

# John Peter Roth – Curriculum Vitae

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## Education and Professional Experience

### 1934-1956

Hanspeter Roth was born in Basel, Switzerland on October 6, 1934...

- From early age was frequent visitor at the Basel Zoological Garden (“Zolli”)
- Attended Primary School and Real-Gymnasium in Basel, influenced by biology teacher Dr. Rudolf Schenkel who conducted behavior studies of the wolves at the Basel Zoo and taught his students how to observe and understand animals
- Was granted permission to participate and learn how to study animal behavior at frequent field study courses conducted for zoology students of Prof. Dr. Heini Hediger who was also Director at the Basel Zoo during the early 1950’s
- Volunteered in working with the five African Elephants at the Basel Zoo, assisting Trainer Werner Behrens when walking the Elephants outside zoo grounds on their weekly trek through City streets and traffic to the nearby woods for relaxing play and exploring nature
- Attended the first public performance of Basel Zoo’s five African Elephants at the Swiss National Circus KNIE in Rapperswil, wrote article published by the Basel newspaper during January 1956 about

this event. The Elephants then toured with the Circus during one entire year with the Circus

- Studied for three years commerce and business administration and graduated in 1954 at the Kaufmaennischer Verein in Basel (the Swiss Mercantile College and Business School)
- Was employed from 1951-1956 at Natural AG, an International Freight Forwarding Company in Basel, Switzerland, specializing in the Import/Export business
- Performed the obligatory Military Training in the Swiss Army as Rifle Expert and with Anti-Tank weaponry.

## **1956-1959**

Hanspeter Roth immigrated the USA on April 4, 1956...

- Immigration was enabled by employment offer as a Zoo Keeper at the Philadelphia Zoo which was the beginning of a career in working at zoos
- Zoo staff, not familiar with the "Hanspeter" name began calling me "Hans" instead, which name was used for the next five years
- First assignment was at the new Bird House under Curator Gus Griswold
- As a relief Keeper worked with reptiles, felines, hyenas, wolves, elephants, hippos, hoofed animals and Primates, notably two adult male gorillas called "Bamboo" and "Massa", and the family group

of Sumatran Orang Utans headed by the famous "Gus" and "Guarina"

- During Winter of 1958/59 spent seven months travelling and assisting Swiss Animal Collector Peter "Pief" Ryhiner and in Singapore attended to a collection of Ryhiner's animals at a private farm, such as pythons, birds, monkeys, Malayan tapir and orang utans. While Ryhiner was in Indonesia capturing Sumatran Rhinos was then required to travel to Rangoon Burma to secure Burmese Takins that Ryhiner wanted to purchase for the Basel Zoo. However Burmese Authorities did not grant permits for Hans' travel to the Northern Kachin State because a team from the New York Zoological Society already had permits to conduct scientific field studies there. And since upon my arrival Burma was ruled under new strict Military Dictatorship following a Coup d'etat the Kachin State Officials already had the female Takin, previously promised for sale to Peter Ryhiner, sold to the Bronx Zoo. Any deals to obtain more animals by Ryhiner were ineffective.

- Hans assisted the New York team by caring for the female Takin at the Rangoon Airport prior to its shipment out of Burma. Ryhiner stopped financial support for Hans which required his return to the USA

- While in Burma Hans received forwarded telegram that he was chosen for the position of Assistant Director to Director Dr. Ivo Poglayen at

the Rio Grande Zoo in Albuquerque NM. Hans made immediate arrangements to ship his Scooter to New York City and he then drove it the 2000 miles from NY to Albuquerque.

## **1959-1963**

Hanspeter “Hans” Roth arrived at the Rio Grande Zoo in Albuquerque, New Mexico and started work as Assistant Director in August of 1959.

- One of the first assignments was the weekly cleaning and scrubbing away the algae buildup on the walls of the large sealion pool which involved hard manual labor using high-pressure fire hoses
- performed most of the administrative duties in dealing with Parks and other City Departments and prepared the bi-annual budget proposals for the zoo

- In 1961, five years after immigration, Hanspeter “Hans” Roth received his Naturalized U.S. Citizenship Award and legally changed his name to JOHN PETER ROTH.

