

TRANSCRIPT

INTERVIEWEE: Krystyna Jurzykowski

INTERVIEWER: David Todd

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David Todd [00:00:03] Well, good morning. My name is David Todd, and we are very fortunate to be with Krystyna Jurzykowski this morning. And I wanted to just try to describe what we're about with Krystyna and, and then launch into a interview with her.

David Todd [00:00:26] With her approval, our plan is to record this interview for research and educational work on behalf of a nonprofit group called the Conservation History Association of Texas. And it will also be used for a book and website for Texas A&M University Press. And finally, it'll be placed in an archive at the Briscoe Center for American History that's hosted by the University of Texas at Austin. And of course, Krystyna would have all rights to use the recording, as she sees fit as well. And I just wanted to make sure that was OK with her.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:01:10] All is good, thank you.

David Todd [00:01:13] OK, well, thanks very much for engaging in this, and let's get started.

David Todd [00:01:21] Let me just say that it is October 12th, 2021. It's about 10:20 a.m. My name is, as I said, David Todd. I'm here in Austin. We are conducting an interview with Krystyna Jurzykowski. She is the force behind High Hope Ranch and the co-founder of Fossil Rim Wildlife Center, among many other ventures. The Wildlife Center is a major facility for endangered species conservation and for land preservation. It's located near Glen Rose, Texas, and has programs with some 30-odd species and has worked for over 30 years to care and breed, among other animals, the white rhino. And she is, as I understand it, based in Glen Rose today, and so this interview is being done remotely.

David Todd [00:02:26] The idea is that we will talk today about her background and interests and focus in, as an example of her life and work, on her efforts on behalf of the white rhino.

David Todd [00:02:40] So, Krystyna, it's just a opening question. I was wondering if there were any early events or influences in your childhood that might have introduced you to an interest and concern for nature and wildlife.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:02:56] Good morning, David, and thank you for your work and this collaboration of interviews, both in audio and written, and a commitment to the, to the histories, the varied history of Texas. So thank you. Thank you for inviting me and my pleasure to be here.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:03:23] So I arrived and then got involved in Texas and Fossil Rim in in 198, 1988. And I realized over time, not initially, that many of the influences came from early childhood experiences. My parents escaped Poland the day that Hitler invaded on

September 1st, 1939, and so I really hear, through them and through their experiences that highlighted and emphasized what human beings do to each other and when one might be on the wrong side of the fence.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:04:34] And I grew up as a child of immigrants and really sourced immigrants in exile. So English is my fourth language. I grew up on Polish, French, Portuguese, and then finally English when I was about eight years old. And so I spent time in Brazil, as a child. My father had become a Brazilian citizen and eventually time in the United States. My mother had become an American citizen. And so we lived between countries.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:05:20] And my childhood in Brazil was very much with nature. We would adopt orphaned anteaters or injured macaws. And really, my friendships as a child was with the world of nature. I was a very, very shy little girl. And yet the world of nature really welcomed me. And so I spent time really in the green jungle.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:05:57] And then at about four and a half, we moved to Paris, in France, and I got to learn what a cement jungle is like.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:06:09] And then after three years there, moved back to Brazil for a while, and then eventually to New York City.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:06:20] And so I understand at that comparison frame between a green jungle and a cement jungle and the feelings of loss and grief that I felt as a little child and yet had no capacity or wherewithal to really understand. Eventually, through a series of experiences, especially in my thirties, brought me back to re-member, and I love the word remember because we are not only remembering, we are re-membering ourselves to a larger world to whom we actually belong.

David Todd [00:07:14] Can you talk just a little bit about that? It seems like you've taken this word, "remember", and broken in part and that that has a special meaning for you. Can you maybe lay that out for us?

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:07:29] Yes. So really, Fossil Rim and my work for the last 30 plus years, very much with endangered species, with land protection, with land preservation, with really looking at both the past and the present. And as we know, as human beings, we are really a world of memories, which are a series of interpretations of experiences. And we are also moving forward in time. And as I've learned through studies with indigenous people, also become aware of looking forward and looking forward, not just for tomorrow or next year, but looking for the next seven generations. And so as you acutely asked, yes, the word "re-member" has a deep, deep meaning for me in terms of remembering the origins of human beings, the reality of human beings, and not only our ancestors, and all the experiences and memories that came before - for example, this life - also looking to make decisions that have a perspective that is much larger than I can see.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:09:36] And yet if I behold that timelessness, I am more aware to make more responsible and accountable decisions towards that whole. And not only the whole, W, H, O, L, E to prevent, in a sense, ignorant decisions that would get me in the hole, the H, O, L, E kind. So the innter commitment to remember our wholeness with all of life, and the interdependence of all of life, that includes all sentient beings, that include the plants, the animals, also the invisible realm, those who have come before us. And to re-member myself and make myself a member of that wholeness, and to understand that each decision I make

and each action I take, or not take, has a phenomenal influence of either being regenerative, and/or, being destructive or cause suffering.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:11:29] And that's a very complex system. I get it on a philosophical way. I get it on an embodied way. And bringing my consciousness and awareness so that I can live that way, moment to moment, however inconsequential the moment might be, or how in a sense, banal the moment is, that I, I live the moment, taking in all that has been and all of that will be.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:12:20] And so the teaching and the separation of those two words is part of my practice. And over the decades now, just the word brings me to a place that is immense, and then tinier than a grain of sand in a very, very big and large ecology and environment.

