

NATIONAL PRESS CLUB NEWSMAKER LUNCHEON WITH TERRI AND BINDI IRWIN,
WIFE AND
DAUGHTER OF THE LATE STEVE IRWIN, HOST OF "THE CROCODILE HUNTER"

MODERATOR: JERRY ZREMSKI, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB

LOCATION: THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB, WASHINGTON, D.C.

TIME: 2:00 P.M. EDT

DATE: FRIDAY, JANUARY 19, 2007

(C) COPYRIGHT 2005, FEDERAL NEWS SERVICE, INC., 1000 VERMONT AVE.
NW; 5TH FLOOR; WASHINGTON, DC - 20005, USA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. ANY
REPRODUCTION, REDISTRIBUTION OR RETRANSMISSION IS EXPRESSLY
PROHIBITED.

UNAUTHORIZED REPRODUCTION, REDISTRIBUTION OR RETRANSMISSION
CONSTITUTES A MISAPPROPRIATION UNDER APPLICABLE UNFAIR COMPETITION
LAW, AND FEDERAL NEWS SERVICE, INC. RESERVES THE RIGHT TO PURSUE ALL
REMEDIES AVAILABLE TO IT IN RESPECT TO SUCH MISAPPROPRIATION.

FEDERAL NEWS SERVICE, INC. IS A PRIVATE FIRM AND IS NOT
AFFILIATED WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. NO COPYRIGHT IS CLAIMED AS TO
ANY PART OF THE ORIGINAL WORK PREPARED BY A UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT
OFFICER OR EMPLOYEE AS PART OF THAT PERSON'S OFFICIAL DUTIES.

FOR INFORMATION ON SUBSCRIBING TO FNS, PLEASE CALL JACK GRAEME
AT 202-347-1400.

MR. ZREMSKI: Good afternoon, and welcome to the National Press
Club for our luncheon speech today by Terri and Bindi Irwin. My name
is Jerry Zremski, and I'm the president of the National Press Club,
and the Washington Bureau chief for the Buffalo News.

I'd like to welcome club members and their guests in the audience
today, as well as our television audience on C-SPAN.

We're looking forward to today's speech, and afterwards, I will
ask as many questions from the audience as time permits. Please
withhold your applause during the speech so that we have time for as
many questions as possible. For our broadcast audience, I'd like to
explain that if you hear applause, it may be from the guests and
members who attend our luncheons, and not necessarily from the members
of the working press.

Before I move any further, I just wanted to say one other thing:
For many years now a young looking man has been wandering around our
luncheons serving us very, very well. And that young man is now 60
years old and today's his birthday. He's been with the Press Club
nearly 40 years. So happy birthday to Andrew Price (sp). (Applause.)

Now I'd like to introduce our head table guests and ask them to

stand briefly when their names are called. Please withhold your applause until the end.

Starting at my left, Ari Meltzer from ABC; Laura Robinson (sp) from CBN; Marylou Donahue, the producer of Artistically Speaking; Judy Bailey, the Irwin's producer; Clark Bunting from Discovery; Chelsea Martin from the Australian embassy; John Stainton, the Irwin's manager. Skipping over the podium here we have Melissa Charbonneau of CBN News and the vice chair of our Speakers Committee, and the member of the committee who organized today's lunch. Skipping our speakers for a moment, we have Rick Dunham from BusinessWeek and former National Press Club president; Alison Smith, Washington television correspondent for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation; Jane Podesta from People Magazine; Meredith Stanton from the Magazine Group; and Geoff Elliott from The Australian. (Applause.)

Today you will meet possibly the youngest speaker ever at the National Press Club. Bindi Irwin is the 8-year-old Australian girl who won the hearts of millions worldwide with her tribute at the memorial service of her late father, Steve Irwin. Our second special guest is Bindi's mother, Terri Irwin. You recognize her as co-host, along with Steve, on the internationally acclaimed television series "The Crocodile Hunter" and "Croc Diaries."

Terri and Bindi come to us just five months after Steve's accidental death while filming off the Great Barrier Reef. The loss is shared by millions of Steve's fans around the world who knew and loved him. As the Australian newspaper reported, when Steve Irwin died, the world stopped to mourn.

Steve's true love was conservation. Irwin told Larry King that that's why he was put on the earth -- to try and help conserve our trees, our wilderness, our oceans and our wildlife. That's why I'm here. Steve's legacy lives on with his wife and daughter. Terri and Bindi join us in the midst of a 10-day whirlwind tour of the U.S., part of Tourism Australia's "G'Day USA Week" to promote Australian tourism.

Steve met his American-born wife, Terri Raines, 15 years ago. They spent their honeymoon in the tropics of north Queensland filming the first episode of their television series. Terri has been recognized for her service to wildlife conservation and her charity work includes sending school equipment to the children of East Timor and providing humanitarian assistance to tsunami victims in Indonesia.

But it may be 8-year-old Bindi who becomes the new face of her father's wildlife crusade. The little girl whose favorite animals are crocodiles and snakes is making her first U.S. appearances in sold-out concerts this month. She'll be teaming with the Australian children's hit "The Wiggles" and promoting Australia.

In the summer, Discovery Kids Network will premier Bindi's 26-part series called "Bindi the Jungle Girl." Terri told USA Today that Bindi has that X factor like Steve did -- an uncanny connection with wildlife that's beautiful to watch and instills a real empathy with all of us for just how special the animal kingdom is.

Bindi and Terri are keeping a hectic schedule here in the states. They're attending star-studded events in Los Angeles, along with Aussie movie star, Russell Crowe, and appearing live on "The Tonight Show", "Ellen DeGeneres", "Larry King Live" and "Late Night with David Letterman." And tomorrow at 2:00 p.m. there will be a family concert in the New York City Center. As the Sydney Morning Herald noted, not even Prime Minister John Howard gets this much exposure when he visits the United States. (Laughter.)