- During four years as Assistant Director supervised the small crew of zoo keepers and their activities

- Participated in establishing the Rio Grande Zoo as a Post-Quarantine location under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) which permitted the import of 1.3 Siberian Ibex in 1962, 2.6 Gemsbok and 2.6 Greater Kudu in 1963 – purpose of this project was to establish captive

breeding herds of exotic hoofed animals at the zoo and then release the zoo-born offspring to the New Mexico Game Department for release in wild areas around the State, while the original imports had to remain permanently at the zoo.

## 1963-1967

Dr. Poglayen left Albuquerque in late 1963 for a position as Director of a new zoo in Louisville KY, and John Peter Roth was promoted to Director of the Rio Grande Zoo (with an official City title of "Superintendent").

- As Director John Roth managed the operations and development of the Rio Grande Zoo, began promoting zoo attendance by installing large Billboards and strategic placement of Directional Signs with the image of a male KUDU, logo designed by John Roth.

- Continued the management of the Exotic Hoofed Animal breeding program for and with the State of New Mexico Department of Game & Fish.

Additional Species imported were from Iran 1.2 Bezoar Goat and 1.1 Elburz Red Sheep in 1965, and 1.3 Persian Goitered Gazelle in 1967. Offspring born at the zoo were then transferred to the NM Game Department's breeding areas near Redrock NM. A detailed description of this management project, written by John Roth and Veterinarian Dr. Marvin Bowman, was published in the IZY issue 9 (International Zoo Yearbook) in 1969.

-Worked with architects in the design and construction of new animal exhibits... a Great Ape House was opened for Chimpanzees, Gorillas and Orang Utans in 1965 with indoor and outdoor cages, and in 1967 the first of two display sections for the Feline exhibits was completed with assistance from San Diego Zoo Design Consultant Chuck Faust. Both facilities were financed with new City Revenue Bonds based on the collection of newly initiated zoo admission charges.

- Late in 1967 John Roth left Albuquerque and moved to Atlanta GA.

## **1967-1970**

As the first professional Zoo Director of the G. V. Gress Zoological Park at Grant Park in Atlanta GA John Roth changed the zoo's name officially to the ATLANTA ZOO.

- John Roth accepted the newly created Zoo Director position because his primary vision was to establish a cooperative agreement with the Yerkes Regional Primate Research Center at Emory University in Atlanta following discussions with Yerkes Center's Director Dr. Geoffrey Bourne in a meeting held prior to John's arrival at the Atlanta Zoo. A permanent breeding loan agreement was then initiated and consummated in 1968 between Yerkes and the City of Atlanta for the transfer of 1.3.3 Orang Utan to the zoo for public exhibit and enabled behavior research by Yerkes comparative

psychology scientists. This program made zoological history.

- John was also interested in Atlanta Zoo's new Reptile Building which contained an exceptional collection of Reptiles and Amphibians (one of the three largest collections in the US during the 1960's, the other two located at the Bronx NY and Columbus zoos) managed by professional Curator Steve Dobbs and his able Assistant Howard Hunt who bred Morelet's Crocodiles successfully in such numbers that their offspring eventually were released back into the wilds of Mexico's Natural Preserves.

- The entire hoofed stock exhibit areas were rebuilt and modernized to house zebras, sitatunga and beisa oryx antelope, American bison, Dromedary Camels, and a pair of African Black Rhinos.

- In 1969 Eason Publications was contracted to produce Atlanta Zoo's first official Guidebook, a first being pocket-size with sections describing animal acquisition and the transport of animals. This Guidebook received world-wide acclaim.

- John initiated the formation of a new Atlanta Zoological Society which was patterned after other successful zoo foundation business plans. In 1970 Dr. Geoffrey Bourne agreed to serve as the new zoo society's first President. Over the next several years the Atlanta Zoo Society was awarded a contract by the City of Atlanta to operate food and giftshop concessions which eventually enabled

restructuring of the zoo management to a joint Government/Private organization in 1984...  
- John Roth left Atlanta in January of 1970 when original City Bond Fund appropriations for the zoo were reassigned to complete other City projects and rejuvenating the old-fashioned zoo exhibit areas was no longer possible. Curator Steve Dobbs was then appointed to maintain the Atlanta Zoo under “status quo” conditions for the next 14 years.