David Todd [00:13:02] This may be really presumptuous because I know everybody's story is their own, and it's sometimes hard for others to, to really grasp them. But if I'm, if I'm following you, I'm thinking that this, this idea of remembering is, is in a way of maybe trying to reengage and enmesh yourself with the natural world that I think maybe you lost in Brazil or that your family lost, in both this sense of community and natural world, in Poland? Is there some effort here of trying to put together something that was riven apart?

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:13:50] Thank you for that question and reflection.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:13:55] And I do believe that my experience as a child of immigrants who lost, as you've just spoken, lost their culture, their community, their language and kept arriving - first to Italy, then to America, then to Brazil and onward. And so that quality of being a foreigner, and that quality of being just arrived, or just arrived because one has just departed, alongside with the friendship with the natural world that allowed this little girl to rest and be welcomed in a way that the world of human being dynamics felt very confusing to me as a child. And so I took home and I was home in the natural world, moving to a cityscape interrupted that. And as a child without, let's say, the recognition of the adults around me recognizing that kind of separation and loss within me, I created my own strategy of, to, to help me as a little girl meet the loss and the grief.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:16:12] And what I did was to forget. And, you know, like, like a lizard that changes colors each day, I adapted to city life by forgetting my love for nature. And so fast forward to my '30s, which was in the 1970s and I was living in New York City, I was an entrepreneur there, and was asked by some friends to housesit their home two hours north of New York City - five acres, a sweet pond next to a forest. I started walking that forest during the summer. And over time, soon, when I walked into the forest, it, tears started rolling down my cheeks. And it didn't feel like I was crying. It felt like I was emptying - emptying something that had resided in me that I wasn't in bodily aware of. And by the end of this summer, I realized that those tears were the grief and loss from that separation.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:17:56] And that summer changed my life. I moved out of Manhattan, I moved an hour north of Manhattan. I entered the world of nature, first to live in, and as life evolves, that led all the way to both a professional commitment and immersion into the field of the world of nature. And so I give, and I have been shown, to be grateful for the experiences that I had as a child, no matter how confusing and difficult they were, these, you know, transplant experiences. I realized that it gave me a perspective that has led me to who I have become. And so I give thanks for that.

David Todd [00:19:17] Isn't it stunning how these experiences as a very young, small person can have these echoes that may be broken by, you know, 30 years between hearing the, the bounce. And something else that sort of strikes me is that you sound like you're sort of an autodidact. I mean, a lot of the people we talk to have a lot of very careful, technical, scientific training and you know, they, they hark back to that life in high school and college and graduate school, and, you know, the first jobs. But you seem to have figured a lot of this out on your own. Is that fair to say? Were there any sort of experiences during school that would have helped lead you to this, this kind of interest and profession?

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:20:25] I, first of all, David, let me tell you, I love your questions and appreciate them and thank you for your deep listening. I'm a very curious person, and I describe myself as a generalist. I know a little about a lot of things, through my curiosity and really my aptitude for experiential learning. I'm a college dropout, after two and a half years, and realized that I needed to go out and in order to go in.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:21:20] And so having lived in multiple countries in multiple different ways, a life of entrepreneurship applied to many different contexts. When I look at them all, I look at them as learning opportunities so that I can, in a sense, find my, my place of belonging. I am, I've been described as a philosopher, as an artist, and I weave all those elements with an aptitude for observation.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:22:17] And back to my childhood again, being a newcomer in different countries, being immersed in another language than the one I spoke in the previous country, allowed me to develop an ability to pay attention, an ability to observe. And that actually kept my nervous system safe in very uneasy situations.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:23:08] I'm sure you can, and our listeners can, relate to certain experiences like first days at school. Or first newcomer to a class that had been ongoing with the same kids in the same class for years. So one stands out. And again, I will use that word "be-longing." And that's another word that I use in two syllables. Being - be - and then longing, longing to participate. Longing to belong. Longing to be received. Longing to be heard and acknowledged, beyond the apparent differences.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:24:13] And so I have spent layers of curiosity to understand both the similarities and the differences and work to diminish with the goal to eliminate judgment based on difference. And I understand science has proven through epigenetics that memories that we each as human beings carry up to 15 generations of what is called epigenetic memory in our cells. So physiologically, we carry what has come before us.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:25:17] And so in understanding my parents' history, and the need to flee. They had an interfaith marriage, which was very rare and unique in Poland in the 1930s. And my mother was labeled as "other". And that's why they left, even though that part of my parents' story was not revealed until after their deaths, because it was so traumatic. And the results were traumatic in terms of my mother losing her whole family, immediate family and her larger community, in concentration camps.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:26:18] And so I'm very aware of trauma, trauma through history, whether it's that part of European history or it's the part of American history that has displaced and created a similar kind of genocide - different details, but similar outcomes - with the First Peoples of, of this northern continent.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:26:57] And so I am sensitive and that sensitivity, through observation and compassionate solidarity, has not only led me to my understandings of human history. It's led my understanding and my passion to make a difference for all other, let's just say, citizens of this world, who are of a different kind they're of another kind - plants, animals, the invisible realms.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:27:48] And so, yes, I choose to belong to what I see and what I can't see, and yet I know is, is available to us, those of us who are willing to see, to receive and to live accordingly.

