

And God Laughs...

The Arthur Jones Autobiography

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“Not having done so yet, if I ever did meet a man who appeared to be sane, I would have to kill him; after all, it’s difficult enough to deal with the lunatics that you are constantly surrounded by, so just how could you even hope to anticipate the actions of a sane man? It would be too dangerous to let him live.”

John Peters

I was supposed to get back to the Natal parks in time to meet Louie Goebel, the animal dealer from California who Player asked me to invite over for a visit to the Natal parks. But last-minute delays resulted in a change of schedule on my part that I could not communicate to Louie, because he was already enroute to Africa; so he arrived in Natal before I did.

Louie got as far as Matubatuba, a town about fifty miles from Player’s office, tried to call Player on the phone from there but failed to reach him; then took a taxi which drove him to Player’s headquarters and dropped him off. But he still failed to make contact with Player, because Player was avoiding him. Late that night, Louie was found wandering around in the park by a ranger, utterly helpless and in great danger from hyenas or other wild animals. Louie was nearly eighty years old at the time, had been badly mauled by a lion many years earlier and was crippled to the point that he could walk only with great difficulty. He would not have survived that night in the park if he had not been found by the ranger; a man who took him to his house, fed him and put him to bed, then took him back to town the next day since Player still refused to meet with him.

By the time I arrived and learned what had happened, Louie had already left South Africa and was enroute to Kenya; but I was able to locate him after he reached Kenya, got him on the phone and convinced him that some sort of terrible mistake had been made and that he should return to South Africa. I made arrangements to meet him when he returned to Johannesburg and then planned to fly him to Natal in one of my airplanes.

The airplane that I used to meet him in Johannesburg with was a Cherokee Six, a plane manufactured by Piper Corporation, and it was painted bright red. When I parked it near the landing strip I noticed that the airplane parked next to mine was also painted bright red, but was a much smaller airplane, a single-seat, two winged plane that looked like it was produced during the First World War (1914-1918), and may well have been produced then. In any case, it was a tiny airplane compared to mine.

So I decided to have a bit of fun with Louie: on the way to the airport in a taxi, I told him . . . “Louie, the airplane that we are going to fly to Natal in is very small, but it is perfectly safe so you do not have to be concerned about that. However, it is not very comfortable, and you must sit perfectly still and will have to hold your suitcase in your lap since there is no place else available to put it. It does have a new paint job, is painted bright red.” And Louie, being the agreeable soul that he was, did not object to anything that I told him.

Then, when we arrived at the airport, I had the taxi driver park in front of the tiny airplane sitting next to mine, led Louie up to it and said . . . “There is only one seat, Louie, so you will have to sit on the lower wing and hold on to the strut, and will have to hang on to your suitcase with the other hand so that it doesn’t get blown away by the wind.”

I was joking, of course, but he would have been perfectly willing to go on such a flight if I had not been joking; we had been friends for many years and he trusted me.

When we reached the Natal parks Player still refused to meet Louie, and would not discuss the situation with me; so I did the best I could manage in the way of seeing to it that Louie at least had an enjoyable visit to the parks.

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I landed my airplane on the side of a mountain located between two of the parks, on a very rough and short strip; then we darted a large adult rhino, hauled it to the strip where the plane was parked, gave it enough of the antidote to get it out of the crate that we hauled it in and back on to its feet, standing but not yet awake. I moved the airplane up very close to the standing rhino, fitted a harness made from a rope around the rhino's head, seated Louie on the animal's back with his suitcase in one hand and then took a picture, a picture that showed him seated on the rhino with a rope leading to the harness in one hand and his suitcase in his other hand, and with my airplane in the background.

As soon as this picture was taken it was rushed to a darkroom that we had established near that strip on the side of the mountain, was developed, blown up to an eight by ten inch size, printed, and brought back to give it to Louie; less than three hours after the picture was taken, he had a large print of it in his hand.

Then, on the back of that print, he wrote . . . "Having reached the end of the local airline, I am proceeding on into the heart of Africa using the only available source of transportation." He mailed that picture to his son, who was a borderline idiot, and he took it to the local newspaper in California, and they printed it as fact, together with the inscription on the back of the picture.

