



CYRIL ROSEN MBE

Everyone agreed that Cyril Rosen, who died on 21st December, was an extraordinary person. Always kind, with a razor-sharp mind and a mischievous sense of humour, he was a humanitarian with firm views on the world, yet modest, pragmatic, tolerant and respectful of others who did not share his outlook. He will be remembered particularly for his unique contribution to our understanding of, and growing respect for, non-human primates.

Cyril was born in London on 20th February 1927. He grew up in a large house in Highbury with five siblings, as well as numerous dogs, cats, ducks, chickens, geese and other assorted pets. He was always at ease with animals and it was, he said, the presentation of a family chicken on the table as Sunday lunch when he was a child that persuaded him to become a lifelong vegetarian.

He attended local schools in Highbury, North London. He was a bright student, often reading so far ahead of the class that when he played truant, his teachers conceded that it made no difference. When challenged by his teacher on one occasion to take a lesson, he did so with such success that, years later, one of his fellow pupils said he was still inspired by it.

Cyril left school when he was 12 at the onset of war. Manpower was scarce and he went to work in the family dental trading business, Nesor (Rosen backwards), which his father had set up in 1910. At the end of the war, he was conscripted into the army. Being a pacifist, he would have declined an order to kill, so he refused to be conscripted. As a consequence, he was sent to prison. On his release he went back to work for his father. He was soon joined by

his older brother Len, whom he adored, when Len came home from the RAF. Working together strengthened even further their life-long relationship that grew and deepened with time.

Like the monkeys he came to understand so well, Cyril had an insatiable curiosity. He read voraciously, educating himself in areas as diverse as Classics and Astronomy. His books were always with him, wherever he went. For many years he was a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society and watched the heavens through his telescope, comparing notes with contemporaries such as Patrick Moore. Cyril also became a dedicated show jumper, riding in competitions with his favourite horse Tarla - and then studying equine psychology. He got involved in other activities too, such as developing and managing, with Lord Moynihan, an event at 10 Downing Street to celebrate Sir Winston Churchill's 80th birthday. He taught himself to be a bookkeeper through a Pitman course and became a master of figures. He could add up a page of numbers from the telephone book in his head. Even recently he could give Excel a good run for its money.

In 1949, Cyril published a seminal work on casting using the lost wax process, and the Nesor Centrifugal Casting Machine became an industry standard. In the 1960s, Cyril and Len gradually took over the day-to-day running of the family business and were in the vanguard of introducing low seated dentistry to the UK. Len did the sales, Cyril did the numbers – and the writing. Nesor was one of the key firms behind what was called, until very recently, the British Dental Trade Association. Both he and his brother were closely involved in how the dental industry developed, and for many years Cyril edited, and wrote for, the BDTA magazine: *Dental Trader*.

The family business was sold in 1990, but Cyril was not the retiring type. Nor had he wanted to wait until he was older before making his contribution to society. Back in the early 1960s he had by chance seen and then responded to a newspaper advertisement that led to him rescuing a friend, a child and a telescope into the human soul. Sousa was a baby West African Mona monkey in a bad way. Cyril nursed him back to health and began to learn first-hand about primates, followed, predictably, by intense research.

Monkeys at that time were generally seen as amusing distractions, usually found in cramped and unstimulating quarters in dilapidated zoos and private homes, or on a cameraman's shoulder, acting as photographer's prop. For Cyril this was a fascinating new area of study. Through Sousa he came to understand the complex social and individual needs, cognitive abilities and emotional make-up of primates. They were inseparable. Sousa would travel to work with him on the London Underground (and sit on his lap to the obvious consternation of fellow Northern Line passengers – especially those who discovered later that pickpockets did not have to be human). At the office Sousa had a vast cage in the main showroom and became a member of the firm, often writing with great erudition to various government officials and receiving considered replies addressed to "Sousa da Monk Esq.". Mr da Monk was even singled out to be one of the select few offered an American Express card. Cyril spoke on his behalf in a subsequent interview on the *Today* programme. While not

advocating keeping primates as pets, nor having them travel on public transportation, Cyril's stories helped people start to understand the special needs of primates that can only be met in professional sanctuaries.

Some years later Cyril married Gina. Luckily, as she had been working with him in the family business, she knew that she was entering into a special family. Cyril rescued a second monkey, Muna, from incarceration in an illegal zoo and nursed her back to health. Muna arrived with deep psychological problems and was so distressed that she pulled out most of her hair. Cyril coaxed her back to normalcy and it was Muna, who in holding up a hand mirror to observe herself, demonstrated that monkeys are also self-aware. This is a rarely observed characteristic outside of humans. But much as these detailed observations fascinated Cyril, they also made him angry. Sentient beings were being torn away from their families and smuggled across borders, as well as mentally and physically tortured in scientific laboratories, and exploited for commercial gain by unregulated zoos and traders.

Cyril was a Trustee and Secretary of the British Monkey Owners' Society (now defunct) for approximately eight years and advised on the establishment of the earliest primate sanctuaries in the UK and overseas. The Society's purpose was to educate owners and to find suitable homes for unwanted monkeys. In 1973, the International Primate Protection League was established in the United States. Three years later Cyril founded its UK branch and remained a trustee until 2007. Under his direction (and with his financial support) IPPL (UK) campaigned ceaselessly against the abuse of primates for the next thirty years. Cyril appeared as a witness in key court cases and gave evidence to parliamentary committees relating to the (often pointless) use of primates for medical research. He was responsible for training, sponsoring and placing field workers with overseas rescue and sanctuary operations, and for addressing various threats to primate survival in the face of continuing trade and deforestation.

