

Ivan report

By Eric Biggs

Zoo Atlanta

- The Zoo Atlanta family is saddened by the passing of Ivan the western lowland gorilla, 50 years old and a cherished member of our collection since 1994



- Every life at the Zoo is a story worth sharing, but his story was once told so widely and passionately that it ignited a national movement that touched two coasts. From the jungles of Africa to the shores of the Pacific Northwest to The Ford African Rain Forest at Zoo Atlanta, his life has been a symbol of the way animals shape our lives – and the power we have to shape theirs.



- We'd love him even if he weren't one of our special senior gorillas, a member of an irreplaceable generation that now represents some of the world's oldest living members of his species. We'd love him even if he weren't one of our most famous residents. We'd love him even if he didn't still attract scores of well wishes, greetings, questions and Facebook posts from hundreds of friends and fans who have never forgotten him. We'd love him anyway, because we've had the honor and the privilege of sharing 17 years of an extraordinary life.



- Ivan spent twenty-seven years of his life alone in a cage. Over time, as an understanding of primate needs and behavior grew, public discomfort with Ivan's lonely state grew as well, particularly after he was featured in a National Geographic special entitled "The Urban Gorilla." A public outcry followed, including heartfelt letters from children. When the mall where Ivan lived went bankrupt, he was placed on permanent loan to Zoo Atlanta, which houses the largest group of captive western lowland gorillas in the nation.



- Ivan and Kinyani were real gorillas — and so, by the way, was Jambo, whose story is recounted in the book. But all other characters and situations in the novel are entirely the product of my imagination. When I started to write about the grim facts of Ivan's solitary existence, a new tale slowly began to take shape. At least on the page, where anything is possible, I wanted to give Ivan (even while captive behind the walls of his tiny cage) a voice of his own and a story to tell.
- I wanted to give him someone to protect, and the chance to be the mighty silverback he was always meant to be.