And, of course, having taken Louie's picture seated on the rhino, everybody else wanted a similar picture of themselves; so several other such pictures were taken, and everything went smoothly until the last man who wanted such a picture started to mount the rhino, that being the ranger who had darted him, and a man who should have known better than to do what he did. He climbed up the rhino's head, stepping on the rhino's horns as if they were steps on a staircase, then stood on the back of the rhino facing towards its rear end, and then suddenly jumped into the air, rotated his body by 180 degrees while in the air, spread his legs and landed with a thump on the rhino's neck. Which was all that was required to wake the rhino from his previous stupor; about a second after he landed on his neck, the rhino tossed him off like a bucking horse, then chased after him in an attempt to run one of its horns up his ass, became distracted by the airplane and started after it, and could easily have destroyed it. Fortunately, the plane's engine was running and I had a man seated in the cockpit, so he was able to get away from the rhino, but just barely. In addition to the still pictures that we took, we also filmed all of this with several motion-picture cameras, and the film of the ranger getting tossed off the rhino and landing on his head was very funny. Although the ranger did not seem to think that it was funny. Some people have no sense of humor.

Louie had stayed in Kenya for several weeks before returning to the Natal parks, and during that time I had been working like Hell nearly twenty-four hours a day and had also been trying to find out just what was going on; in retrospect, given the welcome extended to Louie by Player, I suspect that Player was already aware of the actual shortage of animals in the parks before I first pointed it out to him and then proved it by the aerial count of the animals. No other explanation for Player's treatment of Louie seems to make any sense.

If, at that point, Player believed that he had a need for a customer for his surplus animals, then Louie was the best one he would ever have been able to find; could have purchased and resold thousands of animals since he had been in the animal business for nearly sixty years and had friends and customers all over the world, people who would purchase animals from Louie that they would not buy from anybody else. Additionally, Louie was a very wealthy man, could finance any such purchases from Player out of his own pocket without having to borrow a cent; Louie was a millionaire many times over, although he and his wife still lived in a tiny wooden shack that looked like it was a hundred years old, and might have been. A shack that was filled almost to the roof with Louie's records and other papers that covered a period of nearly sixty years. He spent almost nothing on himself, but would not hesitate to invest millions of dollars in order to purchase animals. I personally sold him several million dollars worth of animals over a period of many years, and both his word and his check were as good as gold.

He sent me a very large check one time, but forgot to sign it; but when I took it to a bank in another town where they did not even know me, and after they called Louie's bank, they cashed it for me even without his signature. That was a sale that involved several Orang Utans and a couple of Giraffes, so the sum involved was quite large.

In another attempt to help Player, at his request, I made a trip to Mexico to visit the wealthiest man in that country, a man named Longoria who had several thousand exotic animals on a large ranch about twenty-five miles west of Nuevo Laredo; Player wanted to get me to offer this man as many as a hundred White Rhinos as a free gift, if he

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would agree to accept them as a gift and would pay the shipping charges to Mexico. But Longoria refused this offer, because his only experience with rhinos was with Black Rhinos, which are dangerous as Hell, and I was unable to convince him that White Rhinos are totally different, about as dangerous as a cow.

Longoria did not operate this ranch full of exotic animals as a commercial enterprise, did not permit visitors to see the animals, did not sell any animals, or generate income from any source; maintained these animals only because he liked them, and was wealthy enough to afford them.

Longoria also had a home in Nuevo Laredo that was nothing short of a palace. It was located in the middle of an outright slum, in the warehouse section of the city, occupied an entire city block and was surrounded by a very high stone wall that made it impossible to see what was inside the wall; on one side of that wall there were filthy and tiny shacks that you could probably have purchased for less than fifty dollars each, but the house on the other side probably cost him at least fifty million dollars, was almost beyond belief.

On the lowest floor of that house, underground, he had a huge room that displayed his hunting trophies from all over the world, hundreds of mounted animals ranging from a rabbit to an adult African elephant, and everything in between; that one room and its contents cost him many millions of dollars. A friend of mine from Laredo was a relative of Longoria's, had a key to the place and took me through it several times.

