



# Because They Needed Me: Rita Miljo and the Orphaned Baboons of South Africa

*Michael Blumenthal, Rita Miljo*

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In May of 2007, noted American poet and novelist and son of Holocaust refugees Michael Blumenthal went to South Africa to volunteer at C.A.R.E., a rehabilitation center for orphaned and injured baboons founded by Rita Miljo. Rita was a Lithuanian-born childhood member of the Hitler Youth who had gone on to have a life as adventure-filled as Beryl Markham's in *West With the Night*.

*"A lot of people have asked me whether they could write 'my book,' Rita wrote to Michael shortly thereafter, "and I said no, because I was envisaging a story both sad and happy, but certainly mixed with a lot of humor. But if you asked me, I would not say no."* With that, for the only time in her life, Rita entrusted another human being with thirty years' worth of her journals, and a rare and unusual collaboration was born. *Because They Needed Me* is that story, a chronicle of primate conservation and the intrepid and courageous woman who devoted her life to it.

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