So now, appearing in our nation's capital for this exclusive engagement at the National Press Club, help me welcome Terri and Bindi Irwin. (Applause.)

MS. T. IRWIN: G'day. That's about the only Australian word I do really well.

Well, I am Terri Irwin and I'm deeply honored to be invited here today to address the National Press Club and give you a firsthand glimpse into what life with Steve Irwin was really like, and to tell you something about what he stood for.

My life with Steve was a constant adventure. It was doing everything right now, right then, and doing things that I never thought I would ever be able to do -- pushing my own limits to the extreme and entering a new world of excitement and discovery every day. He brought this appreciation of everything that was larger than life into my world.

I was born here in the United States in Eugene, Oregon. And I grew up with an instilled passion to save wildlife, which is nurtured by my father, Clarence Raines. In 1991 I was fortunate enough to visit Australia for a holiday and one day decided to call into a small wildlife park I'd seen called The Queensland Reptile and Fauna Park. That visit was to change my life forever.

As destiny had it, the Irwin family's only son, Steve, was doing the crocodile demonstration that day, and I took the opportunity of staying back to meet and talk with him about wildlife after he was done with his show. That was the beginning of a whirlwind romance and incredible adventure -- an adventure that would take us to every corner of the globe and bring thousands of animals into the living rooms of families across America and around the world -- and a romance that would open up a whole new dimension to our lives with two wonderful children: Bindi and Robert.

For me, from the beginning, it was to be a challenge of learning.

Learning how to break from a loving family and close friends here in the United States, and the challenge of moving my whole life and future to a small country town called Beerwah in Queensland, Australia. It was about learning how to understand the Aussie slang like "Goodonyamate!" I've got what on me? (Laughter.) You know, and "'Ows it going?" And how to embrace the warmth and friendliness of the Australian people.

It was also about learning how to handle reptiles -- huge

crocodiles and venomous snakes -- for the very first time in my life, and the challenge of overcoming my fear. But above all, it was learning about an incredible dedicated man that was my new husband, who was still to become "The Crocodile Hunter."

The first couple of years were just unforgettable. Steve wanted me to be a part of everything he did, from catching fierce snakes -- the world's most venomous snakes -- on the black-soil plains of the Outback, to catching rogue crocodiles in the mosquito-infested tropical rivers of northern Queensland.

The fact that I was a woman was never an issue to Steve. He gave me the ultimate pride of position at his side as his best mate. It was my honor to be there, hanging onto the other side of a thrashing crocodile, or holding the bag for a huge whipping snake. You know, it didn't matter whether it was in the heat or the rain or the mud, I'm embraced the journey wholeheartedly.

As a dad, he was the best. I just need to whack myself with this really quick. (Laughter.) This is why you keep this up here, don't you Jerry? For the emotional parts. (Laughter.) Okay. I'm fine now.

If he was to be remembered for one thing, and one thing only, then it should be that he was the best dad. When Bindi was born, the world for Steve as he knew it suddenly changed and it was never to be the same again. And when Robert was born, it got even better. His focus expanded to embrace his children completely. He was never happier than when he was around them.

He wanted Bindi and Robert to travel everywhere with us. He involved us in everything that he did, shared all of our experiences together. We took them everywhere. Bindi and Robert have grown up in

a world quite different to most families. They live in the middle of a zoo. We wake in the morning to the sounds of tigers roaring, elephants trumpeting, lemurs screaming, crocodiles roaring, parrots squawking, kookaburras kooking -- do they kook? I'm not sure. Dingoes howling -- I live in a great place.

You know, we've got wildlife all around us and the children have been blessed with an upbringing that has given them a hands-on experiences with all sorts of animals. Bindi has been filming with us since she was born -- there went any shred of dignity I might have left -- and watched and learn from her daddy every day. (Laughter.)

She's following in his footsteps, just like Steve has followed in his dad's footsteps. And I think it's a tremendous gift that we are able to nurture what we see our children wanting to do, and be able to help them do it.

Bindi loves to sing and dance and tell the world about her wildlife. She's a natural role model for a society that has far too few standouts that set an example worthy of following. Her daddy taught her to love all wildlife, even the ones that are the apex predators like sharks, snakes and crocodiles! And I have to tell you, I was the woman of routine in our family. I was the one who said,

brush your teeth. Be to bed by 8:00 and have a bath -- or as we say in Australia, "a tub."

Steve was the exciting one, the unpredictable one. Steve's the one who would show up in the morning on the motorbike for a tour of the zoo with the kids, and don't worry if you didn't brush you teeth. Let's just go! I never knew when an ice cream cone might directly follow breakfast, and sometimes we'd just pack up and go to the beach for no apparent reason. You know, I miss that spontaneity and enthusiasm, but I learned a lot from it. And hopefully, I can learn that too. And occasionally, just occasionally, it's okay to eat dessert first. (Laughter.)

You know, Steve never feared any animal. He just had the utmost concern for its well-being, but he also held a deep concern for human life and was deeply affected by the tragic events that have unfolded around the world since 9/11. His kinship and bond with America and Americans was never more evident to me than the day of that tragedy, when his efforts to fly to New York and help the rescue mission were thwarted by distance. So we gathered up toys and gifts and sent them off to the families of the FBI teams that were working on finding the perpetrators. He wanted their families to know that someone outside the U.S. cared and respected the work they were doing.

That's what Steve was really like behind the scenes. He never asked for acknowledgement or acclaim. There was this one time when he was filming on a boat in the Sea of Cortez on the Baja Peninsula. He heard two divers had gone missing in the ocean not far north of his location. He immediately abandoned his shoot to divert his energy and entire resources to search for them. He was determined to find them, and he did. Unfortunately, one of the divers had already died, but Steve found the remaining man, clinging precariously to a rock, and saved his life.

He would constantly put his life on the line to save others. He was the only man I know who could actually survive if you dropped him in the middle of the Outback with absolutely nothing at all. He was an expert bushman in every sense of the word.

