

And God Laughs...

The Arthur Jones Autobiography

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“Never give a sucker an even break.”

W. C. Fields

In the late winter of 1950, enroute from Laredo, Texas, to Oklahoma City, I met one of Bo Miller’s older brothers, Jack. He and Ray Olive were operating a small roadside zoo near San Marcos, Texas; were located there only for the winter, and planned to move north to a better location when the weather warmed up. I spent only about ten minutes looking through their small zoo and less than two minutes talking with Jack and Ray Olive, and when I left I assumed I would probably never see either of them again; but, as things turned out, I had quite a lot to do with both of them for the next thirty years.

I met Maburn Miller, another of Bo’s older brothers, a couple of months later when he visited me in Oklahoma City in order to buy some rattlesnakes for an exhibit he was operating near Cheyenne, Wyoming; and I met R. A. Miller, Bo’s oldest brother, when I delivered a large order of snakes to the exhibit they were operating near Gatlinburg, Tennessee.

In some respects the Miller brothers were a rather tight knit family, but in other ways each one of them went down their own road; all of them were professional gamblers, or, as they called themselves, thieves, because the manner in which they conducted gambling games left nothing to chance. If one of the brothers had a problem of any kind the others would help him in any way possible, but they did not seem to be able to maintain a continuous business relationship of any kind for more than a few weeks; perhaps, deep down, they really did not trust one another, or maybe they were simply too independent to work in close cooperation with anybody.

Shortly after I met Jack for the first time, his wife shot him; but that was a subject that nobody in the family would discuss, so I never learned just what happened, or why. Although, a couple of years later I got a hint from Bo: three of us, Bo, Jack and I went to Havana, Cuba, to check out the girls and both Bo and I spent the night with beautiful young girls, but Jack spent the night with a woman that was an outright hag, old, fat and ugly. Which, given the choice of available girls, surprised me; so I asked Bo about it. And he told me . . . “You don’t know what it is that Jack wants them to do, and that’s the only kind that will do it. So now you know why his wife shot him.”

Which was an explanation of sorts, but still did not tell me just what Jack liked, or why his wife shot him.

Like me, Bo liked young and attractive girls, but had to be very careful about any extracurricular sexual activities because his wife, Clara, also had a very short fuse; nevertheless, a few years later he managed to keep two young girls in the same house with his wife and without arousing her suspicions; which, judging by my experience, was almost a miracle, because any time another woman came around my house the shit usually hit the fan immediately.

R. A. Miller, the oldest brother, also liked young girls, an attraction that almost got him killed a few years later: he was visiting another con man who had a beautiful fourteen-year-old daughter, and he did everything he could think of in attempts to get her away from her parents; but his friend’s wife was very suspicious about his intentions and refused to let the girl out of her sight while he was there. Which delayed R. A., but did not stop him; when he wanted something he was a very determined man.

In the middle of the night his friend’s wife heard some suspicious noises and aroused her husband; she had heard a series of scraping noises followed by a click; swish, click, swish, click, etc. When they turned on the light, there was R. A. in the hall, enroute towards their daughter’s room, stark naked, crawling along the hall floor on his hands and knees, with a towel draped over one shoulder, a jar of Vaseline in one hand and a rubber hanging down from his mouth; he was prepared.

How he managed to get out of the house without getting shot I will never know, but he did; he was not, however, ever invited back for any additional visits.

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Shortly before he died, R. A. married the widow of a friend of his from Hot Springs, Arkansas, and she later financed Ray Olive when he wanted to open an animal exhibit to be operated in shopping malls all over the country; during one of her visits to Florida to see Ray Olive, after he closed the shopping mall exhibit and went to work for me, the subject of R. A. came up during a conversation one night and she became terribly bent out of shape when I mentioned some of her then dead husband's early escapades. She obviously had no idea just what kind of a man she had been married to; which, to me, was surprising, since R. A. never made any bones about just what he was.

Sometime during the middle 1950s, R. A. was driving across the country and came upon a so-called Free Zoo, a front for a crooked gambling game, and since he knew practically everybody in the country in that business he decided to stop for a visit; but there were a lot of cars parked in front of the place, so he assumed that they had a game in progress and did not want to interrupt it. So instead of going through the entrance he walked up to a rough fence that surrounded the zoo, stuck his hand through a crack in the fence in an offer to shake hands with a man he saw standing just inside the fence, and said . . . "I'm R. A. Miller, from Gatlinburg, Tennessee, and since we are in the same business I probably know some of your people."

