

93-year-old American woman donates \$22 mn to Cologne Zoo

September 1 2017



Snow leopard mother Siri stands next to her male cub Barid on August 13, 2015 at the zoo in Cologne, western Germany

A 93-year-old widow from the United States has donated \$22 million to the zoo in Cologne, Germany, saying she wanted to give back to the city where she and her husband met during World War II, German media reported Friday.

"We never forgot Cologne," Elizabeth Reichert told the Koelner Stadt-Anzeiger newspaper by phone from her home in Philadelphia.

She said she and her Jewish husband Arnulf Reichert both grew up in the western German city. They met in 1944, she recalled, when Arnulf lived in hiding to avoid being discovered by the Nazis.

They married a year after the war ended and briefly moved to Israel before settling in the US, where they lived the American dream and made their fortune.

Reichert said she worked as a hairdresser, while her husband took a job for a wholesaler selling pets and pet supplies, before setting up his own business and making millions.

Shortly before her husband died in 1998, the childless couple agreed to bequeath their [money](#) to the Cologne Zoo after their deaths.

"When you start thinking about who you want to leave your money to, memories play a big role. With the zoo, the money is well spent," Reichert said.

The couple had already shown their affection for the zoo in 1954, when they gifted a soft-shell turtle.

The considerably larger donation this time will come into effect after Reichert's death, when a foundation named after her husband will provide the zoo with an annual payment.

The zoo's director, Christopher Landsberg, said he was taken aback when he learned of the windfall from across the pond.

"I nearly fell off my chair," he told the DPA news agency.

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Citation: 93-year-old American woman donates \$22 mn to Cologne Zoo (2017, September 1)
retrieved 16 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-09-year-old-american-woman-donates-mn.html>

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