
Riding a Killer Whale

When it comes to jobs, Marlene Queary on the Queensland Gold Coast has one of the most unusual. Her work includes making sure she stays on friendly terms with a giant killer whale. Twenty years old

Marlene Queary of Marineland



Marlene won the job at Marineland on the Gold Coast from dozens of applicants in Queensland and New South Wales.

The girl that Marineland advertised for was one who was photographically attractive (she will have to be photographed by tens of thousands of tourists a year), conversationally good (she has to be able to handle interviews with visiting press, radio, and television people), fond of animals (she works with dolphins, whales, penguins, pelicans, and seals), and above all have a pretty strong spirit of adventure.

For Marlene not only has to win the complete confidence of the giant whale (it is now only 12 ft long, but will grow to at least 25 ft) but she has to get in the water with it. One swipe of the tail could break every bone in the human body and one bite with the fearful teeth in that animal's huge jaws would mean certain death. Yet Marlene is confident that she will not only be able to get safely into the water with the whale but she will actually be able to ride it like a horse.

Marlene was brought up on Stradbroke Island, and is a granddaughter of one of Queensland's famous Aboriginal personalities, the late Willie MacKenzie. She is a keen tennis player, is fond of a wide range of music, and is a student of dancing being especially keen on South Seas music. Before getting the job with Ramu the killer whale, Marlene spent two years in the W.R.A.N.S. as a nurse.

Marlene says that she is sorry that she did not learn an Aboriginal language when she had the opportunity as a child. However she is keenly interested in Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal affairs. Apart from Ramu the killer whale, Marlene also helps look after Squirt, a pilot whale. All told, she says, it's an ideal outdoor job that she thoroughly enjoys.