### **1970-1975**

Early 1970 John Roth travelled in Europe visiting zoos and performed consultant services at Wildlife Parks in Sandusky OH and Dallas TX.

John Roth then organized ANIMAL TRANSPORTS INC. headquartered in Albuquerque NM in 1970. As President of Animal Transports Inc. John managed the transport and trucking of animals, such as giraffes, rhinos, antelopes, ostriches, polar bears and elephants from U.S. Quarantine Stations, airports or harbor ports to and between zoos of all US States, coast to coast, as certified by the ICC (Interstate Commerce Commission) beginning in 1971. John personally drove his rigs and cared for the animals in transit. Animal Transports Inc. ceased to operate by end of 1975.

### **1974-1975**

In early 1974 Albuquerque’s first Mayor, under a revised City Charter, contacted John Roth to assist



in restoring the ill-functioning Rio Grande Zoo, following years of neglect and with zoo employees on Strike. The management of the Zoo was transferred from the City Parks and Recreation Department to a new Department of Services, and John was appointed under contract to a position of Associate Director at the zoo.

- John immediately enlarged the zoo budget, established the zoo's in-house maintenance, construction and horticulture divisions, and embarked on a rebuilding of exhibits program. The former Zoo Director, being a DVM, was delegated to conduct only the zoo's veterinary services with help of a Veterinary Technician position. City general obligation bonds were applied for a skilled in-house construction crew to begin transforming the zoo into a naturalistic garden with artificial concrete mountains and attractive landscaping, a program that has continued perpetually until this day.

- New Zoo Entrance facilities were in the planning stages, as well as a building for both a tropical rainforest and reptile exhibits. John Roth assisted the Architectural firms contracted for these projects and worked with the designers. Existing plans were determined inadequate in size and original design changes were made quickly to build larger facilities, separate the exhibit design of the combination structure for rainforest/reptile exhibits and instead build individual exhibit areas.

John provided the new floor plans for both buildings. In later years the Reptile Building was acknowledged as one of the best and safest facility of its kind for the maintenance of the herpetological collection and the lay-out of public viewing areas.

- When the City Services Director proposed for the City to build a new Botanical Garden he suggested the idea to combine management and operate it with the zoo as a “Biological Park” system, and by adding an Ocean Aquarium to this plan this idea was pursued to become the ALBUQUERQUE BIOPARK. John Roth assisted with the early phases of such planning.

## **1975-1988**

In late 1975 the City of Albuquerque hired John Moore from the Audubon Zoo in New Orleans as the Director for the newly proposed Albuquerque BioPark.

- John Roth was reassigned as the Assistant Director at the Rio Grande Zoo.

In that capacity John Roth performed all administrative functions and supervision of the office, maintenance, construction and horticultural staff at the Rio Grande Zoo.

- Working and learning to operate computer systems was a challenge for many years and John took the zoo through its trials of being a test site for the City of Albuquerque’s Wang Computer

system, making them compatible with newer IBM computers.

- In January 1988 John Roth was able to retire having attained 25 years of service with the City of Albuquerque and that ended his active zoo career.

## **Publications**

- 1967** Roth, John:  
Great ape house at Albuquerque Zoo  
International Zoo Yearbook, Vol. 7
- 1969** Roth, John & Bowman, Marvin:  
Management of antelopes at Albuquerque Zoo  
International Zoo Yearbook, Vol. 9

## **Other Events**

- 1961** On July 18, 1961, obtained Naturalized United States citizenship.  
Changed Swiss name of HANSPETER ROTH to JOHN PETER ROTH, by Court decree.
- 2018** John Roth assembled all of his zoo, aquarium and museum related photos of interest into Albums by alphabetical order, for anyone to view on JOHNROTH.SMUGMUG.COM