

And God Laughs...

The Arthur Jones Autobiography

www.ArthurJonesExercise.com

“People keep telling me that growing older beats the only alternative; but the older I get, the less I believe it.”

John Peters

I never learned just how much of what Player was really doing was known by John Geddes Page, the Director of the Natal Parks Board; but I suspect that he knew very little. I had great respect for him at the time all of this was going on and I still respect him nearly thirty years later. But it became obvious to me shortly after I moved to South Africa that I was guilty of several major mistakes: one, there was very little in the way of a filming opportunity in the Natal parks; two, it would have been impossible to work with Player and his people even if such an opportunity did exist; three, if I was unable to get the situation under control, Player’s smear tactics would eventually make it impossible for me to work anywhere in southern Africa; four, there were no surplus animals, and there was no surplus meat.

So I went to Sorrels Muller, told him that I knew who he really was, or what he was, told him in great detail about all of the problems that I had been having, and asked for his help. He took me to see Major General Van den Burgh, the head of the South African Secret Police, walked in to the general’s office without knocking and asked him to listen to my story. Whereupon Van den Burgh ordered several men to leave, told them he would see them later; all of these men being either FBI agents or CIA agents, in those days it appeared that they stamped them out with a cookie cutter and you could recognize one at a glance if you met him in a Mexican whorehouse disguised as a nun.

Having listened to the details of my experiences in the Natal parks, the General asked me how he could help. So I told him that I was not sure that he could help, but that I would certainly appreciate it if he could somehow manage to bring all of the bullshit to a screaming halt. I also told him that my films were of potentially great value to the government of South Africa, and that any damage caused me probably hurt South Africa even more, which it did. Because they had been spending millions of dollars every year in unsuccessful attempts to counter all of the propaganda that was being distributed all over the world in attempts to smear South Africa; most of which expense was wasted, because films presenting anything favorable about South Africa would never be shown on television in either the United States or Europe.

I told him that I was not in the business of making propaganda films, neither for nor against South Africa, that my films were not politically slanted in any direction, but that they would present the country in a favorable light because they showed both whites and blacks working together, and working on projects that were looked upon with favor by nearly everybody in both America and Europe, an attempt to help save wild animals.

By the time I talked with the General, I was no longer trying to save the situation in Natal, by then it was far too late for that; I was trying, instead, to keep the rot from spreading; if Player’s lies spread to Kruger the upcoming elephant project there might quickly change from a great opportunity to another major disaster.

After my talk with him, I believed that the general understood the value of my films to South Africa, and apparently he did; because, years later, he was forced out of office when it was revealed that he had been using government funds in attempts to get favorable publicity for South Africa, and had done so without the knowledge or permission of anybody else in the government. He was not accused of diverting funds, or anything else, to his personal advantage; but simply of acting beyond his authority.

The general appeared to be both honest and sincere in his desire to help me, and following my earlier experiences with Player, Steel and a few others in Natal, by that point I was very suspicious of South Africans in general, so my protective instincts were fully alert; my tendency then was to trust him, but in the light of what followed, the details of which I never learned, I still have not reached a verdict in my own mind regarding him.

Because, later, somebody killed Sorrels Muller, under circumstances that I have never been able to figure out; it was my belief then, and still is now, that he was killed to shut him up, to stop him from telling even more people about

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what had been done to me; because Sorrels eventually became very outspoken in his attempts to help me, and did so in spite of his position in the secret police. I never learned just what rank Sorrels held in the secret police, but it must have been very high from the way the general treated him.

I know what happened to Sorrels, but do not know who was responsible for it. Eventually, because of his efforts to help me, Sorrels found himself coming under enormous pressure, to the point that he believed his life was at risk; so, taking his family with him, he went to Jan Smuts International airport, near Johannesburg, checked out of the country through immigration, boarded a jet airliner that was about to depart for Europe, and was going to flee the country when he was stopped.

The airliner was already cleared for take off when it was ordered to return to the terminal, and then several goons boarded the airplane, dragged Sorrels out of his seat, down the aisle, down the steps to the ground, across the tarmac, through the terminal, threw him in a car and roared off. During all of which his wife was desperately trying to stop them, screaming and beating the goons on the back with her fists; but they simply ignored her, brushed her off like a fly, offered no explanation to anyone.

The following day, an article appeared in the Johannesburg newspaper stating that Sorrels was dragged out of the airplane by agents of the secret police; but no reason for such an action was given. Then a day later, the same newspaper printed a retraction; apologized for the earlier statement about the secret police, and then said that Sorrels was removed from the airplane by men employed by his father; because, the article said, it appeared to his father that Sorrels was suffering from mental problems.

Sure. But if you are naive enough to really believe that his father, or anybody's father, could send a bunch of goons out to an international airport, stop an airliner from departing, drag somebody off of the airplane and haul them off with no explanation of any kind, then you are not just naive but are also stupid.