In the late 1970s Cyril bought an old cinema in Kings Cross, close to where he worked, and decided to convert it into the world's first "primatarium", an interactive experience designed to give insights on how *Homo sapiens'* closest relatives live. It took years to put into place and cost Cyril a small fortune. It was also fun to build. Today it would be seen as an example of conventional contextual education on conservation; then it was decades ahead of its time - and it folded after 18 months. Cyril covered his losses by selling the building to a cinema and moved on.

Eventually Sousa and Muna (and Sarah, a third monkey member of the family) also passed on, and Cyril devoted his energies to placing abused primates in suitable sanctuaries and to supporting primate sanctuaries both in the UK and across the world. Cyril also ran campaigns against the use of chimpanzees as tourist attractions and the bush meat trade. Indeed, one of the most successful IPPL (UK) campaigns helped to stop photographers in Spanish coastal resorts using chimpanzees as props for tourists. Among others, the pioneers of ape research, Jane Goodall (chimpanzees), Dian Fossey (mountain gorillas), Birute Galdikas (orangutans)

were all sponsored by Cyril through the IPPL. He also supported graduates on the Oxford Brookes University's Master's Degree programme.

In 1976 Cyril was proposed by Professor John Napier to the membership of the Primate Society of Great Britain (PSGB). This was a rare instance of a non-professional appointment to this learned society. He was a member of its Council for many years and was its financial advisor and supporter, as well as being a member of its Conservation Working Party.

Cyril was an advocate for non-human and human primates alike; he supported the work of many budding and established primatologists working on primate welfare and conservation across the world. He also built strong links with academics, primatologists and conservationists such as Jane Goodall, Stella Marsden (née Brewer), Colin Groves, David Attenborough and many others, tirelessly working to increase our knowledge of primates.

Over the years he became a leading authority on primates, and their exploitation, consulted by governments, sanctuaries and zoos. In 2007 he was awarded the PSGB's Special Conservation Medal to celebrate exceptional achievement in Primatology. He was the second person to receive this, the first being Dr Goodall nearly 10 years earlier. It was one of his proudest moments, certainly more so than when he was appointed an MBE eight years previously, although he was too discreet to say so.

Cyril's wife Gina died in 2001. Appalled by the wars in the Middle East, the increasing encroachment of the EU and, as he saw it, growing crime and the insensitivity of the UK government to the needs of ordinary people, he decided that he wanted to rediscover the Britain he loved, where he could leave his door unlocked and live in peace. So in 2006, at the age of 79, he moved to the Isle of Man – whose people, towns and landscapes he came to regard with enormous affection.

Moving away from the UK meant that he had to reduce his involvement with the IPPL, but he remained in constant contact with both its US and UK operations, and more recently he oversaw the winding down of IPPL (UK). He continued to visit and assist sanctuaries and zoos in the UK and in other parts of Europe, and became a strong supporter of the Wild Futures sanctuary in Cornwall.

But Cyril didn't do retirement. He bought a small house in Castletown and looked around. Within a few months he had seen a wreck of a house nearby and discovered that it was rich in history, having been the town house of Captain Quilliam, Nelson's helmsman on *HMS Victory* during the Battle of Trafalgar. Cyril battled against those who wanted to demolish the building (or let it fall down) to develop the site for offices. He bought the property and over the following three years researched local history and the building, its inhabitants and its heritage.

He lovingly restored Balcony House to the glorious villa it had once been. The structure was rebuilt to its original design, working closely with the local council and heritage committee. At the same time, he carefully reconstructed the interior, returning it to the décor of the

early 19th century, while diligently seeking out suitable period furniture and pictures, obsessively scouring catalogues and attending auctions around the UK to ensure that every detail of the interior was correct. When he was finished his greatest pleasure was sitting in the spacious library. However, as he said, his social conscience would not allow him to occupy a 23-room house on his own. He wanted to sell it to a family that would make better use of the property. He just about covered his costs, but he had had his fun restoring the building; it was time to move on.

In the following years he built up strong local friendships and yet remained close to friends and family in the UK and beyond. He was often nearest to people with whose opinions he sometimes profoundly disagreed. He always listened with interest and a smile, argued carefully, and had the tolerance, respect and breadth of intellect to accommodate the differences. He quietly invested in the Island, always looking for the next big project.

Cyril had a driving licence but gave up driving many years ago due to trees and other objects constantly jumping out in front of his car, possibly due to his poor eyesight. As a result he walked wherever he could and stayed fit, and myopic, to the last. Cyril was a familiar sight scurrying around Douglas and Castletown at an alarming pace, a small dapper man in his jacket, tie and smart beige raincoat, wearing a white plastic builder's hat when it rained (not elegant but so practical), squinting at those who greeted him. He refused to wear glasses or to take other action to correct his deteriorating eyesight, with the result that, more recently, he became almost blind due to cataracts. Finally he was, as he said, "kidnapped" by caring friends on the Island who delivered him to a hospital in London to have them removed.

Just before Christmas he died suddenly at home. It was as he would have wished. He hated the thought of doctors or hospitals. Ever the pragmatist, he had had his fun; it was time to move on.

Cyril Rosen MBE, born London 20th February 1927, died Castletown, Isle of Man, 21st December 2013, is survived by his brother Leonard, two nieces Marie and Adrienne, nephew Howard, six great nephews and many friends in the primate world and beyond.