You may also be surprised to learn just how disciplined Steve was. He was never a great sleeper. He would always wake early, sometimes around 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning, and he would slip into his office and write. He'd write up his latest research, write down his ideas and vision for the future of the zoo, study notes on wildlife documentaries he was filming or plan how to do something better for animals. And today I'm very blessed, because I have all the documentation, all of his plans, all of his ideas for the future.

So I'm really lucky to have a direction for where Australia Zoo is headed, where our filming is headed, what research projects were most important to him. And I'm very proud to say that on every single research project, he came away with more questions than he had when he started the project.

He was meticulous in everything he did. He had a drive and passion to do everything straight away. Imagine being a

procrastinator living with that! (Laughter.) He could never wait until tomorrow. I think that's one of the greatest gifts that I learned from him: take the moment to experience it now. His dedication and enthusiasm for animals and conservation was contagious. He rubbed off on the world, and the world heeded his message.

This Sunday night, January 21st at 8:00 p.m. on Animal Planet, and simultaneously broadcast on Discovery Channel, you can see the documentary that Steve was making when he had his tragic accident, "Ocean's Deadliest." This film is a testament to the strong environmental message that Steve was able to deliver amongst some of the most action packed and breathtaking experience. It is a fitting statement to his life's work, and successfully leaves a chilling message for all of us that time is running out for the ocean's wildlife.

There is a sequence in the film that he did in the water with a huge and highly venomous Stoke's sea snake, which is probably one of his finest pieces to camera -- considering that he was in the water free-handling the reptile in its own territory. And I enjoy his description, because he said, "Check it out! It's as thick as me arm! No, it's as thick as me leg!" -- which is probably why I married him -- I just found a guy with bigger thighs than mine. (Laughter.) That encounter was to be his very last segment for the documentary, but compelling evidence of his passion and enthusiasm right to the end.

It will be followed at 9:30 by a moving tribute called "Crikey, What an Adventure!" and which features insights into Steve's life through the eyes of his family and friends. Plus -- and this is really cool -- a recently uncovered interview with Steve himself, filmed some six years ago, which has been lost in the archives until now and has never been broadcast before. And it's amazing, because it's as if Steve is part of the interview.

It's really well done.

I hope if you get to see these special programs that you will all be inspired enough to spread Steve's message to the world through your news avenues, and keep a constant vigil to make sure we heed the warning before it's too late.

All of us in this room have a duty to show those we inform or entertain to keep wildlife and the environment in the forefront of everyone's mind to ensure our children inherit a healthy planet with healthy wildlife and healthy wilderness. And it is an important message. It won't be until we've lost it that we realize how intrinsically entwined we are with wildlife and wild places. We are very dependent on the oceans to feed us. We're dependent on clean air and clean water and it's an issue that was very important to Steve.

Steve's sole mission in life was to bring awareness to wildlife conservation and the critical need for their habitat protection. It's predicted that our ocean's fisheries may collapse by the middle of this century. It is believed by many biologists that we are in the throes of a mass extinction -- that up to one-fifth of all animal species could disappear within the next 30 years. Just think about.

We could lose precious wildlife like polar bears, tigers, hippos, some species of sharks, orangutans and gorillas in our own lifetime. This was one of Steve's greatest concerns. We are all animals, and Steve believed by using his gift with wildlife he could bring awareness to the world through the eyes of a television camera. Putting apex predators like crocodiles, sharks and reptiles at the forefront of everyone's attention, he succeeded. Whenever you think of a crocodile or alligator you will always remember Steve Irwin -- "What a little beauty!" -- I had to throw that in. He made the world see snakes and lizards in a different light. He made people want to help him save the world's most feared and unlovable species. He made wildlife fun and exciting for kids. He was pretty much just a big kid himself, which is why he could relate to them so well. Quit nodding; have some respect. (Laughter, laughs.)

He made the world a better place for them and for us. He believed that sustainable use, like farming of exotic animals for their byproducts of meat and skin, was wrong. He would query how killing wildlife was protecting wildlife, and how legitimizing farming of vulnerable species such as crocodiles gave the cloak of protection to the illegal trade of wildlife, which is probably one of the most devastating threats to all endangered animals.

He bought large tracts of land in the middle of massive land-clearing areas to provide protective wildlife sanctuaries and give animals a safe home. He fostered endangered species breeding programs and created the Australian Wildlife Hospital at Australia Zoo to help injured animals such as koalas and kangaroos hit by cars, attacked by domestic pets or hurt through land clearing get back into the wild. He put his money where his mouth was, and in only two short years the hospital is now caring for 5,000 animals a year, with expansion plans in place to bring that number to 10,000 within the next year or so -- and, remarkably, will probably be the largest wildlife rehabilitation facility around. It's pretty amazing.

He set up a charity foundation called Wildlife Warriors Worldwide to help carry on his work on a global scale. It will expand the Australian Wildlife Hospital this year, and Wildlife Warriors is now assisting tiger conservation projects in India, Sumatra and Bhutan, and with Asian elephants in Cambodia, as well as assisting in the establishment of the Cambodia Wildlife Hospital.

You know, it's exciting work because we're there actually doing it. We're not having a bunch of business lunches and group hugs. We're not spending our money on workshops and ideas. And I have to tell you one thing we're doing which is exciting -- it's very simple and cost-effective. We go to Cambodia and we plant chili peppers. So if you've got a crop and you have chili peppers about six, eight, 10 feet deep all the way around your crop, the elephants come, they get a big bite, and guess what -- elephants don't like the chilis. (Laughter.) They go, "Blech!" and then they leave and the crops are protected.

We're also doing something as simple as building towers. The towers are for fire watch and elephant watch, and when they hear an elephant coming, they can all go out in the village and ask the

elephant to please go away by banging on drums and letting off fireworks. It's a fantastic way that's not hurting elephants and protecting people's livelihoods.