David Todd [00:28:18] Hmm. I love the way you put together this solidarity and compassion and understanding for different people and communities and creatures. It's, it's a, it's a beautiful idea. You know, a lot of ways that folks pass on ideas and try to communicate with one another seems to be through popular culture. And I was wondering if there are any books or movies, plays, TV shows, operas - any sort of, you know, cultural artifacts that, that have been lodestones for you, have opened your eyes to conservation.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:29:18] One of my favorite books, and again, they fall more into whole systems theory and quantum, quantum understanding of a world that exists, and yet we don't see. And the book "Bioimicry", by Janine Benyus, who is a scientist and has written several books. The introduction of biomimicry was one of those guides and helpers. And she explains the principles of nature. And she synthesizes them into a short list. And with examples like: Nature recycles everything, let's just use that as an example. You know, nature is powered by sunlight. And so they are systems, ecological systems and codes of what creates life.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:31:03] And the, the last one on the list is, nature sets her own limits. And then she continues to write that this is the only principle in the list that humans have been unable to bring themselves to a behavior that is reflective of that principle. And because of human will and mind, that is something that has to be an intention, a practice and a commitment. Is to set one's own limits. For example, how much do we consume? What kind of things do we consume? Drilling down even more - what's the packaging of what we buy. And how is everything, every tiny detail of our behaviors affect the whole. So that's one book.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:32:43] There's, there's also a book called Native Science. Understanding again, some of the interactive, interdependent, interrelated aspects that native peoples have based their behaviors on, when they were free to practice their ceremonies and rituals and behaviors that knew, without books, without the internet, without technology, they knew, through their experience and their connection with the natural world, that they were part of some bigger, bigger complex system. And understood that their actions would either benefit, or destruct. And they knew that if their behaviors were destructive, that would not only mean destructive to nature, It would be destructive to themselves. And so the understanding of self-sabotage through one's dedications, through one's learnings. And then the not easy part: what am I committed to? What do I need to sacrifice? What do I need to leave behind? What stand do I make, on behalf of everything? Understanding that my actions make a difference. There are unintended consequences to every action.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:35:20] So those are two books. I read a lot. I've never owned a TV, even though I was a filmmaker in the '70s and early '80s. And so most of the world philosophies and the attentions to inner practices and understanding how we as human

beings interpret and then behave, leads me to another book, a favorite book called "Buddha's Brain". And this is by a neuroscientist who also is and has been a meditator for a long time. And, and understanding how the human brain was formed through history during primitive times when our brain was still forming. Our brains paid attention to, let's say, what was wrong, or what was off, or what was dangerous, so that we could keep our primitive self safe - safer.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:37:05] Fast forward to today, where our existence and our environments are very different than from primitive times. And this neuroscientist has understood that even if we receive nine positives - and that can be thoughts, inner thoughts, outer circumstances - and one, let's say, negative just as descriptive, our brains neurochemically go to that negative, because that's how our brains were formed, with good intention, to keep us safe. So the other side of that book is what are the inner practices, including breath, work and meditation? Or even a simple example like if, if you're feeling in some way that's activated, that's angry, that's judgmental, that is resentful, think of somebody you love. Think of a place you love, a moment that made you happy, because you cannot do those two things at the same time.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:38:42] And so that's a, that's a little practical exercise that when I read that, and from my experience, it works. It helps my neurophysical components come in coherence with a higher level of behavior and one that I want to be attuned to so that I can diminish my ignorance, diminish my reactivity. And instead respond in a way that will make me proud.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:39:35] And again, back to the nature of re-remembering my place, not only here in Glen Rose, where I live, but by my remembering and my belonging to the whole of life. That when I die - this is another childhood set of experiences - my father passed away after an illness when I was 13 and a half, and my mother died when I was 18 and a few months. And that degree of loss added to my experiences of understanding that we have no guarantees. We have no guarantees to meet our expectations and our assumptions that we will live a long, longer, longest life.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:40:50] And that I must stay current. I must stay in the moment. And if there is something that needs a little improvement or an apology, or an insight, or reflection that I didn't have through an experience beforehand, I need to make it right. And so I have been taught through my studies with indigenous people or with other teachers, through various traditions, even though I was brought up as a Roman Catholic in Catholic schools, even those experiences in the '50s and '60s taught me to love ceremony. I would go as a child to Mass, and there was incense, and there was there was a series of rituals that were bigger than the words.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:42:10] And that led me to study with indigenous people in North America and in South America, something that I continue today, because I am a student. I'm a life student, even though I'm a college dropout. And I want to learn about the mystery of how, how life works, beyond what I have experienced, and beyond what I can see with my eyes, or hear with my ears, or feel with my body, through all the senses, so that when I die, when it's my time to be called upstairs, I feel really proud of my life.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:43:11] And so I am also committed to living a life without regret. And the only way I know how to do it is to be current and to be as aware as I can be. And if I become more aware tomorrow, then make, make good. If, if I wasn't the best that I am now,