The pool house alone cost a couple of million dollars, was in itself a mansion. Many of the rooms on several floors were filled with very expensive works of art and the furniture had to be seen to be believed. For many years Longoria was the sole distributor in Mexico for both General Motors and Ford, also owned theatres all over the country, several huge ranches and a number of major manufacturing companies. At one time he may have been the richest man in the world, yet most people never heard of him.

His relative in Laredo, Texas, as a teenager, caught snakes and sold them to me in 1947; the boy's family was also wealthy, but not in Longoria's class by a long shot.

Later yet, again at Player's request, I went to a major convention of sportsmen, hunters and fishermen, that was held in San Antonio so that I could run one of my African films as part of the program, or so I was led to believe. My real reason for going there was because I wanted to give away a large number of Player's surplus animals, since these animals would otherwise have been killed. Most of the people attending that convention were very wealthy, and quite a few of them maintained private game parks similar to the one that Longoria had in Mexico; so they might very well be willing to accept wild animals in great numbers as a free gift.

Nick Steel had previously refused to fly back from Durban to the Natal parks with me, because of his fear of flying; but must have gotten over some of that fear because he was at that convention in San Antonio, and I don't believe he made the trip from Natal by ship and train; although, knowing him, he might have traveled by swimming and walking.

Since I did not know anybody else at that convention, I looked for Nick, and asked him to introduce me to the man in charge; which he refused to do. So I went up on the stage in front of the auditorium, approached the man in charge and introduced myself.

He instantly went into a rage, started screaming at me in the most insulting manner possible, accused me of having run baby elephants to death by chasing them with a helicopter and a long list of other such outrages; all of which could be heard by every person in the auditorium since he was screaming all of these utterly false accusations into both my face and a microphone that transmitted everything he said to the audience over huge loudspeakers.

I was stunned, could not believe what was happening; but I managed to get out of the place without killing him. Once outside, Eliza Steffee insisted that I go back and get the matter straightened out; but I told her . . . "Eliza, it was very hard for me to stand there and listen to all of that shit without shooting the son of a bitch on the spot. If you want me to go back and kill him, I will, but I don't think that will do us much good at the moment; besides, there are far too many witnesses." So we left. But, as I said earlier, some people deserve killing.

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I still don't know just who arranged that trap, but it had to be either Player or Nick Steel, or both. But the motive was obvious to me later: they were trying to utterly discredit me in advance, just in case I ever told anybody some of their terrible secrets.

In fact, I went to great lengths in my attempts to help Player dispose of his surplus animals, at no small expense to myself and with nothing in the way of a return. All at his request. In return he tried to smear me all over the world, and did cause me enormous problems. As they say . . . "No good turn ever goes unpunished."

I have known several men who were a better shot with a pistol than I ever was, although I was not a slouch myself, could usually hit a man in either eye at a distance of thirty yards, and call the eye in advance, while he was running, providing only that he was looking back at me so that I could see his eyes. Such shooting is not done by aiming, you don't even look at the gun's sights, look only at the target, the aiming is purely by instinct. I never practiced a fast draw, but was so fast that sometimes a gun seemed to appear in my hand as if by magic; one moment it was not there, but a split second later it was, already cocked and with the hammer starting to fall. The human mind cannot follow such a fast move, so you can literally draw a pistol from a holster, cock it, point it, pull the trigger and shoot a man before he even realizes that you have started to move.

We do not live in real time, everything that ever happened to us actually happened about a quarter of a second before we realized it; so our awareness of things is usually late by about a quarter of a second. But some people have much faster reaction times; the world record for a fast draw, the last time I was aware of such records, was six one-hundredths of a second. The draw started when a light flashed on the target and the clock recording the elapsed time stopped when the bullet hit the target. A man that fast could shoot you four times before you even became aware of the fact that he had started to move. I was never that fast, but was fast enough to suit my purposes.

The best pistol shot I ever met was a man that I knew in Kenya in 1959, during the so-called Mau Mau uprising; he was the District Commissioner in the NFD area of Kenya (Northern Frontier District), and lived near the town of Nanyuki, and was in command of the forces then fighting the rebels in that part of the country.

