

Former National Zoo director dies

by UPI

WASHINGTON -- Michael Robinson, credited with transforming Washington's National Zoo into a hospitable place for both humans and animals, has died of pancreatic cancer at 79. A native of England, Robinson served as director of the Smithsonian National Zoological Park for 16 years, The Washington Post reported Monday. He maintained that a zoo should be a "biopark," a place where the public can learn about animals as well as view them. "I believe passionately that zoos are probably the most important force in informal education that we can muster," Robinson told the Post in 1990. During his tenure Robinson turned the National Zoo from a collection of pens and cages into a place where animals lived in something akin to their natural environments. Among his many accomplishments was the installation of an exhibit on animal thinking, the construction of an Invertebrate House with a spider exhibit and the opening of the zoo's Amazonia building. Robinson was born in the English town of Preston where his father ran a pet store.

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