then recover, and be direct in my relations. The native people use this phrase - "all my relations". And so they have helped me go beyond what I knew before.

David Todd [00:44:16] Thank you. You're so good at explaining things that are, I think, often just beyond our grasp and, and things that maybe leave us a little bit empty or confused because we don't quite engage with it. And it's interesting that you have the, these, you know, really deep quests and understandings. But, but you've also been working very much with, you know, acres of land and pounds of hoofstock. And, and I thought maybe this would be a good time to try to explain how this, this search that you've been on this, this lifelong learning, took you to Fossil Rim Wildlife Center. And perhaps you can tell us about the origins of that piece of land, that may be a good place to start. I understand that it was an exotic game ranch, originally Waterfall Ranch, right?

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:45:33] Yes. And I will even start earlier than that. And these areas of Texas were undersea millions and millions and millions of years ago in the Cretaceous period. And so the lands of Fossil Rim and High Hope are actually an original sea bed. And so this land is on limestone bedrock, as is Austin, where you are. And so, I would name the earliest ancestors to be sea creatures, like clams, and oysters, and sea biscuits, that we find all over these lands.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:46:33] And then I want to give acknowledgment to the First Peoples who were here. And this area was a migratory area with the Northern Apache, the Caddo from the East, those from Mexico, the Comanches, that are now also named the Comancheria, to include the mix. And so I want to attribute where attribution is necessary and called for.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:47:17] And yes, for the lands that are known as Fossil Rim, it was a private ranch with exotic species that do really well in Texas, so well that they're some of them are named Texotics, like fallow deer and black buck antelope. And it was a private, as I understand it, was a private hunting ranch. And the original founder, a man by the name of Tom Mantzel from Fort Worth, found the land. The land called out to him, and because there were some animals on the land, he began to devote his free time to bringing animals. And he was in the oil and gas business that did very well in the '70s and early '80s until 1983, where there was a reversal in in that business.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:48:43] And concurrent or parallel to that, Jim Jackson, who was my partner since the late '70s, and I had gone from our respective businesses to moving onto a sailboat with a dream of going round the world. We did lots of trans-oceanic crossings: never went around fully. And it was during that time we had left, either sold our businesses or brought in a new partner, which was for me the case. And we were asking ourselves, "What's next? What do we love to do? What are we connected to?"

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:49:45] And out of many, many long conversations came this synthesis of those conversations into a question, "What can two untrained people do hands-on for animals and the world of nature?" So that question was asked, and as we know, some questions don't have immediate answers. And so if I look back from now, I see that that question was like a boomerang that just went out wherever boomerangs go. And then experiences, and I endearingly say experiences conspire, conspire to lead us, to guide us, and sometimes to force us to where we need to go.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:51:01] And that's what happened with our long introduction, long introduction to Tom Mantzel and our curiosity, which has a lot of details before it. I'm, I'm giving you the broad band of events. And we were introduced to a place in Martinique, on the island, and we were involved with oceanic people and a possibility to merge oceanic and land conservancy. And since we didn't know anything about the subject, some research brought us to several private places in America. And one of them was a place at that time called Fossil Rim Wildlife Ranch. And that was 1987. On our first visit to Texas was in March of 1987, and Tom was curious about our project and was willing to share some of his experiences.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:52:31] Well, events conspired and, in a sense, forced our hand. I'm sure you know how something can happen in a second, and that takes us you on another route than what we expected. And that's how Fossil Rim came to be in our lives. We had no desire to move back to America, no desire to be landlocked and away from the sea and departing from our new business, which was building sailboats and also sailing in between.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:53:28] And yet, looking back and being acknowledging of how surprises are sometimes not easy at all, the surprise was worthy, and led us on this journey to Fossil Rim, and we became the next generation of co-founders after Tom. And fast forward to 2008 and the next generation of stewards, which is Fossil Rim, in and of itself, a 501(c)(3), not-for-profit entity that is dedicated to forwarding the work not only on-site at Fossil Rim, its alliances and collaborations around the world, and its dedication to land restoration, preservation and protection, especially in Texas.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:54:57] The largest, the most influenced, of destruction of habitat within Texas is called "fragmentation", when large properties become developed into residential homes and or developments. And Texas has, and back to 1989, when we created a gathering, a conference on Texas endangered species. In 1989, Texas had more endangered species than some countries. Texas today has the fastest level of destruction of farmland than, than any other state. It's the fastest growing state, in terms of economic development. And all those things may have certain positive elements to it in terms of jobs. And we're losing our ecology and we're losing our cultural history, that people are only part of. And we're losing the memories, just the way our bodies, human bodies, have memories, and our brains were formed at a different time.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:56:55] Every time, cement gets, replaces a grassland, a native prairie, a forest ecology, there are so many consequences. And some of them are unintended. Some of them come from the dominion of human impression: that we know best. And if our minds want something, we're going to - where there's a will, there's a way. And so part of Fossil Rim's work, part of my work is, again, to find ways to expand awareness, so that as a human species, we survive. Even though the work of Fossil Rim is with endangered animals, the work has to be for endangered humans. We are actually the most endangered species on this planet.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:58:18] You know being my age, I've heard the concept of Mother Nature. And whether we agree with climate change as a theory or not, there is that element of Mother Nature. And left to her own wisdoms (I don't mean left in isolation), but if we can enter that world of wisdom to allow us to make a decisions, to make decisions, not singly and unilaterally for ourselves. And to include the world of nature, like biomimicry, to study our influence, study the benefits. What happens if the bees disappear? Our food is, is created through their job.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [00:59:44] What happens if we would, for example, take an airplane and start pulling out little bits of hardware that attach the wings to the body. The plane can probably fly for a while. Let's say we take out a few more, and then a few more, and a few more. And what is that one piece of hardware that will make that plane destroy itself? That's what I am attending and intending to making sure that we humans survive, along with the rest of life.