Whereupon the man inside the fence slapped a handcuff on his wrist and said . . . "I'm glad to meet you, Mr. Miller, I'm Special Agent Brown of the FBI."

And it turned out that R. A. did not know any of the people who were operating that zoo; but it still cost him quite a lot of money to get out of the situation without being prosecuted.

After they opened a second exhibit in the Smoky Mountains in the summer of 1950, an exhibit operated that first season by Ray Olive, they hired an Italian woman named Marie, a divorced woman with two young children, and within a few days Ray Olive moved into her house trailer and started living with her. Until R. A. arrived on the scene; and he too fancied Marie, so he sent Ray Olive off on a long trip in a truck to Cheyenne, Wyoming, to get rid of him for a couple of weeks so he could have Marie for himself. Ray later told me that he knew exactly why R. A. sent him on that trip, but did not care because it provided him with an opportunity to visit several other girls that he knew along the route of his trip.

Just why either of them were ever attracted to Marie I was never able to figure out, because she was one of the most difficult women I ever met, and was not particularly attractive. Bo called her a 'Rangy Tang,' since she was constantly involved in a fight with somebody. Carnival and circus people have a language of their own called Carny, which is a rather complicated form of so-called Pig Latin; they use this language in order to be able to speak freely in front of so-called marks, people visiting a carnival or a circus, and quite a few Carny terms eventually became rather widely known. The term Fuzz, for police, was originally a Carny term. And Marie was a classic example of another Carny term (defined in an earlier chapter) a Take-over Broad; and a very brief bit of contact with such women is usually about all that most people can stand.

Both of her two children were just about as bad: the youngest one, a boy, picked up a large monkey wrench and hit Ralph Cramer across the shins as hard as he could while Ralph was leaning back in a chair reading a newspaper. Hit Ralph so hard that he nearly broke one of his legs, and did so for no reason apart from the fact that he wanted to.

So Ralph jumped up, grabbed the kid by the seat of his pants and the scruff of his neck, carried him outside and held him up over a pool of large alligators, and told him . . . "Listen, you little son of a bitch, if you ever do that again I'm going to feed you to these alligators." None of which seemed to impress the kid at all.

But then the kid's sister, who was watching all of this with a big smile on her face, said . . . "Yes, and besides that you'll get a bad spanking." And that did impress the kid, who immediately started crying.

Nearly thirty years later, the last time I saw either of Marie's two kids, I was not at all surprised by the way they turned out; with Marie for a mother there was never much doubt about the future of her children.

The second oldest of Bo's brothers, Maburn, was married to a German woman named Inge; a woman who was nearly as wide through the hips as she was tall, and a woman who understood her husband quite well. Why she put up with him, or vice versa, was always another unsolved riddle. Maburn returned home after a trip to Mexico, and Inge

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had no doubts about just what he had been doing in Mexico; so, as he started to walk up the steps to their house trailer, Inge suddenly opened the door and said . . . “Drop your pants, you son of a bitch; now drop your shorts.” And he did; and then she sprayed him with a flit gun, soaking his pubic area with insecticide. She was taking no chances.

In the late winter of 1951, Maburn went into a partnership arrangement with a cousin of his named Franco Richards; they planned to put two reptile exhibits on the road, exhibits contained in large trailers and pulled by trucks.

When I asked Maburn how he was splitting the income from the exhibits with his cousin Franco, he said . . . “Fifty, fifty; at the end of the day I take all of the money that came in that day and throw it up into the air, and then give Franco half of everything that sticks to the ceiling.”

Bo was the youngest of the four brothers, but was the first one to die; in 1964 he went into a hospital for surgery and died on the operating table because of an allergic reaction to penicillin.

Although all of the four Miller brothers went through millions of dollars during their careers, most of it being income from crooked gambling games, none of them ever filed a tax return or paid a cent of income taxes, and none of them were ever prosecuted as a consequence. And apart from Bo, who spent a couple of years in prison in Texas for armed robbery, none of them ever spent more than a few hours in jail.

I was never a part of any of their criminal activities, but they spoke openly about them in front of me; to me, they were customers, and they always paid cash for everything they bought from me, and never questioned the prices of anything.

