UO professor emeritus donates $1,000 to Goodall

Concerned with the fate of primates, Dr. Paul Simonds supports the conservationist's efforts

By David Ryan
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When Jane Goodall came to the Hult Center Thursday night, a 65-year-old primatologist entered her dressing room to pay his respects — literally.

Dr. Paul Simonds, a University professor emeritus of anthropology, gave Goodall a check for $1,000 out of his own pocket. This is the second time he has donated $1,000 to Goodall.

"I came to the conclusion that I'm giving money to her conservation efforts above anything else," Simonds said.

That "above anything else" is in reference to Goodall's studies of chimpanzees and the patience that such a study required.

"It's one of the most complete studies in chimpanzee behavior," Simonds said. "Certainly her original contribution has been the intensity and duration of her study. As far as I could see, she had to go on and on day after day."

Before Goodall's study of African chimpanzees, Simonds said anthropologists had little idea about their behavior. It was a British anthropologist named Lewis Leaky who first conceived the idea that primates should be studied to find similarities humans. Then to determine which traits were exclusively human and which traits came from ape ancestry.

Leaky made it possible for Goodall to study chimpanzees and for Diane Fossey, portrayed in the movie "Gorillas in the Mist," to study gorilla behavior.

Simonds and Goodall led parallel careers for a time. Goodall started her chimpanzee study in 1960, while Simonds started his study of Indian Bonnet-Macaque monkeys one year later.

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Like Goodall, Simonds observed primates with striking human-like qualities. One female bonnet monkey named Trixie changed his way of thinking about the supposed dominance of males in the wild.

"That first group I watched there was this middle-aged female who was a political genius who ran the whole group," Simonds said. "She could manipulate those males. She influenced me more than any other."

Simonds left his study one year to start teaching. Today Simonds said the area where Trixie led her group is gone.

"There's a superhighway where my monkeys were," he said.

Simonds is concerned about environmental conservation, noting the skyrocketing population of India and the disappearance of many Oregon forests, but he admits he is not as optimistic as Goodall.

"This is one of the reasons I want to support her," he said.