David Todd [01:01:01] And life is, is so diverse like, you know, the, the rivets in the plane that you mentioned. I wonder, you know, given all the, the choices that were in front of you, how you ended up focusing on, on those animals that are at Fossil Rim, and particularly the, the white rhino. I know you've done really important work with the red wolf and the Attwater's prairie chicken and, and other animals. But, but tell us about the rhino. How, how did those first come to Fossil Rim? Why did that happen and why did you think that was an important venture?

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:01:57] So when we involved ourselves with this world of wildlife conservancy, obviously, we added ourselves into the mix, and I have to also give acknowledgment to the specialists who make these decisions possible, as what you've mentioned, the choice of including white rhinos into Fossil Rim. And I first have to go into a little bit of how the world of endangered species is coordinated and collaborated. And there is a program called the Species Survival Plan, which has been developed in these last decades, which is essentially a collaborative program for a chosen species. And there is one for the white rhino, and it's a, it's a focused attention on all the elements that are responsible for having a healthy population, whether the population is in the wild, or the population is in other countries in a managed program.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:03:42] And so at the time, in the late '80s, the White Rhino Species Survival Program, which is those letters become the acronym S, S, P, the white rhino SSP was going through a number of elements that realized again the natural needs of the species. When the white rhinos were first brought to America, they were placed in zoos. And zoos usually have a male and a female at least. Well, it turns out that white rhinos don't do themselves that way. The females stay together as a family group or, let's say, a village or a community. The males have a tendency to live alone, and when a female is ready to be bred, she sends out signals. The animals have a communications system. And males will come to her and compete to breed her. And that's how white rhinos do white rhinos.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:05:21] Well, that fact was discovered at San Diego Wild Animal Park. That was more of a natural way of managing animals. And all of a sudden, they observed and discovered that breeding was happening. Whereas in the zoos that had paired animals, there was no breeding. And obviously, breeding and success in breeding is part of any endangered program management.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:06:05] And so in the early days when Jim and I, with the animal care specialists that were already at Fossil Rim, we were asked by the association that manages this SSP program to see and inquire whether we would be interested in managing and receiving the oldest white rhinos in the United States who had not yet bred. And therefore their genetics were really, really important because keeping a population alive is around diversity, and keeping the genetics as diverse as possible over, you know, the scope of hundreds of years. And that inquiry demanded out of us a commitment to invest resources to build a white rhino barn, to build white rhino facilities and to commit our private resources to

expanding the existing breeding programs that Tom himself had dedicated through being an entrepreneur.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:07:42] And so the first white rhinos arrived. And you know, what an exciting day! And what a level of trust to welcome these animals that are millions and millions and millions of years old. And are so pressured, especially in their native habitats.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:08:17] And I want to bring up another point, because what makes the world of wildlife conservancy so compelling, so challenging? It's not just about the animals and how well we can duplicate their natural ways of being in order to provide them what they need to reproduce themselves. Really, wildlife conservancy is a geopolitical issue. It's about politics in the countries of origin. It's about economics in the countries of origin. It's about human growth. All those elements.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:09:17] So even though Fossil Rim is known to work with endangered species, I want to underline that the specialists at Fossil Rim work not only within the SSPs, but the SSPs work with other national and international bodies of collaboration all the way to include governments. And so it's a very, very complex, layered kaleidoscope. Where if we see in our mind's eye the kaleidoscope, we know that every time we move the instrument, everything that we're seeing through the hole also moves. And that's what makes this work so important and so challenging.