We also support cheetah conservation in South Africa, and Steve established an international crocodile rescue unit to save crocodilians around the world. And it is amazing. From India to Cancun, Mexico, and all points in between, we've done some terribly exciting crocodile rescue work and education programs -- teaching people management strategies for dealing with these amazing apex predators.

All this from the aspirations of one man -- it will take millions of us to carry on his mission.

Probably his biggest and most tangible achievement was his beloved Australia Zoo, a wildlife park that he grew from his mom and dad's original four acres to a massive 80 acres heading into a future covering some 500 acres.

When I first met Steve as an innocent tourist, I must tell you, I was quite impressed when I went into the zoo and met both the staff. (Laughter.) Today there's 491 of us running a fantastic zoological facility, and we're very proud. And I always appreciated Steve's foresight. He said we needed to protect habitat; we needed to breed endangered species; and we needed to care for the individual animals. And he never lost sight of any of those. And sometimes we get a little bit too focused on one individual approach, but Steve's vision and foresight was second to none.

He built a facility where people could come from all over the world to experience wildlife firsthand, to see it, to smell it, to feel it, and -- if you're brave enough -- to kiss it. He wanted to put animals into people's hearts so they would want to save them forever, and by giving visitors such a personal, hands-on experience, he was creating a bond between them and wildlife that may eventually help save their kind.

He loved Australia. He loved everything about it. He was probably the most fair dinkum Aussie bloke I ever met. He loved the aboriginal culture, the unique animals, the Outback, the reef, and the honest, down-to-earth people who opened their hearts to him in his final hour. He personified Australia for the world. He gave it an image of fun and adventure. He stood out from the crowd as large as the Sydney Harbour Bridge and cast a shadow almost as tall.

Last week, the Australian government bestowed upon me the honor of being an Australian tourism ambassador, which I was so proud to accept. It is a role that Steve did unofficially so well for so long, and one that I will now take on with all my heart and soul. After all, I first went to Australia as a tourist, and I fell in love with the land, its people and its culture. Even though I'm an American, I have the red dust of the Outback in my veins.

Steve was first introduced to Americans by way of a fledgling cable channel called Animal Planet in 1996. That association saw The Crocodile Hunter and Animal Planet grow together over the next 10

years, making it the fastest growing cable network in television history, and making The Crocodile Hunter and Steve Irwin a household name right across this country and around the world. Steve's wildlife adventures helped take the channel from a few hundred thousand subscribers at the startup to a nearly 90 million today.

I'm pleased to tell you here today that the close association between the Irwin family and our Discovery family will continue well into the future with Discovery Kids, The Travel Channel, Discovery Channel, and of course, Steve's television home, Animal Planet.

Steve is alive in my heart and my mind and my soul, and I hope he will live in your hearts, too, so you can channel his vision and ideals to your audiences from our meeting here today and help me to carry on the critical work that Steve had just begun.

Thank you. (Applause.)

Now just in case you get emotional, I have this. (Laughter.)

MS. B. IRWIN: Yes. (Laughter.

)

MS. T. IRWIN: There you go, baby. Good girl.

MS. B. IRWIN: Thank you.

G'day. I'm Bindi Irwin.

My daddy had a special bond with wildlife. He taught me all about animals -- never to hurt or fear them. They are all nature's creatures from ants to sharks, and they are all individuals, just like me, and we need to keep them safe.

It's very sad, but in my lifetime, a lot of wildlife could disappear. We could lose tigers and gorillas, and even my favorite koalas could become extinct. We need to help my daddy's work and make this world a safer place for animals.

He made people love and respect crocodiles and snakes and sharks. He told everyone how they were apex predators and were an important part to all the animal kingdom.

I don't want to grow up in a world without wildlife. That's why we must do something now to help save their homes. We have to stop cutting down forests and polluting our oceans and rivers and buying wildlife products. These are just some of the important things everyone can do. My daddy was a wildlife warrior, and I'm going to continue his work for him. I want to become a wildlife warrior just like he was.

Thank you for allowing me to tell you about my daddy's important work here today. I miss him very much. Thank you, and show your Wildlife Warriors wristbands. I know Daddy's watching. (Laughter, applause.)

MR. ZREMSKI: Now Bindi, I hope you can stay with us up here for just a minute or two, because there's --

MS. B. IRWIN: Cool.

MR. ZREMSKI: -- this is also probably the youngest audience we've had at a National Press Club luncheon, and there's a lot of kids out there that have got some questions for you.

MS. B. IRWIN: Yeah. Oh, that's awesome.

MR. ZREMSKI: Isn't it, though? (Laughter.)

MS. B. IRWIN: Yeah.

MR. ZREMSKI: Now Erin Cooper tells us that her favorite animal in the world is a pig. You like crocodiles and snakes, right?

MS. B. IRWIN: Yes, love crocodiles and snakes.

MR. ZREMSKI: Tell us why.

MS. B. IRWIN: I love them because they're so sweet and gentle. Some people -- they would say they're not very sweet and gentle. (Laughter.) They're such loving, caring sorts of animals. Crocodiles are great mothers, and snakes -- they're just gorgeous. (Laughter.) So I love them both very much.

MR. ZREMSKI: That's great. That's great. Margaret Hudak (sp) asks, "Where do you go to school, Bindi?"

MS. B. IRWIN: Where do I go to school? I actually go to home school at the zoo, which is really nice because we can just pack up our -- my teacher and just go on a trip and she can teach me while we're going on our trip.

MR. ZREMSKI: Oh, great.

MS. B. IRWIN: Yeah.

MR. ZREMSKI: So a lot of biology in your curriculum, right?

MS. B. IRWIN: Yes. Yeah.

MR. ZREMSKI: Okay. Bindi, what do you enjoy most out of all you do?

MS. B. IRWIN: What do I enjoy most out of all I do? I really enjoy working with wildlife and helping to save them because that's just really nice. It's part of me. I really want to save the wildlife.

