

Obituary

Thomas J. Foose, 61, expired suddenly on May 17th at his residence in Waynesboro, Pennsylvania. He was currently holding the post of Program Director for the International Rhino Foundation IRF of which he was a founder.

Tom authored many scientific publications on zoo management, population management, wildlife management, etc. A graduate of Princeton University in 1969 he obtained his Ph.D. in biology from the University of Chicago in 1982 for studies on Indian Rhinoceros. He was Director of Conservation for the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (1981 to 1990). During this time he, along with Dr. Ulie Seal, developed the first organised species management programme. This was called the Species Survival Plan program SSP and the first was for Siberian tigers in 1983. SSPs and similar programmes all over the world are how regional zoo associations manage their wild animals.

From 1990 to 1992, Tom served as Executive Officer of the IUCN/SSC Conservation Breeding Specialist Group. In a very short time Tom made a big impact on the science of conservation through shaping CBSG tools to include using computer simulated modeling, global risk assessments, identification of species management and research recommendations, etc. Throughout his career in conservation his efforts to facilitate cross-organizational global conservation made possible many species action plans which global zoo experts and field biologists from around the world had a part in writing.

Tom also served as Curator, Philadelphia Zoo for some time and thus brought a very practical perspective to integrated conservation. He was also IUCN SSC's Asian Rhino and African Specialist Groups Programme Officer for several years. Whatever organisation he worked with — zoos, AZA, CBSG, IRF, ARSG Tom encouraged people to work for conservation instead of career. His dream was for a global zoo - wild programme in which all zoos would help save species by cooperating with one another with the help of the new conservation sciences, some of them developed by or with the help of Tom himself.

The above factual material I poached from the Obituary on the International Rhino Foundation Website, so that I would get the facts right. But the rest is my very personal tribute to Tom because he was a personal friend, fan and supporter as well as a trusted and valuable professional colleague.

Tom's employment at CBSG took place (fortunately for me) when I began working as a volunteer (very green, meaning ignorant, not environmental), and just learning there was an active zoo community in the world. I came into contact with Tom, Ulie Seal and CBSG through interest in ISIS, the International Species Information System which had been developed by Dr. Seal and shared office space with CBSG at Minnesota Zoo. I guess Tom particularly noticed me because he had lived and studied in India and had fond memories of the people and the country, and because I was interested in Indian zoos.

There were not too many people interested in Indian zoos as potential conservation contributors in 1985. Tom tended to think positively about this aspect of conservation and impressed me from the beginning with the importance of cooperation between zoos.

Tom and Ulie were developing what has turned out to be an incredible set of conservation processes -- for analysis, assessment, action, teaching, lobbying, legislation, etc. PHVAs and CAMPs will be most familiar to our ZOOS' PRINT readers but there were others such as G-CAPs, Global Captive Action Plans, later known as G-CARS Global Captive Action Recommendations because "Plans" offended people in the zoo world.

Tom was a "behind the scenes" kind of guy. He was shy and somewhat insecure about his effect on people and even his own abilities, none of which was justified. He and Dr. U. S. Seal worked together on the conservation sciences which went into the CBSG processes and created tools for the zoo world to participate in conservation effectively and scientifically.

Today, only 25 years later, zoos have progressed so much that even some senior zoo personnel seem to have forgotten that zoos were not so much involved in conservation till more recently. Even "good" zoos used to talk the talk before they could walk the walk in conservation. There was not much real conservation going on but Ulie and Tom working together took zoos to a completely different place.

Tom had a particularly difficult job which was to put unpopular (but correct) ideas in front of zoo people and convince them to go along. Tom often got the blame for some of the most unpopular ideas. In fact, Tom had drafted a zoo strategy years before the first global zoo strategy. The draft of his working document was brought out for review at an Endangered Species Conference held in Jersey, it was suggested in the draft — perhaps for the first time in print — that zoos make a commitment or pledge to give a minimum of 1% of their income to field conservation. When this document made its appearance, all hell broke loose partly because it looked more like a *fait accompli* than a draft but primarily because the idea of giving 1% of a zoo's income to field

conservation was then too much ahead of its time! Today zoos give millions of dollars world wide to field conservation projects, not only without a whimper but with tremendous pride and satisfaction.

