Obituary:

Geza Teleki, Ph.D. (7 December 1943 - 7 January 2014)

by Dale Peterson

Geza Teleki was born in Kolozsvar, Hungary, on December 7, 1943, scion of a distinguished branch of the old Hungarian aristocracy. One of his ancestors, Count Samuel Teleki, famously explored large areas of East Africa during 1887 and 1888. His grandfather, Count Paul Teleki, served two times as Prime Minister

Left: Geza Teleki (L) and David Bygott (R) photographing a colobus kill, Gombe National Park, 1970. Photograph courtesy D. Bygott.

Below: Geza Teleki and his dog Newt, in Maryland. Photograph by H. McGiffin.

of Hungary, while his father, Geza Teleki, an Olympic athlete, became Hungary's Minister of Education during World War II. When the Soviets took over Hungary at the end of the war, his father's name was placed on the list of politicians to be executed. Geza and his father and mother were able to escape the Soviets in 1949, and they found their way to America, where the father became a professor of geology at George Washington University.

Geza became a naturalized American citizen in 1956 and attended the Harvey School in Katonah, New York, and St. George's School in Newport, Rhode Island. After completing undergraduate studies in anthropology at George Washington University (B.S. 1967), he enrolled for anthropology graduate work at Pennsylvania State University under the guidance of C. R. Carpenter, one of the great pioneers in American primatology.

His early field work brought Geza to Gombe Stream National Park in Tanzania (from 1968 to 1971), where he was supervised by Jane Goodall, the distinguished pioneer in research on wild chimpanzees. The field work at Gombe resulted in a book, *The Predatory Behavior of Wild Chimpanzees* (Bucknell UP, 1973); a dissertation and degree from Pennsylvania State University (Ph.D. in 1977); and a lifelong passion for conserving and protecting chimpanzees.

After receiving the degree, he taught at George Washington University as an Associate Professorial Lecturer beginning in 1977, and he wrote some forty professional papers for scientific publication as well as two dozen articles for popular magazines including *Scientific American*, *Smithsonian*, *Zoonooz*, and *Wildlife News*. His wildlife photographs, meanwhile, found an audience in more than 150 magazines and books.

But Geza's heart was in conservation, not academics. In 1977, he became Scientific Advisor

to the International Primate Protection League and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, and by 1978 he had begun compiling data to describe the conservation status of chimpanzees across Africa for the IUCN Red Data Book. In 1979, he became the Project Head for a national survey of primates and primate habitats in Sierra Leone, West Africa (under the sponsorship of the New York Zoological Society, the World Wildlife Fund, the Fauna Preservation Society, and the Sierra Leone Nature Conservation Association). And in 1981, Geza returned to Sierra Leone (for the WWF and at the invitation of President Siaka Stevens) to establish that country's first national park, the Outamba-Kilimbi National Park. He was also Park Director for Sierra Leone's Wildlife Conservation Branch from 1981 to 1984.

contracting the parasitic After disease onchocerciasis ("river blindness") during his time in the back country of Sierra Leone, Geza withdrew from field work in 1984 and settled in Washington, D.C., to continue his career as a conservationist. He served as Associate Scientist for the World Wildlife Fund in Washington, DC from 1985 to 1991; during this period he wrote 18 technical reports for NGOs and governments on conservation issues while promoting public awareness of those issues as a consultant for public media documentaries. And then, in 1986, in partnership with Dr. Jane Goodall and the Jane Goodall Institute, Geza established the Committee for the Conservation and Care of Chimpanzees (CCCC), which was a non-profit organization made up of primate and conservation professionals with members in more than 25 countries. Geza served as the Chairman of CCCC until 1994. During this period, the CCCC became a powerful voice for protecting chimpanzees in the wild as well as ensuring their appropriate treatment in captivity. He also, from 1986 to 1991, was Associate Scientist with the WWF and, in 1991 and 1992, was Director of the Africa Programs for the Jane Goodall Institute.

He married Heather McGiffin in 1991, and in 1995, they had a son named Aidan. Starting in 1995, Geza returned to teaching graduate courses at George Washington University and continued in that position until early in the twenty-first century, when his health was devastated by a complex group of diseases – including hypothyroidism, diabetes, gall stones, and kidney failure. He eventually concluded that the diseases were a consequence of massive soil contamination in his Washington, D.C. suburban neighborhood by toxic chemical-warfare agents that the U.S. Army Chemical Warfare division

had manufactured, tested, and then buried in the area during World War I. His wife, Heather, rescued him from debilitating rounds of dialysis by donating one of her kidneys for transplant. The family moved from Washington, D.C., to Bethesda, Maryland, in 2003, and in 2012 they returned to Geza's childhood land of Hungary.

Geza's commitment to conservation was founded on his love for chimpanzees and on his recognition of them as individuals with minds, emotions, and personalities. He was a passionate and powerful personality whose presence was impossible to ignore, and he used that presence tirelessly for the causes he believed in. The world will miss him, as will his grieving family and his many friends and admiring colleagues. The chimpanzees have lost a friend.

A Selection of Geza Teleki's Publications

Baldwin, L.A. & G. Teleki. 1972. Field research on baboons, drills, and geladas: An historical, geographical, and bibliographical listing. *Primates* 13(4): 427-432.

Teleki, G. 1973. The Predatory Behavior of Wild Chimpanzees. Bucknell University Press, Lewisburg. 232 pp.

Teleki, G. 1973. Notes on chimpanzee interactions with small carnivores in Gombe National Park, Tanzania. *Primates* 14(4): 407-411.

Teleki, G. 1973. Group responses to the accidental death of a chimpanzee in Gombe National Park, Tanzania. *Folia Primatologica* 20(2-3): 81-94.