Driving a Landrover over a very rough trail through the bush at night, an overcast night that was as dark as it ever gets anywhere, he rounded a curve and was faced with a large tree that had fallen across and totally blocked the narrow trail. In such situations you do not stop to think, you act, or you die. There were only two possibilities, an elephant or an ambush. So he did not even hit the brakes, instead threw himself on the floor of the Landrover, which then crashed into the tree and bounced back from it, knocking out his headlights so that he was then in total darkness. It was an ambush, and people on three sides of the Landrover started shooting at him, or at least shooting at where they believed he was; but, like most untrained marksmen, shooting at night, they aimed too high and were shooting well above his head.

The only weapon he had was a nine-shot Beretta pistol, and while current models of that gun are pretty good, the ones then available were not, it was in fact a very poor weapon; nevertheless, he fired nine shots and hit his targets every time, all being shots to the head, eight instant kills and one man so badly wounded that he could not move. And he did this while firing in total darkness, shooting at the after-image that remained burned into his eyes for a split second following the muzzle flashes of the guns being fired at him. Every man but one who fired a shot at him died a split second later, shot through the head.

When he got out of the Landrover nobody remained standing apart from him, eight of the men he shot were dead, the ninth was down and could not move; and since he did not have any more ammunition he killed the ninth man with an ax. If there were more than nine men involved in the ambush, the rest had run off into the bush by the time he got out of the Landrover.

I was never that good with a pistol, nor that fast, but very few people in the world could shoot better than I could with a shotgun, and at one time I was probably the best shot in the world with a sub-machinegun. I have hit one hundred small, moving targets in a row, without a single miss, while shooting from the front of a moving jeep going across very rough ground, with a shotgun. At the age of fourteen, I could toss five empty shotgun shells into the air at the same time, then shoot every one of them, individually, before the first one reached the ground, using a semiautomatic shotgun manufactured in 1911.

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Pump versions of shotguns can be fired even faster than semiautomatic models, you can manually reload the next shell faster than the automatic loading system of a semiautomatic gun can function, but I always liked the semiautomatic models better; because working the slide on a pump gun that loads the next shell tends to throw your aim off.

While we were working in the Natal parks, the people there were constantly testing us in every way possible; and since most of these men considered themselves to be outstanding shots with any kind of a gun, they were anxious to see just how well we could shoot. I killed an impala one night shooting offhand from a moving Landrover with a pistol, at a range of more than a hundred yards, with one shot; and the word of that spread all over the park within a matter of hours, spread quickly because they always maintained radio contact with every ranger in the park, did so because of the constant threat of a terrorist attack.

Having heard about that, one of the senior rangers decided to test me himself; invited me to visit his house and then suggested that we go out in the yard and do a bit of shooting with a very powerful rifle that he had which used compressed gas rather than powder to drive the bullets. He liked this gun because it did not make much noise, so he could shoot one animal in a herd without scaring other animals away.

He handed me the gun, picked up an empty can and started to put it on top of a post to serve as a target; but I told him to toss it across the yard instead, and he did, and I hit it on the move while aiming from the waist, without looking at the sights; then did the same thing again; whereupon he decided that he was not interested in target shooting after all.

I do not know how many shots I have fired from a wide variety of guns, hundreds of thousands of rounds certainly, perhaps millions, but have never been a 'gun nut,' do not attend gun shows, do not read shooters' publications, and almost never discuss the subject of shooting with anybody; to me, a gun is a tool, when I need one I reach for it, but when I don't need one the subject of guns never enters my mind. And the same thing applies to airplanes, when I need to I fly one, but when I do not need one I do not spend any of my time thinking about them, don't hang around airports or associate with other pilots. Have found that I do not like pilots as a group, they are far too narrow in their outlook, generally believe that they have to live flying, sleep flying, eat flying, and avoid anything else in order to be good at what they do, fly.

But, and the same thing applies to doctors, such a narrow focus actually prevents them from becoming as skilled at their trade as they would like to be; rather than making them better pilots actually makes them worse pilots. But don't try to convince a pilot, or a doctor, that this is true.

As somebody supposedly said, or words to that effect . . . "A man should be able to build a house, butcher a hog, tan the hide, preserve the meat, deliver a baby, help the sick and nurture those who are about to die, fight a war . . . specialization is for insects."