David Todd [01:10:31] Oh, it's clear that it's difficult. And I, and I think that part of the difficulty is something that I guess you just touched on and that that the rhino is, and its trajectory is, is, you know, affected by the geopolitics and the economics, and, you know, the, the whole context that it comes out of. I was hoping that you could give us a little bit of an idea of why the rhinos were in a bad place. Why they, their populations were suffering.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:11:12] Yes. Rhinos have been around, as I said, for millions and millions of years. So have other cultures. The Asian populations and the Middle East populations have certain traditions that, let's say, hundreds of years ago were in balance. That the supply and demand was minimal, and acceptable. Fast forward to modern-day transportation systems, technology, the exponential increase of demand to a supply, is also relevant to rhinos.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:12:28] So rhinos have, white rhinos have a horn. And the horn is like our nails and our hair follicles.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:12:43] Rhinos were used in the country of Yemen as a symbol of rites of passage for young boys that received a rhino-handled instrument.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:13:06] In some Asian countries, including China, the rhino horn is considered to have medicinal qualities. I might say some things that some scientists disagree with, and the scientists have more scientific data than I do. And yet again, on a cultural, philosophical perspective, I understand how these traditions have come about, and see the problem as a consumptive problem.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:13:55] Some people will challenge that a white rhino horn has medicinal properties. I am open to the potential that it does, just the way plants have incredible medicinal properties. In fact, many of our medications today are sourced originally

from the molecular structure of a plant that then is synthesized and copied through a chemical process.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:14:38] And so the same thing goes, I believe, with rhino horns: that some people say the rhino horn has same properties like aspirin. So like high temperatures can be reduced. Some people say that rhino horns have immune-building properties. And so take that further and further, and it's known or thought to be an aphrodisiac. Is it? I don't know. And yet the culture and the tradition has it so.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:15:33] So really, conservancy is about changing the story. And when we change another's cultural story, even though we may disagree, we have to enter with respect and reverence that these elements have been built over centuries.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:16:01] I understand that Yemen was courageous, and actually with the work of many organizations, including the World Wildlife Fund, and London Zoological Society, and many others, that the government of Yemen actually now prohibits rhino horn being used and has replaced it with some man-made product.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:16:41] Now in China, you know, that tradition still, and it's embedded in the people. We've got a lot of traditions here in America embedded in us, and we must begin to stay current. We must begin to ask ourselves, "Is this tradition that was once possible, what do we need to do as human beings to change that tradition because we are causing so much suffering and endangerment and destruction to another species?"

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:17:36] So there are organizations and people involved in that. But again, as a child of immigrants in exile, and, and the fact that my mother was named, "Other", and "Wrong", I get it. I get the capacity of human beings to point the finger and say, "You're wrong, I'm going to wipe you out, or I'm going to make it difficult for you to survive." That's happened, people-to-people, and that's happening humans-to-animals, and it's happening humans to native prairies.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:18:33] Which, again, brings me up to reemphasize the point: what are our day-to-day decisions for the future of really, when it comes down to it, our own existence? What do we want for our children? What do we want for our grandchildren? What, what do we want for their grandchildren? And on and on and on. And if we take that seriously, something changes in us, and we can never go back. We can never make a decision just for what it means for me. We have to make a decision for what it means for We, and the "We" is in caps.

David Todd [01:19:33] You know when we were speaking once before, you talked about the need to, I guess, change and adapt our cultural myths and stories with respect and acknowledgment that they're really, as you said, embedded. And this is hard, but I think that one of the things you mentioned at one point and this again, was in another day and another visit, you said that that the rhinos were in in effect, your teachers, your mentors, and, and that they, they held a kind of cellular memory that you felt was helpful to you. And I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about that capacity of animals to maybe help us change our, our understanding of the world and our practices.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:20:35] Rhinos have been around, as we know, through archeology and anthropology and other studies, for millions and millions and millions of years. In fact, even in North America in the time of mammoths. So being as large as they are,

