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Founders of the African Conservancy

Corinne Waldenmayer, Co-founder and President

“After 18 years working in the high-technology industry, I wanted my work, and my life, to be about more than corporate profits,” says Corinne Waldenmayer, African Conservancy co-founder and president. “By the end of 1999, the urge to be useful at the global level had grown so powerful that I could no longer ignore it,” she explains. So when her Boston-based employer offered her a vice-presidency, she turned down the promotion, resigned her post as Director of Professional Services, and went home to Africa.

Born in Algiers and raised in Madagascar, Waldenmayer hadn’t had the opportunity to visit the continent of her childhood since she’d left it as a teenager. Even after such long absence, it only took a couple of visits for her to feel a very strong connection to Africa, and to be inspired by its people, wildlife and environments. “Living in the U.S., and working in corporate high-tech as I had, I was very well placed to recognize that in Africa one could find the beauty and spirituality our society is missing. I knew then that I needed to do something to protect this most extraordinary place,” says Waldenmayer.

Waldenmayer left Africa in the mid-sixties to finish her secondary education in Paris. Graduating as a linguist –she speaks five languages-- she pursued a first career in the travel industry before enrolling at the University of Miami to pursue a degree in Computer Science and Electrical Engineering. “The 90’s were years of extraordinary technological expansion,” says Waldenmayer. “By the end of the decade, everyone raved about increased productivity but no one wanted to stop long enough to contemplate what was happening to us as a society. In those years, I, and everyone else involved in technology, or maybe everyone in corporate America, made a lot of money, but we literally lived in airports, rental cars, and hotel beds. I don’t know anyone who worked less than 70 hours a week,” Waldenmayer remembers.

There is no doubt in her mind that it is the intensity with which corporate profits were pursued that brought her to ponder what she really wanted to do with her life. “There comes a point, I think, where money is no longer worth the sacrifices we make, not just as individuals but as a society, as humans. There comes a point where we owe it to ourselves, our families, our neighbors and our friends, and all our fellow human beings to ask whether we are contributing in a meaningful way, and at the level at which we are privileged to be able to contribute. I came to that point, and the African Conservancy became my answer.”

So in 2000, Waldenmayer co-founded the African Conservancy with her husband, Norbert Waldenmayer. She rallied around her a small group of environmentally conscious friends, and together, they defined the organization’s mission: to preserve Africa’s last remaining wilderness for the benefit of current and future local, regional and global stakeholders. This, they would accomplish by protecting and re-habilitating habitats and wildlife; educating locals about their



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environment and its sustainability; and providing socio-economic improvements and alternatives to humans living in and around the African wilderness.

Since then, Waldenmayer has been working tirelessly to make her dream a reality. She spends about a third of her time in Lusaka, Zambia where the African Conservancy has its African headquarters. The rest of the time, Waldenmayer runs the organization from its offices in Vista, California, where she also lives with her husband Norbert, their three dogs, and her cat, Lion.

Norbert Waldenmayer, Co-Founder and Chairman

Also an expatriate, Norbert Waldenmayer left his native Germany at the age of five to grow up in the San Fernando Valley, a suburb of Los Angeles, CA. With an advanced degree in development and city planning and management, Norbert is a visionary who has spent the best part of his professional life re-developing blighted city areas, and developing rural and suburban areas in an eco-friendly fashion. A lover of animals and open spaces and a champion of the underprivileged, Norbert lost his heart to Africa the first time he set foot on the continent. As the African Conservancy chairman and founder, he is determined to apply his very significant resources to its preservation and enhancement.