**BIO - Rodrick (Rick) Barongi - Founder, Longneck Manor**

Rick grew up on Long Island, New York and attended Cornell University for his B.S. and Rutgers University for his M.S. in Zoology. He retired from the Houston Zoo in June 2015, after 15 years as Zoo Director. He presently consults on zoological projects while serving on several wildlife conservation boards. He has been both a keynote speaker and author on topics ranging from animal management to conservation strategies for the future.

Rick has been working in the wildlife management and conservation field for over 45 years. His level of experience ranges from zookeeper to senior executive positions at the Walt Disney Company and the San Diego and Houston Zoos. He has served on the boards of AZA (Association of Zoos and Aquariums) and WAZA (World Association of Zoos and Aquariums).

He was the top animal executive for the creative development, planning and construction of Disney’s Animal Kingdom. He led the efforts to create the Disney Conservation Fund, which since its inception in 1995 has generated more than $100 million for field conservation projects around the world. While Director of the Houston Zoo he led the efforts to privatize the zoo in 2002.

Rick actively serves on several wildlife conservation boards, including the International Rhino Foundation, GRACE (Gorilla Rehabilitation and Conservation Education Center), Margot Marsh Foundation and Okapi Conservation Project. He is an avid wildlife trekker and photographer and has traveled extensively to Africa (over 50 trips) and South America (over 25 trips). He has visited over 60 countries and plans to keep adding to that list for as long as he can.

Rick divides his time between Fredericksburg, Texas and Sarasota, Florida where his life partner, Diane Ledder, resides. They share two wonderful yellow labs (children) named Cooper and Drifter.