right, white rhinos weigh between, oh, 3500, 4000 to 6000 pounds. And the white rhino specifically being very, sort of communal. The female's communal.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:21:30] For me, in my experience, has allowed me to relate to them in ways that are physically impossible, let's say, with the prairie chickens or the red wolves that you mentioned earlier. And so it's a, it's a fascinating, in a sense counterintuitive contradiction that the largest animals on Fossil Rim are actually the ones that I can get more physically close to, and with attention and care and common sense, I can actually put my hands on a white rhino. And in a way that is because they're willing. They're willing to come up to the pipe fence. They're willing to allow again, very careful and very aware, physical touch on their skin.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:22:40] And I spoke about cellular memory. And I do believe in that. And so I believe that when I have my hand on a rhino, that somehow, there's something that's being transmitted to me. I may not be able to translate that into a thought, or some kind of reasonable understanding. Yet I know that their, their age, and their history, is potentially as old as one of the fossils that we find here on the land.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:23:40] And just the way scientists are now, just in the last few years, accepting and realizing that trees are in communication with one another underground through their roots, and that information is being transmitted. And it's been shown, there are now books available, of what trees do to help each other in need.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:24:11] And so, taking all of that scientific confirmation to add to my own philosophical attunements, that my history with the white rhinos here have these experiences that you know are, are they stand out? They stand out to again, learn me, teach me that there's more than I can see. And there's more to what is in the cosmology of the universe than my touch on a rhino. And I am committed, and I am open to learning about that.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:25:14] And I have to say, some people may laugh. I, you know, years and years ago, I was less confident. I'm 69 years old. I've entered my seventh decade. I know what I stand for. And over the years, especially within the world of wildlife conservation, I was laughed at some of my philosophical and spiritual beliefs around even animal communication. And back then, I was embarrassed. Back then, I was less confident because I was a generalist, I didn't have lots of letters behind my name. I didn't have all the degrees to prove that I was worthy. And to many, I wasn't. To some, dear, dear human beings who recognized Jim's and my passion and committed devotion to entering a world we didn't know anything about, and yet we were led. And this is where we were supposed to be, even though we consciously did not agree to come. But events conspired. And so now I'm confident, even though others may disagree with me, I am, I'm open to the possibilities that there's so much more to life, so much more to this chemistry, biochemical chemistry that is all of life, that has greater meaning, greater potential, and greater outcome to a world of balance that we're all participatory in.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:27:25] And so the rhinos have, have helped, because of their age and because of their massiveness, and because of their willingness to be interacted with, in a way that, for instance, the black rhinos - that's not their personalities. And so, again, management is according to what a species is and wants for themselves, and is, is necessary for their healthy well-being for next generations to come.

David Todd [01:28:28] You know, one of the questions that always, you know, is sort of stuck in my head, and I think it's something that you've really worked on and thought a lot about and expressed really well is, what is the, the meaning behind wildlife conservation? Why is this important? Why does it matter? And I am sort of picking up a few comments as you've been speaking that I think get to this, I mean, this, this idea that there is more than, than we can see, and that there's somehow more to life than just its biochemical mechanics? And I remember when we talked earlier that while you're not a formally religious person, you do feel that you have a spiritual interest and calling and that you, I think you, you put it as that you sought a kind of surrender to the, some divine qualities, divine perfection in life. Is that is that a fair way to put it? Oh, could you maybe help me understand that?

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:29:48] Yes, thank you. One of my favorite subjects and favorite because we have to approach that in ambiguity. And I use the word "ambiguity", commensurate with "faith". As I mentioned, I was brought up a Roman Catholic. And I will say that one of my father's teachings was to stand up for myself, and to stand up beyond institutional power and institutional narratives, which over time can become dogma, and can become rigid, and limiting of what's right and what's wrong, which is a polarity and a duality that I believe has led us to a long human history of religious and cultural wars whether we have participated in them or observed them from a distance.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:31:48] And it doesn't seem to matter what color we are. It doesn't seem to matter what color we are. Or what language we speak or what religion we might belong to. Humans have such a capacity for either phenomenal generosity, or phenomenal horror to one another, based on dominion. Who's more important than whom? Who's more right than whom? Back to our earlier words and language, who belongs and doesn't belong? And I include the world of nature.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:33:05] What I call the great book. And some may find what I say as blasphemy, and I see it with respect for human evolution. The great book, and that's what I call the Bible, was written through story, through narrative, and through a selective process where some Gospels have never been included. Where certain language has been used for a long time that speaks to higher directives around dominion, dominion over the whole world, dominion over the world of nature.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:34:09] And I am dedicated to more of a circular understanding of life. We all belong to this planet. Our resources, for example, the air that we breathe. The air goes around the planet. The fires in California - the smoke travels across America, the Atlantic Ocean, Europe, Asia and then returns to California. If we take some of those elements and understand how influential we are, I believe we would all wake up in a new way.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:35:05] And so I was taught by my father to be, to respond to religious teachings through a lens that sometimes challenged, and sometimes fully accepted. And I believe that the spiritual traditions - native peoples, Tibetans, Tibetan Buddhism, Zen Buddhism, and all the religions in their most ideal constructs have the same message - that we, as humans, are attuned to collectivity, to generosity, to compassion for each other's ignorance and each other's suffering. And that through inner practices that elevate the human reality to a higher potential, we can change ourselves.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:36:41] As Gandhi said, "if we want to change the world, be that change ourselves." And so, I ultimately have to respect the religious traditions, and yet I also

have to look with open eyes about the suffering that they have caused and continue to cause around the world. And so I do.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:37:22] You know, I think we can all remember when we were little children, and I'm sure that we've each had just certain experiences where as a child, in our innocence, and in our order and wonder, we met, we met this world that we were brought in. And that, that's what I, for me, what spirituality represents is all that is the mystery. There is some kind of construct that holds us together, something so much bigger than human constructs and human narratives about these constructs, and that we have to meet what we know with a spirit of awe and wonder, and what the Zen Buddhist call, "I don't know mind".

