

Media stampedes to bison event

By JIM WATSON

Behind the scenes of the Catalina Island Conservancy's bison contraception event at Middle Ranch last Thursday was an international media blitz rarely seen on Catalina. For Catalina, the message was the media.

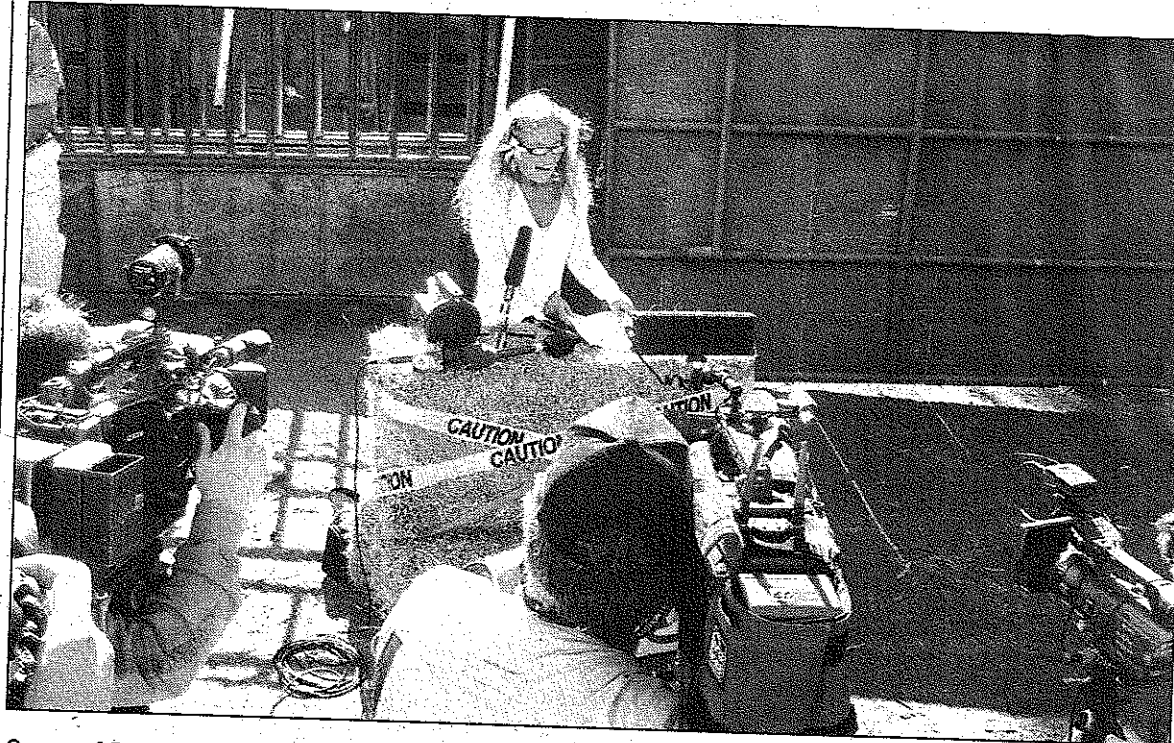
Not only was the Catalina Island Conservancy's latest foray into managing the Island's bison herd covered by media representatives from local television network affiliates like KTLA Channel 5 and KABC Channel 7, but coverage would also come from national TV, radio and print organizations, including CNN, the Christian Science Monitor, the Wall Street Journal (the story made the front page), KPCC Radio/All Things Considered, the Washington Examiner, Orlando Sentinel and international newspapers from Canada to the U.K.

Part of the reason for all of the media attention was a number of past stories that have kept media outlets "on the line" and interested in Island events. According to the Conservancy's Leslie Baer, the story was "a natural follow-up" to the story of bison being sent home to the plains several years ago.

Though rare, this media attention is not unprecedented in recent years. Catalina has been the media focal point of a number of stories for which the Island has gotten international ink.

In 2004, after the recovery of the Catalina Island fox population was well underway, the

Council, Page 9



Owner of Debbie's Deli and long time advocate for pets and wildlife, Debbie Avellana was the first to suggest the concept of bison contraception to the Conservancy.

Buffalo

From page 1.

Conservancy closed down the captive breeding portion of the program and released all of the foxes to much fanfare.

Three helicopter loads of press landed to watch the foxes sprint from cages into the wild. Coverage of the fox release was seen across the country and internationally.

Also in 2004, Catalina was featured in newspapers and in tele-

vision broadcasts worldwide as the Island's bison were "repatriated" to an Indian Reservation in South Dakota to live out their lives under a no-kill agreement. Although a similar transfer was made earlier this year, the 2004 event garnered the most attention.

The last time Catalina gained nearly as much media attention as the bison contraception story was the unexpected, unaided hatching of eagle chicks a few years ago. "It happened as we were heading toward Easter weekend," said Baer. "It was the perfect Easter

miracle story." Again, news of Catalina traveled worldwide.

For the impressive turnout for the press conference, Baer credits the Conservancy's Bob Rhein, a veteran publicist and who, like Baer, is a former reporter.

Baer also thanked Judy Escoto, Jeanne McKay, and Deana Stone for press conference preparation. "As you can see, securing this kind of recognition takes a monumental team effort," she noted.

"The positive press is just plain good for Catalina," she said.