Jenny was the only elephant at the Sanctuary to have a fully-raised endowment. However, Shirley’s endowment is at less than half the $185,000 needed to generate the annual income for her care. If you’d like to make a financial gift to honor Jenny’s legacy, we ask that you consider a contribution to Shirley’s endowment in her name.

For 18 months we battled for her release. It seemed we would never succeed. The USDA was powerless, local authorities had no authority and the owner of the shelter hoarded Jenny like a prized possession. The problem was Jenny was living in squalor. With an injured knee, serious weight loss and infected feet, Jenny stood day after day in a tiny dirt yard, barely big enough to turn around. Finally word came: the owner was tired of fighting and had agreed to turn Jenny over to the Sanctuary. What joyous news!

On the day of her move, it was discovered that Jenny was literally penned-in. Plywood barriers, animal cages and piles of discarded appliances nearly blocked Jenny’s escape route. As she limped along the narrow corridor created by the debris, one could only hope that Jenny did not choose this moment to lash out at her captors. Jenny made everyone’s heart skip a beat when, without warning, she spun around while approaching the transport trailers. But instead of running off into the endless desert, Jenny maneuvered herself until she was standing in the trailer... backwards. It was later discovered that this was the way Jenny had traveled for years, in an overcrowded circus trailer which left only this tiny spot for her to stand. From that moment until her passing, Jenny continued to bless all who loved her so dearly. However, we chose to follow Jenny’s example to not dwell on injustices of the past, but to instead honor Jenny by playing to our heart’s content, singing unabashed to the open skies and living each day with a joy that Jenny taught us. We will not focus on sorrow, only thankfulness for the gift of having known Jenny.
Memories of Jenny

Although death is a permanent loss of the physical body, it can mean the beginning of a greater consciousness between loved ones.

On October 17, 2006 at 6:35pm CST, with her family at her side, Jenny’s breathing slowed and for the first time became noticeably shallow. On one exhalation she released a deep guttural sound from the base of her trunk, bringing Bunny and Tarra immediately to her side. Shirley had moved away—we now realize why. Shirley sensed that Jenny’s death was very near, her sorrow was overwhelmingly heavy. To lose Jenny for a second time was more than Shirley could take. For the next few minutes, Jenny uttered the baritone rich vibration with each exhale; it was not anguish, nor pain; she was calm and relaxed and appeared to be gently announcing her departure from this world into the next. With the grace of a swan gliding effortlessly across the clear glass surface of a pristine lake, Jenny slipped from this world without the slightest twinge or pain; she was gone. Tarra and Bunny remained silently at Jenny’s side throughout the night and the following day until Jenny’s body was placed in her grave. Then Bunny joined a despondent Shirley, painfully racked with grief, who stood alone a distance from Jenny’s gravesite. The two intertwined trunks, leaning affectionately against each other. Their loss was heavy in the air.

Delhi and Jenny shared a special fondness for one another, too.

Since Jenny’s passing, Bunny and Shirley have become inseparable “spinster sisters,” lovingly attentive to one another. To her sheer delight, Tarra now provides Shirley with a mothering focus in Jenny’s absence. This has proven to be a sweet arrangement that brings much-needed joy and has helped to counter their pain of losing Jenny.

On October 17, 2006, surrounded by her loving family of elephants and caregivers, Jenny’s breathing became labored. She was relaxed in her process, exhibiting no signs of the fright or struggle one might expect from a dying individual. When Jenny did appear to be a little uncomfortable, her caregivers provided homeopathic remedies which Jenny accepted willingly, relaxing deeper into her process. Once her death was accepted as imminent, every effort was made to assist dear Jenny to move naturally and peacefully towards the other side, neither hurrying the process nor impeding it. Jenny made her transition with profound grace and beauty. In a blessing to herself and her attentive family, Jenny’s final days, hours and minutes were filled with a deep sense of joy and connectedness to her family, held in the arms and trunks of all who loved her so dearly.

Carol Buckley with Shirley and Jenny.

In a sign of motherly protection, Shirley watched over Jenny while she slept.

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Jenny arrived at the Sanctuary in 1996 to join Tarra and Barbara. Over the next ten years, Jenny would welcome six more sisters into her herd—and bask in all the extra attention!

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Jenny was gleaming with affection for Bunny from the moment she arrived.

While potatoes remained her favorite treat, Jenny never passed up a pumpkin!

Jenny loved to browse in the woods.

Jenny was an expert at finding underground springs and excavating mud holes.

Shirley and Jenny both carried crippling leg injuries from their circus days, but that never stopped them from roaming far and wide.

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After 23 years of separation, Shirley and Jenny’s reunion helped open the world’s eyes to the deep, emotional bonds that all elephants share.