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:38:55] That in certain, in tandem with being certain about certain things, we have to add a huge measure of uncertainty. And that's what I call spiritual practice: that there are elements and factors and conditions that I can attune to around this, and if I attune to this, then I am able to go beyond the myths and the stories that have been handed down. Take the wisdom from those stories and again, make them current. Rather than depend on what was seen centuries ago and may or may not apply to today.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:40:13] And be willing to adapt myself for that purpose of alignment, coherence, equanimity and cooperation with the world of life, which includes the world of humans and the world of, and put humans back into nature. There's been a separation. Now there's the world of humans and the world are nature. How about if we put ourselves in the world of nature? How does our, how do our lenses, how does our eyesight, how does our perspective change? Because, all of a sudden, what we're doing, we're doing to our family, our greater family and greater community, which means we're doing it to ourselves.

David Todd [01:41:13] There's something circular about this, I guess. I like your metaphor about the, the smoke from California, the terrible wildfires there, crossing the United States, going to Europe and then coming back. And I, if I'm reading you right, I think that there's that same sort of, you know, repercussions for how we treat one another and how we treat animals and like ourselves, but also the wildlife around us. And this is so, so interesting and valuable. I really appreciate it, Krystyna.

David Todd [01:41:52] But I see that that of the day is is moving on and you have many things to do, I imagine. Maybe I could just ask one more question if you don't mind. And that's just an open-ended one. Considering what you said today, is there anything you'd like to add?

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:42:13] Mm-Hmm. Can we have a couple more hours?

David Todd [01:42:19] I'd love that.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:42:21] Um, let me just take a moment and see what comes.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:42:38] Again, it's on human potential. I believe that if we adapted our beliefs, we would be benefited and the world would benefit. How about if were born in our greatest potential for equanimity, for reverence, for respect, an openness to difference. If we remember the innocence of a young child, and the excitement of a young child experiencing. How can we as adults continue that? Rather than behaving as if the world is a tight fit.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:44:08] I believe if we changed our story about the power of our potential as an entire construct, as an entire interdependent web and net, that perhaps someplace like Fossil Rim wouldn't be necessary. Because that would mean that each person, each animal, each plant had its respectful place in the whole. And we would find a way to behave, so that there would be nothing like an endangered species. There would not be further extinction of hundreds of insects, hundreds of elements that are part of the larger plan for this planet.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:45:43] It's fascinating to me that, you know, people are going up in space again, taking a ride, you know, like the earlier astronauts. I remember when the astronauts were able to see planet Earth for the first time. And that became a spiritual experience. And different organizations were created to understand what's bigger than we can conceive or see. And those earlier astronauts devoted the rest of their lives to understanding the spirit, the spiritual connection that this planet has with even a larger world than this planet. You know, we can take it as big as we want and as how astronomy and science is continuing to discover star systems and continuing to ask, "Is there a life beyond this planet?"

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:47:19] And so for the rhinos, for the Attwater prairie chickens, for the red wolves, for all the species that and subjects that you, David, are focusing on to leave a legacy, leave a legacy of understanding, of this world of beauty, this world of mystery, this world of potential. That's what I want is to leave you my gratitude for creating these programs for allowing me to speak today and for us to continue these conversations.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:48:15] If some of your listeners are curious and understand, curious to understand more, I welcome some kind of process to continue these dialogs. Because we must understand each other, even though we might disagree. And so it isn't actually what we believe in. It's how do we move through? And how do we meet others who may have a completely different take on reality? And so I am curious to continue the conversations, not only about rhinos or Fossil Rim, land. How do each of us become fully realized, and conceive of the world beyond non-dual perspectives that seem to have carried us this far. And I hope we will be carried much farther, much farther in what we can co-create together through cooperation and collaboration for a regenerative, larger community that we belong to.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:50:04] Thank you so much for this opportunity. Thank you, David.

David Todd [01:50:11] Thank you, Krystyna. I think you do a wonderful job of leading us through this, this whole inquiry and, and it's, it's kind of you to, to be our guide and to share all your thoughts of where you've been and where you're going. And I wish you all the best in the future. Thanks again for your time today, and I hope that our paths cross soon and often. But until then, take care of yourself. Be good. Love yourself. You're a good person, I appreciate it.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:50:55] Thank you, David. The same for you. And let's find a way to meet each other face to face again as a long time ago. Thank you so much for you.

David Todd [01:51:09] I would enjoy that. Thanks a bunch. Take care.

Krystyna Jurzykowski [01:51:13] OK, bye bye.

David Todd [01:51:14] Bye now.