucks?**

It takes a lot of money, believe me. It takes a board, a board that's willing to work to bring

the funding in. And it takes a trained staff, people who care and aren't interested in the pay, because the pay is minimal. None of my staff gets paid what they're worth, but they all do it because of the animals.

**Emotionally, physically, it must all take a toll.**

Well, you know what, you're so mentally happy doing this that nothing else matters. Working outside all day long in the sunshine and fresh air seven days a week makes you healthy, healthy, healthy. Believe me.

**What keeps you motivated?**

The animals keep me motivated. They're worth it. It gives me joy just to feed them, to give them things they've never had in their lives. Some of them never had peanuts, some of them never had bananas.

**What's it like when you give an animal a banana, who has never had a fresh banana before?**

You should see them grab it; they know what it is by instinct! We put some corn down for some of them, and they were afraid of it. They'd never seen an ear of corn. Then they'll go up and hit it with their hand, and they'll reach over and sniff it, and then they'll realize that it's food. From then on, they know what it is.

**Some monkeys released to Mindy's Memory are from a defunct New Jersey lab—you call them the Magnificent Eight. You were in a video about them, and you got a little choked up when they were arriving. What were you thinking about then?**

Well, do you know how frightened those monkeys were? Do you know the fear they felt when they're grabbed out of their pens and jabbed with needles and choked and slammed, and all the stuff that goes on in research—not all labs are that way, but many are. Well, there was one young monkey in particular who was so frightened. He screamed so loud that his rectum prolapsed. And that just tore me up. I mean, you know how hard he has to scream to prolapse the rectum? That's a good muscle, that's a strong muscle, and he screamed that hard out of fright and fear and pain. I just couldn't talk about it. The image, even now, the image of

what he went through, it's horrible.

**Do you know how these monkeys were used in the lab?**

Toxicology is all I know. Some kind of toxic chemicals. It's not clear to me how they were exposed, but it was a pharmaceutical laboratory.

**How are the Magnificent Eight doing now?**

They're doing great! They play and romp and wrestle. They're sweet. And when we go out there, they rush to the fence and plaster themselves up there like, "What did you bring me to eat?" Food is their favorite pastime.

**Well, I bet they're not getting only monkey chow!**

No, they get fresh fruits and vegetables and peanuts. We bake potatoes for them on occasion. They get lots of grapes and watermelons, celery, plums, peaches, you name it, green peppers, corn, lettuce. They love spinach.

**They haven't been at Mindy's very long, and it seems that they've made a quick transition.**

They adapted in just a few days. They had jet lag when they first arrived because it was a long venture. And they slept a lot, but it didn't take them long. We have an entire telephone pole buried in their enclosure, and they go to the top and jump from there to their swing. Of course, they were in cages where they couldn't jump, so it took awhile to learn. They'd tumble and fall. We also have a fire hose, and they'd lose their balance and have to crawl upside down on it, but now they just scatter across. They're being monkeys. That's what this is all about.

**That's awesome.**

Yeah, we think so. It's enjoyable to see what they're getting. It's also heartbreaking to know that there are monkeys out there who aren't ever going to get this. But they don't let them all go, and we can't take them all. We need more sanctuaries, but right now, with the current economy, there are sanctuaries that have to close their doors.

**That must make more worthwhile. And seeing the monkeys come together as a group must be gratifying.**

Well, they're all youngsters, and with the

amount of room I gave them, nobody owned that cage. When you put these animals in there, nobody owns it. They're not going to fight for their territory, because it's not their territory. And they develop a bond for each other quickly. And they share.

**It just proves how much they need each other and companionship.**

Yes. The oldest one is kind of food aggressive, but none of them have ever been bitten, none of them have ever been hurt, none of them have ever been injured. They'll wrestle one another to the ground, and then they get off and go about their business. The youngest ones submit to the oldest ones; they learn that in a hurry.

**Is there anything else you want our readers to know about primates and sanctuaries?**

Support research to better sanctuaries. Support all the anti-vivisection societies because they're the ones that are behind us.

**We like that message, too!**

**Well, thank you so much for spending time with us and for all you do to help primates.**

Well, I'm the lucky one. I'll tell you that not everybody gets to enjoy what I'm enjoying. It's well worth it, believe me. I don't need thanks because I really enjoy what I'm doing. **AV**

*Mindy's Memory Primate Sanctuary is located in Newcastle, Oklahoma, and is home to nearly 100 primates and other animals rescued from abusive situations. Visit [www.mindysmem.org](http://www.mindysmem.org).*