Tom visited India several times after his Ph.D. work, once at my behest to teach population biology at a Central Zoo Authority zoo directors' training course. Tom could express very difficult concepts in such a way that people of different backgrounds could understand, so the lectures at the course should have been very well received by the zoo directors. He explained all the concepts using Indian rhinoceros as an example. The idea was to get Indian zoo directors on board the concept of zoo cooperation in conservation. This was Tom's primary interest for all countries.

Tom Foose and Ulie Seal together provided encouragement and support for CBSG, India which was my project. Both Ulie and Tom, impressed with the number of Asians at the meeting just suggested at the Singapore CBSG meeting that there should be more "grass roots" activities. (I had brought 10 Indians with some help from Tom personally — I think he provided the last air fare out of his children's Christmas budget but he helped raise much of the rest from zoos !) Thus I took this "grass roots" comment very seriously and wrote Ulie asking him if I could start a CBSG "network" for India, using CBSG name (CBSG, India), CBSG logo (but with Indian animals), CBSG everything — quite presumptuous from such an amateur but they agreed. Tom was a constant support in suggesting ways of approach and how to deal with different problems that came up. Tom's role in CBSG, India was huge. When he left CBSG I was bereft because he did so much to encourage me. After some time Judi Mikolai and later Onnie Byers took over giving me confidence and all kinds of other help.

Tom was so much fun to know. He had interesting personal habits that made him a fascinating specimen for study as much as any taxon. He loved clothes and was so very particular about what he wore. It was all understated so not all of his associates would have noticed. I wouldn't have except that I spent a lot of time with him and developed my own style in dress, if not the quality that Tom went for. Once we shopped in London and Tom purchased an expensive waistcoat of dark, forest green, which was his "signature colour". I commented that I was surprised he did not have one since he loved that colour so much and he replied "Oh, but I do. I have three more." His other colours were variations of beige, white, and green. He had a rule that he never wore blue. Without meaning to I adopted this habit and even today, when shopping for clothes I will automatically refuse any item of clothing that is blue. Now that Tom is no more I will continue doing this more consciously as a sort of personal gesture.

Tom was addicted to Coca Cola (not any of the varieties just original Coca Cola, although later he might have substituted Diet Coke). Once while he was in Assam the Government of India banned Coca Cola and all the bottles in the shops were confiscated and taken back to the bottling plant and locked up. Tom convinced one of his helpers or colleagues to assist him in breaking into the plant and they got caught. I can't remember more about this but it was a mess that could have got Tom kicked out of India.

Tom had a wonderful sense of humour ... dry, mild, sarcasm and black humour. He liked my sense of humour also ... in fact I think 90% of the basis of our friendship is that he always laughed at my jokes, my often bizarre view of humans and ways of dealing with Indian bureaucracy.

Tom also inspired me because he took care of his mother in her last days. He moved from a more comfortable and connected city to Waynesboro to take care of the house, coordinate her caregivers and take on part of the burden so she would not have to go to a rest home but could come to the end of her life under her only son's care.

Tom never forgot the zoos as a potentially valuable tool for conservation. In the last two years I was providing some advice and encouragement for an exchange of Indian rhinoceros between Indian and USA zoos to regularise genetic and demographic diversity for the captive population. The exchange was very long and complicated but was about to fructify when he passed away.

My hope is that Tom Foose will never be forgotten and particularly that his last project be carried out. I hope the Indian Rhino Foundation and Central Zoo Authority will continue to pursue the project of cooperation to improve captive management of the Great Indian One-horned Rhinoceros in memory of Tom as well as for their mutual benefit.

Tom soldiered on under many burdens and was a person of great courage and integrity. One might have had to know him well to understand this because he made everything look easy. The conservation community is a much poorer place without Tom Foose. I very much hope his achievements will come to light in a larger way through his death.

Sally Walker, Zoo Outreach Organisation/CBSG, South Asia