MR. ZREMSKI: Oh, that's wonderful. Wow.

Now how do you handle snakes and crocodiles at such a young age? Aren't you a little bit scared?

MS. B. IRWIN: No, not really. I know that nobody will let anything really bad happen to me. Like my dad, he was always there to help me, and I trusted him and I knew that nothing would happen when I'm around him. And now my mum's around me, so it's really easy when my mum's with me.

MR. ZREMSKI: Oh, that's good. That's good. Frankie DeLula (sp) I believe, who's 8 years old, says that his goal one day is to work for the Australia Zoo. What's your advice for him?

MS. B. IRWIN: Oh! I would say that always know when you work at Australia Zoo, you have to have a passion for wildlife and love them, and of course we'll take you in if you love wildlife -- (laughter) -- and if you're a wildlife warrior!

MR. ZREMSKI: All right. Okay. Well that's some good advice for Frankie, I think.

Bindi, tell us what you want people to think when they walk away from your shows and performances.

MS. B. IRWIN: I want people to think that they love wildlife and they want to help. And I really want to get the message out that all the wildlife is just so important to our ecosystem, our world. We need -- we need wildlife to survive, really.

MR. ZREMSKI: And what do you want to do when you grow up?

MS. B. IRWIN: When I grow up I want to be just like my daddy -- just like my daddy.

MR. ZREMSKI: That's great. Can you just tell us a little about what you learned from your daddy?

MS. B. IRWIN: I really learned that -- like, about animals, like how with snakes, look but don't touch. And like with crocodiles, how they're sweet, gentle, loving mothers. And with all of the animals he taught me just a little bit about each and every one as I grew up.

MR. ZREMSKI: Oh, that's great.

MS. B. IRWIN: Yeah.

MR. ZREMSKI: Well, thank you very much, Bindi.

MS. B. IRWIN: Thank you!

MR. ZREMSKI: Now we've got a whole bunch of questions for your mom here.

MS. B. IRWIN: Awesome! Thank you very much. Thank you!
(Applause.)

MR. ZREMSKI: All right. We might have one more question for you at the end.

MS. B. IRWIN: Awesome. Thank you.

MR. ZREMSKI: Okay. Many questions for you as well. First of all, how important is it for you to remain in Australia and in close proximity to the zoo? Have you thought about moving back to America?

MS. T. IRWIN: Yeah, I think living in Australia is tremendously important because of all that Steve and I worked for for the last 14 years. Also it's very special to live in Australia. It's such a beautiful country.

I mean, you have to keep in mind, this is a nation the size of the continental United States with 20 million people in it. It's a place that it beautiful and achingly remote, and yet still incredibly safe for children. At home I don't lock my front door. It's a lovely place to live and a terrific place for my kids.

It's also got some of the most interesting and endangered wildlife on the face of the earth. We have northern hairy-nosed wombats. My New Year's resolution is to help the northern hairy-nosed wombats. So this may be the first time you've ever heard of them, but there's about 120 left; 30 of those are female. They're probably some of the most endangered mammals on the face of the earth. I feel compelled to finish what Steve has started. I don't think I'll be able to finish it in my lifetime, but certainly Bindi will give it a go, and so will little Robert.

I also feel a real point of pride being an American living in Australia, because I can tell people just how special our country is. I first went there, after all, as a tourist, so I know firsthand what it's like to fall in love with the country. And I was really lucky afterwards to meet the man. So all you single women out there, you might want to go to Beerwonk (sp). (Laughter.)

We've got a fantastic zoological facility where Steve's ethics never wavered. Our entire life together, all money that we earned from anything Crocodile Hunter -- the television shows, the movie, the merchandise -- all went back into our conservation work. We've put about \$40 million into Australia Zoo. We've got 84,000 acres of conservation property. We have a rehabilitation hospital that's top in the world, and we are very blessed to have projects with research throughout our environment.

We're going to definitely need to do a lot of work to keep up with Steve, but I won't be leaving Australia to accomplish that.

MR. ZREMSKI: Okay.

MS. T. IRWIN: Thank you.

MR. ZREMSKI: Thanks.

We have a question here about our own local zoo and how it compares to the Australia Zoo -- (laughter) -- in terms of specimens of the animals and species, et cetera, and amenities.

MS. T. IRWIN: Sure. Well, you know, there's a lot of really wonderful zoological facilities throughout the world, and I was

speaking earlier with someone about -- the last time I was at the National Zoo, they have the Indian rhinos, which are those big plated rhinoceros. They look like dinosaurs. They're really cool. And to be able to help an endangered species like that is such a point of pride that you should all have.

I think that it's a little bit of a different world in Australia, just because there are less people. But after 300 million Americans visit, there will probably be more of an influx. But at Australia Zoo I have the opportunity to get everything that won't kill and eat you out of the enclosures. I mean to tell you, although we keep them on leashes, we walk the tigers, you can have your photo with a cheetah, you can hold a snake, you can smell that eucalyptus smell on the koala, you can kiss a camel on the lips, hand feed an elephant.

The idea to get animals into your heart is to experience them, and Steve did exactly that with his filming. You never felt that you were watching some guy on an adventure. You felt you were with him, that he had taken you on that very special trip to experience that wildlife. Australia Zoo is very much like that. And I think zoos of the future continue to evolve, to become more hands-on. I really applaud that.

It's also important for the animals. If the animals will kill and eat you, we have specially trained people that we throw in with them because it's enriching. (Laughter.) It's a lot of fun for our tigers to jump in the water on top of the keepers and see what happens. It's also fun for the crocodiles to play "Kill the Keeper," although, to-date they never actually have won.

So these are the things that are important for the psychological well-being of animals as well as the physiological well-being of animals. And that's another consideration that I see zoos evolving to do. And also I see a more global reach with zoological facilities.

