



Toby Styles

December 27, 2024

Toby Styles died on December 27, 2024, at the age of 81, in Oshawa, Ontario. Toby was born in 1943, the second son of Bernard (Bud) and Shirley Styles (McCullagh), in Banff, Alberta.

Toby's first job as a "weasal wrangler" for Walt Disney Productions led to positions as an animal trainer and keeper for a variety of organizations all over North America.

Toby's love of animals brought him to Toronto as one of the original Toronto Zoo staff members before the zoo opened in 1974. Toby was involved in many significant events in the first 25 years of the zoo's history including bringing some of the original animals to Canada from Europe by ocean freighter, welcoming the first African elephant calf born in Canada, accompanying the first pair of giant pandas to call the zoo home from Hong Kong by plane and more. Toby was well-known for representing the zoo on radio and television including appearances on talk shows and children's programs like the KangaZoo Club and Sharon, Lois & Bram.

Toby retired as Executive Director in January of 2000. He and his wife Suzanne spent several years of their early retirement travelling around Africa and other parts of the world before moving back to Canada.

Toby is survived by his wife, Suzanne (St-Maurice); his daughter, Tara; his older brother, Barry; and younger sisters Jill, Josée and Holly, as well as many sister and brother in-laws, nieces and nephews. He is predeceased by his parents, and his younger brothers, Lance and Bing.

As per his wishes, Toby was cremated with no funeral service. A celebration of life will be held at a later date

Tribute Wall

RR

“ I only recently learned of the passing of Toby. I send my heartfelt condolences to his family, colleagues, and friends. RIP Toby

Rachel Rogers - January 31, 2025 at 12:42 PM

TM

“ My condolences to Suzanne and Tara. I worked with Toby at the Calgary Zoo in the late 60s and early 70s before he moved on to the Toronto Zoo. Working with him and just being with him was always a pleasure. The zoo world was certainly richer because Toby was in it!! Terry McDonald, Calgary

Terry McDonald - January 24, 2025 at 06:56 PM

DB

“ My condolences to Sue and Tara on the passing of Toby. I worked with Toby at Calgary Zoo from 1967 to 1972 when he left to begin his career at the Toronto Zoo. Spent many a day and night at zoo conferences with him, time that I treasure in my memories. A life well lived.

David Banks, Calgary.

David R Banks - January 23, 2025 at 03:21 AM



“ Toby was very instrumental in getting me started in the animal business and was also a role model of mine. He was a masterful storyteller, a wealth of knowledge, and a true credit to his profession. My deepest sympathies go out to Sue and Tara and the rest of his family.

Jay Christie - January 07, 2025 at 09:14 PM

LN

“ I just now received a text telling me that Toby had died. Was getting set to watch The Leafs game. Instead, I'm writing a tribute for a former co-worker. Life turns on a dime.

Toby was immensely funny. He was one of the best storytellers. Some of his animal stories were priceless! He'd drop into the Zoo's Foundation Office (when it was called that) and we'd stop working as he settled in. One thing led to another and then...the stories would flow. He could really entertain.

I believe I met Toby in 1967 at Expo in Montreal. I was on my honeymoon and Toby was wrangling animals (maybe an elephant?) at the Canada Pavilion. I don't remember this meeting and I'm sure Toby didn't either. But, when he related, so many years later, that he'd had this job at Expo 67, I was sure it was our first meeting. How could you not stop and talk to a guy with an elephant! I was 20 years old. Toby would have been 24. Who could have foreseen that 30 years later we'd be working together at Toronto Zoo.

He was a big presence. You knew he was in a room and, when he wanted to, he could be the centre of attention. He had many friends at the Zoo, in the media, and in the community. Everyone knew who Mr. Zoo was.

My condolences to Suzanne and Tara. You have lost one of a kind. He is not easily forgotten.

Linda Nadeau - January 07, 2025 at 08:02 PM

HH

“ Toby, one of the original Zoo icons, always had a story to share and will be deeply missed. My thoughts and condolences go out to his family and friends. Thinking of you at this difficult time.



Heather House - January 07, 2025 at 01:44 PM

TS

“ Sue and Tara, very sorry to hear of Toby’s passing. Lots of great memories of time spent at Sharon. He will be missed by all who knew him.

Tony Smith - January 07, 2025 at 09:08 AM

BD

“ Toby was a dear friend and colleague of mine for over 50 years. A legend in zoological community and well respected for his experience and knowledge. RIP Toby and condolences to Suzanne and Tara.
Bruce Dougan.

Bruce Dougan - January 06, 2025 at 08:08 PM

HH

“ I remember Toby (rafiki) so, so well. We both had a love for Africa. He will live on in my memories. Helen Huggett

Helen Huggett - January 06, 2025 at 04:12 PM

AF

“ Toby lived his life as completely as you can. He shared his passion for wildlife, particularly elephants, and for travel with whoever he met. He carried his sense of humour everywhere which always enhanced his life and his storytelling . He made the world a better place. Wishing Susan and his family the courage and strength to carry on as Toby would want you to. RIP buddy. Art

Art Froese - January 06, 2025 at 03:57 PM

DC

“ He was one of the best. Enjoyed my time on the zoo board so long ago . Toby stimulated everyone's interest in elephants particularly but all the magnificent creatures we were trying to reintroduce into the natural world.

Dee Chenier - January 06, 2025 at 03:46 PM

BJ

“ Suzanne and family. Saddened to hear of your loss. Toronto's Mr. ZOO. Along with his experience and stories of adventure, he left an impression on everyone he met in Canada and abroad. Fondly remembered.

bob johnson - January 06, 2025 at 03:39 PM

SM

“ Sue and Tara, so sorry for your loss. Toby lives on in so many of our lives through his influence on us. An unforgettable man. My sincere condolences sympathy. Susan Peleschak Murray

susan Murray - January 06, 2025 at 01:53 PM

SJ

*Very sorry to hear of of Toby's passing. I was reporter at the Toronto Star when the zoo opened. I was fortunate to be assigned fulltime to the zoo beat shortly after the zoo opened
With Toby's help I was fortunate to come up with some world-wide stories such as the need to euthanize Brum the tiger because hi Gene pool was full. With the help of an a nonymus local businessman. Because of the the modern design of the zoo, there were as few walls and barriers to allow visitors to get as close to the animals as possible. As a result it became known as one of people friendly zoos in the world. Stan Josey*

Stan Josey - January 06, 2025 at 06:27 PM

CR

“ *Sincere condolences.....we went to school with him and his brother Barry in Banff. Carol and Harry Riva*

Carol Riva - January 06, 2025 at 01:42 PM

RO

“ *Toby was always great fun at school. I remember meeting him in Calgary when he was finished School. With an Elephant.*

Robert Okumura - January 06, 2025 at 12:01 PM