Jane Goodall

Jane’s first encounter with a chimpanzee was at the age of one, when her father gave a toy chimpanzee that she named Jubilee. Jubilee was Jane’s constant companion, and she still has her today. She’s bald from over seven decades of hugs, but she sits in a place of pride on Jane’s dresser in her bedroom. Jane was every bit as fascinated by real animals. One of her earliest animal memories is of hiding in the henhouse to see how a hen laid an egg. She spent five hours in this activity; her parents were frantic and had even called the police. But they couldn’t be upset with her when she finally came back in from the henhouse excited to share her discovery of how a hen lays an egg. Her first animal companion was her dog, Rusty. From Rusty, Jane learned early that animals have minds, personalities and feelings.

Jane loved the book *The Story of Dr. Dolittle*, by Hugh Lofting, and it inspired her to want to travel to Africa. She also liked the Tarzan books set in Africa, though Jane believed she would have been a much more sensible “Jane” than the Jane in the books! From a young age Jane’s dream was to live in Africa, and to watch and write about animals. This was not a thing that most girls wanted back then; it wasn’t even a thing that most girls might imagine they could even do. But Jane’s mother encouraged her. She told Jane that if she worked hard and believed in herself, her dreams could come true.

Not long after she finished high school, Jane was invited to visit a friend’s farm in Kenya. On this, her first trip to Africa, Jane was 23 years old. It was here that she met the famous anthropologist and paleontologist Dr. Louis S. B. Leakey. Leakey hired Jane to be his assistant and soon Jane was digging up fossils with Dr. and Mrs. Leakey. Dr. Leakey wanted someone to go to Tanzania to study the chimpanzees, as people didn’t know much about wild chimpanzees back then. Dr. Leakey was impressed with Jane’s energy and character, and he knew she was interested in wild animals. He choose Jane to study the chimpanzees, and that is how Jane got started on the work that made her famous.