Baldwin, L.A. & G. Teleki. 1973. Field research on chimpanzees and gorillas: An historical, geographical, and bibliographical listing. *Primates* 14(3): 315-330.

Teleki, G. 1974. Chimpanzee subsistence technology: materials and skills. *Journal of Human Evolution* 3(6): 575-594.

Baldwin, L.A. & G. Teleki. 1974. Field research on gibbons, siamangs, and orangutans: An historical, geographical, and bibliographical listing. *Primates* 15(4): 365-376.

Teleki, G. 1975. Primate subsistence patterns: Collector-predators and gatherer-hunters. *Journal of Human Evolution* 4(2): 125-184.

Baldwin, L.A., M. Kavanagh & G. Teleki. 1975. Field research on langur and proboscis monkeys: An historical, geographical and bibliographical listing. *Primates* 16(3): 351-363.

Teleki, G., E.E. Hunt, Jr. & J.H. Pfifferling. 1976. Demographic observations (1963-1973) on the

- chimpanzees of Gombe National Park, Tanzania. *Journal of Human Evolution* 5(6): 559-595.
- Baldwin, L.A. & G. Teleki. 1976. Patterns of gibbon behavior on Hall's Island, Bermuda: A preliminary ethogram for Hylobates lar. In Gibbons and Siamangs: A Series of Volumes on the Lesser Apes. D.M. Rumbaugh, ed. S. Karger, Basel. Pp. 21-105.
- Baldwin, L.A., G. Teleki & M. Kavanagh. 1976. Field research on colobus, guenon, mangabey, and patas monkeys: An historical, geographical, and bibliographical listing. *Primates* 17(2): 233-251.
- Teleki, G.G. 1977. Still more on predatory behavior in nonhuman primates. *Current Anthropology* 18(1): 107-108.
- Baldwin, L.A., T.L. Patterson & G. Teleki. 1977. Field research on callitrichid and cebid monkeys: An historical, geographical, and bibliographical listing. *Primates* 18(4): 985-1007.
- Baldwin, L.A. & G. Teleki. 1977. Field research on tree shrews and prosimians: An historical, geographical, and bibliographical listing. *Primates* 18(4): 985-1007.
- Baldwin, L.A., N. Koyama, N. & G. Teleki. 1980. Field research on Japanese monkeys: An historical, geographical, and bibliographical listing. *Primates* 21(2): 268-301.
- Teleki, G. 1981. The omnivorous diet and eclectic feeding habits of chimpanzees in Gombe National Park, Tanzania. In *Omnivorous Primates: Gathering and Hunting in Human Evolution*.
 R.S.O. Harding & G. Teleki, eds. Columbia University Press, New York. Pp. 303-343.
- Galdikas, B. & G. Teleki. 1981. Variations on the subsistence activities of female and male pongids: New perspectives on the origins of labor division. *Current Anthropology* 22(3): 241-256, 316-320.
- Harding, R.S.O. & G. Teleki. 1981. Introduction. In *Omnivorous Primates: Gathering and Hunting in Human Evolution*. R.S.O. Harding & G. Teleki, eds. Columbia University Press, New York. Pp. 1-9.
- Teleki, G. 1987. Current threats to the survival of the once "common" chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*) of equatorial Africa. 49pp. + maps and tables. CCCC, Washington, DC. [Report accompanied petitions to US Fish and Wildlife Service to classify chimpanzees as Endangered Species, process successfully completed on 12 March

- 1990, Federal Register 55(48): 9129-9136.]
- Teleki, G. 1988. The Chimfunshi Wildlife Orphanage: A sanctuary in Africa for confiscated chimpanzees. *Journal of Medical Primatology* 17: 113.
- Teleki, G. 1988. Chimfunshi Wildlife Orphanage for chimpanzees. *Primate Conservation* 9: 15.
- Teleki, G. 1988. Chimpanzee: *Pan troglodytes* Blumenbach, 1799. In *The IUCN Red Data Book: Threatened Primates of Africa*. P.C. Lee, J. Thornback & E.L. Bennett, eds. IUCN, Gland. Pp. 107-122.
- Teleki, G. 1988. Circumvention of CITES restrictions on chimpanzee trade. *Frame News* 19: 4-5.
- Teleki, G. 1988. Circumvention of CITES restrictions on chimpanzee trade. CCCC, Washington, DC. 7pp. + documentation. [Testimony submitted 13 July 1988 to the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations of the House Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries concerning implementation of CITES, 13 July 1988.]
- Teleki, G. 1988. Pygmy or Dwarf chimpanzee or bonobo: *Pan paniscus* Schwarz, 1929. In *The IUCN Red Data Book: Threatened Primates of Africa*. P.C. Lee, J. Thornback & E.L. Bennett, eds. IUCN, Gland. Pp. 125-130.
- Teleki, G. & J. Goodall. 1988. Recommendations to USDA on improving conditions of psychological well-being for captive chimpanzees. *Alternatives to Laboratory Animals* 15(3): 255-259.
- Teleki, G. 1989. Population status of wild chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*) and threats to survival. In *Understanding Chimpanzees*. P.O. Heltne & L.A. Marquardt, eds. Harvard University Press, Cambridge. Pp. 312-353.
- Teleki, G. 1989. Recommendations to USDA on formulating new standards to promote the psychological well-being of captive chimpanzees.

 1 Opp. CCCC, Washington, DC. [Petition submitted on 20 July 1989 to US Department for review of Animal Welfare Act under for Laboratory Animals Act.]
- Teleki, G. 1992. Action Plan I: Conservation of Chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*) in Africa. CCCC Special Report, Washington, DC.
- Teleki, G. 1994. Evaluation of proposed criteria revisions for listing species on CITES appendices. Report commissioned by Humane Society of the United States, Washington, DC.