I have done so many different things in my life that I probably would not believe, even if I remembered all of them, an actual true list of the things that I have done; have sometimes done them very well, but have also learned a long list of things that I cannot do well, if at all, so have tried to limit my interest to things that I could do well, while trying to avoid things that I cannot do well. But have also learned that it is all but impossible to find help when you do need assistance; you can get hundreds, probably thousands, perhaps millions of opinions on almost any subject, but if you are ever able to determine the actual facts it almost invariably turns out that all of these opinions are wrong. Regardless of how widely they are believed, as somebody once said . . . "Just when, or where, has it ever been demonstrated that the majority were right about anything. But it might be true that the majority are wrong about damned near everything; and you can count on it, the 'experts' are always wrong."

If you have a problem that you cannot solve, I have found that the best solution is to seek out the top man in whatever field you are interested in, carefully explain the problem to him, and then do the opposite of what he suggests; the very fact that he believes it is usually proof that his suggestion is wrong. So don't waste any time trying to apply his advice, doing so usually results in a move in the wrong direction.

Certainly there are exceptions to that rule; someday I hope to meet one.

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The people that I got to know so well in Natal and later in Kruger, and later yet in Rhodesia, are generally considered to be the leaders in their field, are supposed to be the people who are preserving the wild animals in Africa; while, in fact, when the relatively small number of wild animals still remaining in Africa are wiped out, and they will be wiped out, it will be these so-called conservationists who are responsible for it. It will not be the fault of sport hunters, or poachers, or commercial hunters, but they will get the blame for it.

Some animals are highly specialized, cannot eat, or will not eat, anything apart from a certain type of plant, or animal; the White Rhino is such an animal, its mouth is designed for 'overgrazing,' the lips have ridges that act almost like a pair of scissors, make it possible for the animal to eat very short grass, the stumps of grass that are left when a normal grazing animal has already eaten as much of the grass as it can.

So a White Rhino usually will not survive if confined to a place where there are no other grazing animals, other animals that are required to cut the grass down to the short length that the rhino requires. Which specialization on the part of the rhinos in the Natal parks led to a problem: Player was convinced that there were too many rhinos in some of the parks because they were constantly trying to break down the fences around the park, trying to escape from the park. So Player, being the dumb ass he was, assumed that their attempts to escape were caused by the fact that they were seeking more food; and, in a sense, he was right; they were seeking food, grass that was short enough for them to eat, which they could clearly see outside the fences that surrounded the park, places where native-owned goats and cattle had eaten the grass down to a length of an inch or less. Which was exactly what the rhinos wanted.

Inside the park, where the grass was much higher, the rhinos could not, or would not, eat it; so Player jumped to the stupid conclusion that he needed to shoot all or most of the other animals in these same parks in order to provide the rhinos with more grass; when the real problem was that they had too much grass.

As a direct result of their highly specialized feeding habits, about forty percent of these animals that are captured have to be released, because they cannot, or will not, learn to eat in captivity; they can eat longer grass but do not seem to realize that they can, and many will never learn to do so.

So, again, Player's real problem was the exact opposite of what he believed; instead of fewer grazing animals he needed more grazing animals in the parks. Yet, in his own mind, Player sincerely believed that he was single-handedly responsible for saving the White Rhinos from extinction.

After all of the problems that were involved in my attempt to get a permit to take one of my bombers to South Africa, a permit that reached me less than a day after my talk with General Hallaby, in the end I did not take that airplane to Africa; which turned out to be just as well, because the surplus meat that Player wanted me to haul to the gold mines did not exist, and since, in spite of what I told Hallaby, I really had no use for the airplane in the upcoming elephant catching operation in Kruger.

Which does not mean that my threat was an idle one; because, if he had refused to give me the permit, I would have produced the elephant-slaughter film and would then have blamed it on him. He may have believed me as a result of having seen some of my films, and having heard things that I said while introducing or narrating those films; if he was familiar with my films he would have had no doubts about just what I might say, or how I would say it.

Several people have been outraged when I exposed their criminal activities in public, and some of them have tried to sue me, but not a single one of them ever collected a cent as a result of such a suit; while many things that I have said in public were very insulting to some people, they were always true, and I was always in a position to prove that they were true, and the truth is never libel. If this book is ever published as written, you can be damned sure that a long list of people are going to be very pissed off; well, fuck 'em, they can see me in court if they are stupid enough to do so.

