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Jim Cronin, world-renowned primate rescuer, mourned in Yonkers

By [NICOLE NEROU LIAS](#)
THE JOURNAL NEWS

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YONKERS - Before he was James Cronin, world-renowned primate expert honored by British royalty, he was little Jimmy from Yonkers, entranced by the organ grinder's capuchin monkey on Morris Street.

The 55-year-old succumbed to liver cancer Saturday at Cabrini Medical Center in Manhattan. About 50 family and friends gathered to remember him this morning at St. Paul the Apostle Church, his childhood parish in Yonkers. Meanwhile in England, condolences from fans all over the world poured into The Daily Echo Bournemouth, the newspaper for the area where Cronin founded the Monkey World Ape Rescue Centre.

The Yonkers native graduated from St. Denis School and Lincoln High School before embarking on his quest to open his own zoo and rescue abused monkeys and apes all



Alison and husband Jim Cronin, operators of Monkey World ape-rescue center in Bournemouth, United Kingdom. (Photo by Barry Gomer)

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over the world. He and his wife Alison ran Monkey World on 65 acres in southern England, where more than 160 rescued primates of 16 different species now make their home.

The Cronins traveled all over the world, investigating reports of animal cruelty and smuggling. Together, they rescued orangutans forced to perform in boxing rings in Thailand, chimpanzees used as tourist props on Mexican beaches, and dozens of other abused primates. Cronin lived in England for the past two decades.

At today's memorial service, his brother John Cronin of Cold Spring, shared simple memories of the man who had received the honor of Member of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth II for Services to Animal Welfare.

"Monkey World started out as a small refuge with a handful of monkeys and a couple of kids' rides, and Jim had the determination, imagination and loyalty to make it something wonderful," he said.

Television viewers around the world got to know Cronin through the "Monkey Business" series on the Animal Planet channel, which documented the Cronins' rescue missions and undercover investigations throughout Europe and Asia for the past 10 years. New episodes are scheduled to air in the United States this fall.

Monsignor John Gallagher, who has known the Cronin family for decades, elicited some chuckles through the tears at the service.

"If Jim only knew how many monkeys come into St. Paul's Church on a regular basis," he said.



Cronin opened Monkey World with a loan from the British government in 1987, as a refuge for abused Spanish Beach chimpanzees. In addition to the colonies of woolly monkeys, gibbons and orangutans, the center also offers a play area for children and theme park amenities like a café, a gift shop, and picnic tables. More than 500,000 people visit the park each year, funding its international rescue mission, Alison Cronin said.

Cronin's widow plans to fly back to England with his ashes tomorrow.

"I've promised Jim that I'll continue his legacy," she said, standing outside St. Paul the Apostle Church this morning. "Jim was an inspiration to everyone who knew him; he was so passionate everything he did."

Cronin is survived by his wife, Alison; his daughter Eleanor; his mother, Margaret of Yonkers; his brother John of Cold Spring; and his sister, Deborah Nunez of Yonkers.

Donations in Cronin's memory can be made at www.monkeyworld.org.

Staff writer Rob Ryser contributed information for this report.

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