During the years that I knew them, I had the least contact with Jack; he was somewhat of an outcast in the family for reasons that were never explained to me, for reasons that were a closely guarded family secret. Over the years, I was in contact with Bo from the time I met him in 1950 until he died in 1964; and, for a short while after he died, Bo’s son Jimbo worked for me in Slidell, Louisiana. But while he was Bo’s son, Jimbo was not a chip off of the old block, so our relationship did not last long; unlike Bo, who considered himself a thief, but who would not steal from his friends under any circumstances, Jimbo was more than willing to steal from anybody.

And in spite of the fact that he fucked so many local girls while going to high school in Tennessee that he was eventually forced to leave the state with several irate fathers in hot pursuit, Jimbo also ended up with a wife who treated him like a dog on a leash.

I fired him on a trip to South America while we were stopped enroute in British Honduras, a largely black country; fired him because he refused to dance with a black girl while we were filming a native festival, and refused in a manner that was insulting to our black hosts. I sent him home by commercial airline, and then he went to Slidell and told Herbert Prechtel that he was supposed to give him a rather large sum of money; and Herbert was dumb enough to believe him and gave him the money.

I planned to spend several days with two of the Miller brother, Maburn and R. A., tape recording their stories as they told me about their lifetime experiences, but as usual waited until it was too late. To the degree that I was ever able to confirm them, all of the stories that I heard appeared to be true; if anything, were usually understatements.

For a few years, in the mid 1950s, one of Bo’s squadron mates during the war was the pilot of Airforce One, the President’s airplane; and in 1954 Bo showed up in Mobile, Alabama, wearing an Airforce major’s uniform; his friend, the pilot of Airforce One, provided him with the uniform and took him along as a co-pilot on a flight from Washington, D. C., to Mobile. So much for Airforce security.

On a hunting and filming trip to Africa, Bo and I stayed in the home of the District Commissioner (D. C.) in a part of what was then the country of Northern Rhodesia, and the D. C. took us on a tour of the area in a boat. In a relatively shallow area of a large system of interlocking lakes we came upon a white man standing in water up above his knees while he was setting some large nets for fish; then the D. C. stopped the boat as close as we could get to the man standing in the water and started reading him the riot act about the danger from crocodiles; told him . . . “Don’t you know what happened here a few months ago? A crocodile bit a man’s ass off.”

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Whereupon the man in the water said . . . “Yes, I know, because it was me.” Then turned around and dropped his pants, bent forward and showed us his bare buttocks; or, rather, his buttock, singular, because one side of his ass was gone, had been bitten off by a crocodile.

The shower stall for the house where we were staying with the D. C. was located outside the house, and one day Bo opened the door and started to step inside; only to discover the wife of the D. C. standing there a few feet in front of him stark naked. Then, in an attempt to prevent the woman’s embarrassment, Bo said . . . “Oh, excuse me, sir, I did not realize the shower was being used.” But rather than making the situation better it made it worse; because the woman was insulted by the fact that anybody could mistake her for a man.

Later we stayed for a few days in the home of an American missionary, and they had an attractive young daughter who immediately attracted Bo’s interest; he told me that it was a sure thing if he could get her to agree to meet him later in town, and she did agree to meet him. But his attempt to seduce her ended up in an attempt on her part to convert him to her religion.

On the subject of just how to select a wife, Bo told me . . . “As my uncle told me when I was a kid: never forget, rich girls have a pussy too.” On that same trip to Africa with Bo, I was fucking the attractive young assistant of a film producer named Klaus Kreiger, a man I hired several years later in Rhodesia, and Bo was clearly aware of my relationship with that girl; which made his failure to seduce the missionary’s daughter even more irritating.

Some months after that trip, when Ray Olive asked Bo where we went, he told Ray that we spent several days in Denmark, both going over and coming back, which was not true; Bo told Ray that only because he knew that Ray had heard a lot about Danish girls and their attitude about so-called ‘free love.’

Then, when Ray asked him about the girls in Denmark, Bo just smiled and changed the subject; knowing that such a response would drive Ray up the wall, which it did.

And how are the girls in Denmark? You will have to ask somebody else, since Denmark is one of the few countries in the world that I have never visited. But I do know quite a bit about the girls in many other countries; some of which experiences are covered in other chapters.