Be proud of your National Zoo and support it. And also support its efforts outside of the zoo and outside of the United States, because there are so many endangered species. If you start to think, "What can I do? I work so hard and I'm so busy," well, that's a good sign that you've probably got an income, and if you can't do anything directly, then you can always contribute to someone who is working to keep the world so special.

So congratulations for having such a terrific zoo here.

MR. ZREMSKI: One somewhat similar question, a Press Club member asks, "Will the Australia Zoo or the Irwins be able to have any of

Steve's ocean research included in the new Smithsonian Museum of Natural History's oceans exhibit, which is supposed to open in a year or two?"

MS. T. IRWIN: Well, this is the first I've heard that suggestion made. I think it's an excellent suggestion. I think Steve was really ahead of his time with a lot of his wildlife work and philosophies.

And only two weeks before we lost Steve, I was discussing with

him how someday -- I said, you know -- we were discussing croc research, and he has all these philosophies and ideas and just really spinning about croc management. And I said, "You know, Steve, someday, school kids are going to read about what you've discovered in a book, but it probably won't be until after you're gone."

And it was a bit eerie to reflect on that conversation. But I do think that he was very much ahead of his time, and the work that he did and the appreciation that he had of nature should certainly be preserved. And he didn't have more respect for any facility than the Smithsonian, so I think that would be tremendously honorable.

MR. ZREMSKI: Great. You talked about the decline of the world's wildlife. How concerned are you about global warming and how that might be contributing to that, and what should be done about it?

MS. T. IRWIN: Sure. Well, I think Steve would often talk about large issues with conservation and with humanity, and he would talk about how we don't want to be breathing oxygen in a little glass bubble and visiting a museum to see trees and not have, you know, drinking water that hasn't been manufactured. He was very adamant. And I thought, "Why are you rabbiting on about all that when we've got endangered species problems here?" But he had this incredible foresight that the smaller issues would directly affect these larger issues. And there are many ways individuals can help.

There's a sense of feeling that you have no control over the future, but you do. You have a lot of control by the way you vote, by how involved you get and by the support that you give to people in high places making important decisions. Every one of us has a voice, and it's easy to complain in private, but it's important to be proactive and get something done as publicly as possible. And that's why I appreciate this opportunity to say there's tremendous things that can be done. As an individual, simply not purchasing wildlife products is probably the single largest contribution you can make because once we stop eating them and wearing them, there will no longer be an illegal trade in wildlife, which is second only to the drug trade.

So there's huge issues here that we need to discuss, and I'm very proud to be working with Bindi to bring these to the forefront, much as Steve did. But every single person here has that responsibility. So thank you.

MR. ZREMSKI: Do you get the sense that there is progress being made on these fronts, that these issues were not talked about nearly as much a few years ago?

MS. T. IRWIN: Yes, I do feel that there is a tremendous change, that there is a sweeping movement throughout the world and a great awareness.

For example, I had the opportunity 12 years ago to start working with the Fijian crested iguanas, and it was really amazing to me to stay with some of the villagers on the remoter islands in Fiji, where they did not have word for conservation. So now we are evolving to teach peoples in all lands the importance of preserving wild places.

And for the beautiful, wonderful indigenous people, their lives are forever changed with one word: export. So now all of a sudden, what you needed to kill and consume for your village is something you can kill and consume for the world.

So things are changing with more awareness all around the world. And I'm very proud of that because as a child, I can remember I would turn on the television Sunday night to watch the documentary that was on once a week. And now we have channels completely dedicated to educating people about wildlife. And I think our future is our children. There is a lot of us old fuddy-duddy, stuck-in-our-ways people, but the kids are really starting to see the light, and that's where the future lies. And I do see a big difference.

MR. ZREMSKI: How do you explain Bindi's amazing ability to speak publicly with such confidence at such a young age?

MS. T. IRWIN: I don't know, maybe her perfect mother.
(Laughter.)

MR. ZREMSKI: Bindi, do you think that had anything to do with her, or was it something --

MS. T. IRWIN: Answer carefully. (Laughs, laughter.)

MS. B. IRWIN: (Laughs.) Okay.

MS. T. IRWIN: Hop up here and tell us why you're so at ease in front of people.

MS. B. IRWIN: I really think that I'm so at ease with people is because I've really grown up since I was like two weeks old, and done like TV shows with my mom and my dad. And I just think that like when you get up on stage and things, I don't really get stage fright because I've been around it so much that I'm really used to it. So --

MR. ZREMSKI: Oh, that's great. We can tell. (Laughter.)

MS. T. IRWIN: I love -- she did her first stage show outside of Australia Zoo's Crocoseum. And it was funny because the Crocoseum holds over 5,000 people and the stage show held about half that many people. But Bindi said she had a few butterflies; I think it was five to be exact. She counted them.

MS. B. IRWIN: Yes, five. (Laughter.)

MS. T. IRWIN: But once she got out on the stage, Bindi said to me, "It really felt like I belonged there, and I was home." So I think part of it is gift and part of it is just that familiarity. You know, Bindi's been around cameras and people and we would often have lunch in the croc enclosure during the show. So Bindi would be a little tiny 2-year-old girl and we're having a picnic while the croc show is going on over there, and it just became very normal for Bindi.

And I think, growing up in a zoo, I would be an irresponsible person if I didn't make her familiar with wildlife and to be able to understand people a little bit better. Steve always said he loved

crocodiles because they were very open and honest about wanting to kill and eat you -- (laughter) -- whereas sometimes people pretend to be your friend first. (Laughter.)

So Bindi has the wonderful gift of being able to talk to people and still be sensible and understand stranger danger and have that confidence and consideration of how to handle herself, which is the same as she is with wildlife. She loves crocodiles, but she doesn't run around hugging and kissing them, do you?

MS. B. IRWIN: No.

MS. T. IRWIN: Good girl. There was that one time, but we won't go into it. (Laughter.)

MR. ZREMSKI: Thank you very much, Bindi. We'll have another question for you in a few minutes. But we got --

MS. B. IRWIN: Thank you.

