Renowned Wildlife Filmmaker Leaves Lasting Legacy

 Alan Root responsible for decades of environmental movie magic

INDIANAPOLIS – Alan Root, legendary wildlife filmmaker and longtime friend of the Indianapolis Prize, died Saturday morning at age 80.

"Alan Root felt our wondrous, spectacular, awesome world in every aspect of his being, and it called to him and seduced him completely. The result was that he knew every hero of African conservation, and he told the stories that defined their heroism for the world,” said Mike Crowther, president and CEO of the Indianapolis Zoological Society and the Indianapolis Prize. “Of course, he steadfastly refused to see himself as a hero, regardless of his pioneering filmmaking and the sacrifices he made, and he managed to be quietly confident without any trace of arrogance or ego. When he visited us during our trips to Kenya — where he was a legend — he was just as unassuming and humble as when he visited us in Indianapolis."

With a passion for film that began at an early age, Root’s filmmaking techniques transcended technology and captivated audiences worldwide, garnering more than 60 awards including a Peabody, two Emmys and accolades at The Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival. Root’s insightful documentaries include Mysterious Castles of Clay, Heart of Africa and The Year of the Wildebeest.

“For any wildlife filmmaker, Alan Root’s work is the benchmark. He was an incredible innovator and a master storyteller. He cared deeply about the natural world and made incredible sacrifices to bring it to all of us. I consider it one of the great honors of my life and career to have known and worked with Alan,” said filmmaker Matt Mays, who directs the videos showcased at the Indianapolis Prize Galas and restored Root’s 1978 Two in the Bush for an IMAX feature in 2012.

Root’s dedication to conservation was apparent, earning him the Order of the British Empire during Queen Elizabeth’s 2008 birthday honors. In recent years, he was a welcome guest at multiple Indianapolis Prize Galas, honoring and celebrating accomplishments for the wild things and wild places he cared so much about. At the 2016 event, he spent time with Jane Alexander Global Wildlife Ambassador Award Winner Sigourney Weaver, who played primatologist Dian Fossey in 1988’s Gorillas in the Mist, a film he worked on. Root was also one of the first people to take Fossey into the field, where she was instantly enamored with the gorillas she devoted her life’s work to.

Root was born on May 12, 1937 in London and passed away Aug. 26, 2017.
ABOUT THE INDIANAPOLIS PRIZE
The Indianapolis Prize recognizes and rewards conservationists who have achieved major victories in advancing the sustainability of an animal species or group of species. Winners receive the Lilly Medal and an unrestricted $250,000 award. Remaining Finalists each receive $10,000. The Indianapolis Prize has received support from the Eli Lilly and Company Foundation since its inception.

MEDIA NOTE
Multimedia assets that accompany this story can be found here.