Proving libel, current laws being what they are, is damned near impossible: in order to win a libel suit you have to establish several things: you have to prove that the statement is a lie, the other party is not required to prove that it is true; secondly, you have to prove that you have lost money as a result of the alleged libel; thirdly, and this is seemingly impossible to prove, you have to prove that the party who made the statement knew that it was a lie when the statement was made; fourthly, you must prove that the statement was made with malicious intent. So, lots of luck.

I filed a four-billion-dollar libel suit against ABC Television network, in a case where I had them by the balls, had

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enough proof of libel against them to establish the facts to the satisfaction of a goat; but it was overturned on appeal, in spite of the fact that the Supreme Court of the United States ruled in my favor. That, by the way, being one of the very few lawsuits that I ever filed against anybody.

I did not, for example, file a lawsuit against that asshole Robin Leach (who cannot even spell his own name: it should be leech) who produces the *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous* television series; he sent a film crew to visit me without telling me who they represented, and we treated them like kings, cooperated in every way possible; and, having previously had some very bad experiences with others from the media, I was very careful about what I said. You dare not joke with such people, they will twist it in an attempt to smear you every time.

Then, when the show aired on television, there was Leach saying . . . “You cannot help noticing the twenty-three security cameras, the armed guards, the locked doors, or the crocodile-filled moat that surrounds the property.”

Well, somehow, I have failed to notice most of those things; while it is true that I do lock a door now and then (who does not?) the rest of his statement was pure bullshit.

Then he went on the Phil Donahue show and said . . . “The most intimidating and disgusting person that I ever interviewed was Arthur Jones; he stuck the barrel of his pistol up inside my nostril, pulled back the hammer, started to pull the trigger and told me ‘Repeat that question, Robin, and you will never live to hear the answer.’ But, unfortunately, my cameraman passed out from fear, so we did not get that on tape.” Sure. Well, in fact, Robin never saw me in his life, never spoke to me, never even sent me a fucking Christmas card.

Then he went on to say . . . “Arthur Jones, a man in his seventies, makes a habit of marrying very young teenage girls, keeps them a short while and then throws them out.” He might have been talking about C. C. McClung when he said that, but not me. And I suspect that McClung was dead long before they ran Robin out of England, so I doubt if he ever met him.

When Phil Donahue seemed to be a bit disturbed about some of Robin’s statements about me, Robin said . . . “Not to worry, Phil, he cannot sue you, my lawyers have confirmed the truth of all my statements about Arthur Jones.”

I should have sued him and Phil Donahue both, but I did not. The man is an outright malicious liar.

In any case, if he ever had my pistol barrel up inside his nostril, his nose would never have looked the same again; it would have been a very tight fit.

On another television show, another man who never saw me or talked to me, Tom Brokaw, had this to say about me . . . “Every small town has a know it all, and Lake Helen, Florida, is certainly no exception; why this man, Arthur Jones, has opinions about everything, even politics.”

Well, just what did he base his statements on, if not opinions? Opinions based on nothing. And just how many people did you ever meet who did not have political opinions?

Freedom of speech? No, freedom to lie, to smear, to distort, to twist, to attempt to destroy people that they have never seen or talked to.

Barbara Walters, Hugh Downs and Roger Caras were the liars in the ABC case, they should have been taken out in the street, strung up by their toes and horsewhipped. I asked for one billion dollars in actual damages in my suit, plus three billion dollars in punitive damages; but if I had won, and I deserved to win, I was already planning to agree to settle the case, in the following manner: I would have been willing to accept only half of the full amount, only two billion dollars, if they also agreed to run a four-hour special program on prime time, live, wherein Barbara would give me a blow job while Hugh was fucking her up the ass with a baseball bat, and while Roger was beating both of them, and himself, with a horse whip. After which they would have to admit that they had maliciously lied, while taking turns kissing my bare ass. I thought that would be a very fair and reasonable settlement, and would have left me owning only half of ABC network. And, of course, all three would have to be fired, kicked out on their ass in disgrace.

But, of course, that would have been leaning slightly in the direction of justice, so would never have been agreed to except on the receiving end of a gun. As Mao said . . . “Justice comes out of a gun barrel.”