MR. ZREMSKI: -- sure. We got a bunch of questions for your mom. You know, obviously, we're going to get a lot of questions about Steve as well. And so I just had a couple about that. How is Steve's father, Bob Irwin, coping?

MS. T. IRWIN: Well, I think, in some ways, Bob is doing it the hardest because, of everyone in Steve's life, Bob knew him the longest, the entire 44 years. Bob had the opportunity to come with us on Steve's last research trip. We were on Cape York in Queensland and spent nearly five weeks doing fantastic research with crocodiles. We were putting satellite transmitter on them, which also had time depth recorders on them. We've learned so much about their homing instincts, about their overland travel, about how deep they can dive and how long they can stay submerged.

All this was important to help with the management of crocodiles and the protection of people. Bob was a big part of that, and I think it was particularly difficult for him after spending so much time in such close proximity on such a wonderful trip with his son. But I think he also treasures the fact that he had that terrific relationship, and not every father and son were blessed enough to have such a close and special relationship.

Now he's going to pass that all on to Bindi and Robert because I don't tie knots very good, and if you don't tie knots very good, you have all kinds of problems with crocodiles. So he'll be showing Bindi and Robert firsthand how to catch crocs, how to set up tents and tarps and traps. And Steve caught 49 crocodiles in three weeks only because he was catching so many crocodiles -- the scientists with him couldn't keep up with the apparatus to attach to them. We had to disarm traps because Steve was catching so many crocs.

So I think that wisdom that came from Bob and went to Steve is something that he's holding onto to pass on to our children. And I'm really glad.

MR. ZREMSKI: Another member of the audience asks, "What did you

love the most about Steve?"

MS. T. IRWIN: Well, there's a lot of children here, so -- (laughter) -- let's just say he was fun. (Laughter.) He was fun in so many ways and on so many levels.

You know, he had that spontaneity and enthusiasm and he was such a "do-it-now" man that he would -- he would drop everything for his kids. And if he felt like going bush, we'd pack the bags in an hour and be gone.

I remember him telling me one time -- luckily before the kids were born -- he tells me, "There's a whale been stranding in Tasmania. We've got to go see if we can help; we're leaving in an hour. We'll be gone in three weeks."

Gone for three weeks? I have a whole zoo I'm running and all these people I have to organize. And we packed in less than an hour and we were gone for three weeks. And it was a very important mission. But Steve had that real sense of urgency about him. I think with his sixth sense with wildlife -- I think he just had a sixth sense. And he always mentioned that he was in a hurry because he didn't feel he'd be here a long time. And I thought, "What a lesson for all of us that put things off for tomorrow."

I really appreciated learning that from him. And instead of just mourning my loss for Steve, he taught me to appreciate those that are still here, and I'm really thankful for that. And, you know, being fun is an art form and it takes practice. And I'd encourage all of you just to try.

I mean, for example, even his attire. He had the honor, one time, of presenting an award at the BAFTA Awards in England, and they said, "It's black tie," and Steve said, "I wear khaki." (Laughter.) And they said, "It's black tie," and he said, "Well, mate, I'll wear me best khaki." (Laughter.) And he did. So good for him. You know, he never ate with the right fork and he never maybe said the proper thing, but he was true to himself.

And I do; I miss that and I admire that.

Oh. Bindi likes something about him, too.

MR. ZREMSKI: Sure. I bet.

MS. T. IRWIN: Hop up and tell us.

MS. B. IRWIN: Sorry, I just wanted to say something about him. I just think that -- I have one story that I thought was just great about my dad.

MR. ZREMSKI: Oh sure. Tell us.

MS. B. IRWIN: Every time we used to go camping, I used to want to catch lizards. And so I would wake up, like, at midnight and say, "Dad, Dad, I can hear all these lizards. Let's go out and catch them." And he would be like, "Oh, okay. Come on." So we would go out

in our pajamas and catch lizards all night. And then --

MR. ZREMSKI: Wow.

MS. B. IRWIN: -- we'd be back in bed so my mom didn't know.
(Laughter.)

MR. ZREMSKI: And when did you find out?

MS. T. IRWIN: Yes. Well, you know, a lot of this has come to light recently. (Laughter.)

MS. B. IRWIN: Yeah.

MS. T. IRWIN: But I do think it's an important point that Steve always took time for the kids. And Bindi or Robert would run in in the middle of a board meeting, and he would always say, "Excuse me," and see what the children needed and then go back to his meeting. I really admired him for that because the kids really did come first.

And, you know, we all pay lip service to that, but it's a lot of work to actually do that. And it was a lot of effort for him to drag us all over the world and, you know, packing up the bags and the kids and going a little bit slower and being a little bit more careful.

You know, his world changed with the children, but it really changed for the better and gave him someone to play with and have food fights with other than me, which was nice.

MS. B. IRWIN: Yes.

MS. T. IRWIN: But, yeah, we were very blessed.

MR. ZREMSKI: Were you surprised at the world's reaction to Steve's death?

MS. T. IRWIN: Yeah, I was absolutely overwhelmed. But, you know, in so many ways, it made me so incredibly lucky because I had such an outpouring of love and support. And I really felt that from all over the world.

I mean, you know, the Queen of Jordan wrote and George Bush wrote and, you know, 1 million special people who you may not know their names. And some of them wrote letters to Steve, and some of them sent little tokens of appreciation for the work that he did. And I remember thinking to myself, "You know, as much as I don't believe this, Steve would never have believed it." He was the most humble person. He never thought of himself as anything more than an Australian with a passion for wildlife. And I think that's why I loved him so much.

You know, his ethics never changed, his beliefs -- you know, he didn't become a big deal. And when he had a lot of money, he'd go, "Great. Let's build a research vessel to rescue wildlife and research them," and "Let's do something for lemurs because some of the lemurs are highly endangered," and "John, we've got to go film sharks because there are still sharks in soup in Sydney. We've got to tell people

why they can't eat that anymore." And this enthusiasm was just absolutely fantastic and beyond words. So, pretty terrific.

MR. ZREMSKI: You've done so many interviews and performances, some people have said that this is just too much too soon. Why do you think it's important to continue these public appearances?

MS. T. IRWIN: Well, again, the support of the people has just been wonderful, and that reaction of wanting to say thank you has been foremost in my mind. And this is a nice way to say thank you to everybody. Also, I think grief is a road that every individual travels in their own way. I think it's really important to seek help and advice and read a lot and get the assistance that you need because none of us are immune to tragedy.

And our road was to talk amongst ourselves. And I said to Bindi, "What do you want to do now?" And she said, "I want to get back to filming as soon as possible." And it seemed to be familiar for us all. It's like that fishing trip every weekend or going surfing with your dad or whatever else it was special in your family.

For some people, it's hard for them to do it again, and for some people, they really do need to do it again. And that was our category. For us to get -- stand right back up and to be able to say that Steve's work counted for something, and that we're going to carry on with his message has been to help ourselves as well as for other people. And for myself personally -- and I'm not speaking for Bindi -- I also feel that if I can help in any way with any words of wisdom for people who are traveling this road of grief -- if I can say things like, "Listen to your children, get a lot of home movies, take photographs and appreciate the people who are still with you instead of just being devastated about those you've lost and take time to honor your grief." These are important lessons that I've learned.

I also haven't been too proud to ask for help when I've needed it. And that's also very important. So I think all those reasons are why we wanted to get right back out. We want to stand up proud. We want to say, "What are you doing here? Come to Australia."
(Laughter.)

MR. ZREMSKI: Okay, great. We are almost out of time. I've just got a little housekeeping to do before the last question. First of all, let's remind our audience of some of our future speakers. On January 24th, Antonio Villagrosa, the mayor of Los Angeles, will discuss pressing urban issues in the California political scene. On January 26th, Gary Sinese, the actor, will be discussing "Honoring the Cost of Freedom: The Building of American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial." And on January 30, Marian Blakey, the administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration, will discuss "Aviation Safety in a Changing World."

Now we have some gifts; we always have gifts for our guests.

MS. T. IRWIN: Aww. Look at -- (cheering.) I knew I came here for a reason. (Laughter.)

MR. ZREMSKI: First, we have our National Press Club plaque.

MS. T. IRWIN: Wow, that's beautiful. Thank you.

MR. ZREMSKI: Yes.

MS. T. IRWIN: Isn't that pretty?

MR. ZREMSKI: And second -- we've got something for you in a minute -- second, for your tea or Fosters Laegers or whatever, the National Press Club mug.

MS. T. IRWIN: You don't get to drink coffee. It's mine too.

MR. ZREMSKI: And you don't get to drink coffee, either.

MS. B. IRWIN: I can drink -- I drink plain milk, though. (Laughter.) Plain milk is good.

MR. ZREMSKI: It works for plain milk, too.

MS. T. IRWIN: Okay. Well, I'll give you this one. It's pretty.

MR. ZREMSKI: Now we don't have a National Press Club alligator or a National Press Club snake -- at least I don't think -- but we do have a National Press Club panda for you.

MS. B. IRWIN: Thank you so much. I love pandas.

MR. ZREMSKI: You love pandas? Have you seen our pandas out there, yet?

MS. T. IRWIN: No.

MS. B. IRWIN: No, not yet.

MR. ZREMSKI: Oh. Well, you probably don't have time, but on your next visit, you should go see our pandas at the zoo.

MS. B. IRWIN: Oh yeah. That would be fabulous.

MR. ZREMSKI: Alright. Great, great. Sure. Before my last question, let me just remind everyone that the Irwins have to leave very promptly at the end. So we're going to ask you to, you know, remain in your seats here for a couple of minutes while they leave, okay? Lastly, you've been doing all these interviews, right, all week long.

MS. B. IRWIN: Yes.

MR. ZREMSKI: How do reporters compare to, like, poisonous snakes -- (laughter) --

MS. B. IRWIN: Okay. I don't want to offend anyone here, okay? (Laughter.) I really don't want to offend anyone, but -- I -- I --

MS. T. IRWIN: This ought to be good. (Laughter.)

MS. B. IRWIN: Okay. So please, nobody be offended. Please --

MR. ZREMSKI: Okay, I won't be offended.

MS. T. IRWIN: We're not offended.

MS. B. IRWIN: Okay, good. I think I like poisonous snakes.
(Laughter.)

MR. ZREMSKI: I'm not surprised.

MS. B. IRWIN: I really like poisonous snakes.

MR. ZREMSKI: Good for you. Okay. Thank you both for coming today. This has just been wonderful.

MS. B. IRWIN: Thank you.

MS. T. IRWIN: But no one here's offended.

MS. B. IRWIN: Good. (Applause.)

MR. ZREMSKI: Nobody's offended.

MS. T. IRWIN: Okay.

MS. B. IRWIN: I'm glad.

MS. T. IRWIN: Thank you.

MR. ZREMSKI: Thank you. Thank you so much.

MS. B. IRWIN: Thank you. Thank you very much.

MR. ZREMSKI: Alright. Thanks, Bindi. Thank you all for coming today. I'd like to thank the National Press Club staff members, Melinda Cooke, Pat Nelson, Jo Ann Booz and Howard Rothman for organizing today's lunch. Also, thanks to the NPC library for its research.

A video archive of today's luncheon is provided by the National Press Club Broadcast Operations Center. Press Club members can also access free transcripts and video of our luncheons at our website, www.press.org. Non-members may purchase transcripts, audio and video tapes by calling 1-888-343-1940. For more information about joining the National Press Club, please contact us at 202-662-7511.

Thank you very much. We're adjourned. (Sounds gavel.)
(Applause.)

####

END