Trying to pull a stunt like that, at that time and place, would have got your ass so full of bullet holes that you would have looked like Swiss cheese; the guards on that airport were armed with machineguns, were constantly on the alert because of the very real possibility of a terrorist attack at any moment, and would have stopped those goons if they had not been ordered to permit what took place, and could have been given such orders only by somebody in a position of great authority.

According to the story that was later leaked out, by somebody, Sorrels was then confined in a mental institution, was held without charges of any kind being filed against him, and was not permitted to talk to anybody. Then, so the story went, he was released, whereupon he went immediately to a gun store and killed himself in front of several witnesses. And perhaps he did kill himself, maybe that was his best option; if somebody had been beating you in the balls with a rubber hose for a period of several months, you might look upon suicide very favorably.

All I know for sure is that he was killed by somebody, and that he was not dragged off of that airplane by goons working for his father; I would rather believe in the tooth fairy or Santa Claus than believe that story.

So just what do I now believe? I believe that the rot had spread far too high, I believe that somebody in the government was afraid of a major scandal, and that they were willing to go to almost any lengths in their efforts to prevent the true story from ever leaking out to the media. If, like Player, they were afraid that I would leak the story to the media, then they misjudged me; because, prior to the writing of this book, I have never mentioned any of this to anybody in the media, did not believe that doing so would serve any worthwhile purpose, and might get me killed. The people who have tried to kill me have never been very successful in their attempts, but that was usually a one on one situation, which at least gave me a fighting chance, but, as they say . . . "You cannot fight City Hall." I had sense enough to realize that if the South African government really wanted me dead, I could do very little in the way of protecting myself. Besides, you eventually get a little tired of constantly looking back over your shoulder, sleeping with a gun in your hand, and remaining in a continuous state of full alert.

My remaining doubts in regard to what really happened in South Africa are a result of the fact that I know that the general was one of a very few men with enough authority to order what happened to Sorrels, and yet I have no proof

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that he was even involved in the situation. Additional doubts being introduced by the fact that my impression of the general was very favorable. But somebody did it.

Few things are really clearly understood at the time that they are actually happening, but most things usually do become clear after the passage of a few years; but, even nearly thirty years later, I still do not fully understand what happened in South Africa.

Not all of the people in Natal tried to hurt me; quite the contrary, some of the people there went to rather great lengths in their efforts to help me. And some of these people were punished by Player for having helped me, or in some cases when Player merely suspected that they were acting in a friendly manner towards me. One ranger had devoted two years of his spare time, together with what money he could save from his relatively low salary, to building himself a nice house in one of the parks; but when Player learned that I had given this ranger a ride from Durban to the parks, when he was returning from a brief vacation, he transferred him to another park, took over the ranger's house and gave him nothing in the way of compensation.

Jan Oelofse, the Chief Capture Officer, helped us during the elephant operation in Kruger, and was then so badly treated by Player that he left the Natal parks, went to Southwest Africa (now Namibia) and opened a private game park; Jan also came from a relatively wealthy family, had worked in the Natal parks only because he liked what he was doing there. Jan later visited me in this country several times.

In spite of our initial run in, which was a direct result of another of Player's fuck ups, Nick Van Niekirk and I became good friends. He was a tough bastard, but straight as an arrow and afraid of nobody. He made a trip to this country with a large load of wild animals, by ship, and when the ship arrived in New York the authorities refused to permit him to offload the animals; between the time that the animals were shipped from South Africa and later reached New York, the rules were changed. Previously, a ship carrying such animals was permitted to stop at other ports enroute to this country; but while Nick was on the high seas with his animals, that rule was changed, and under the new rule such animals could be shipped only on a ship that made a nonstop voyage with no other ports of call enroute.

But Nick had to unload the animals, because he could not delay the ship at a cost of several thousand dollars a day, and had no way to ship the animals back to South Africa; so, after arguing with the officials in New York for a few hours, he reached the limit of his patience. Then he called every major newspaper and television station in New York City and told them to send reporters to the ship immediately if they wanted to cover a very dramatic story. When the reporters arrived, he told the officials . . . "Do you see this knife, and do you see all of those cameras? Well, if you do not permit me to start unloading these animals immediately, then you leave me no choice; I am going to take this knife and cut the throats of all of these animals, and then I am going to heave all of them over the side into the harbor, crates and all, and these reporters are going to record the whole damned thing on film, and you will see it on television tonight, and if that happens then your ass is grass. And if you don't believe me, then roll the dice, but remember that the stakes are your asses."

He would have done it, too; so the animals were unloaded in spite of the new rule.

With Nick's help, we made two more crocodile catching trips to the river on the north end of the lake, and he sent a different ranger with us on these later trips so we had no more problems similar to those created by the ranger who went on the first trip. Trying to catch a large crocodile while simultaneously fist fighting with a ranger does not make either activity all that much easier. One or the other, but not both at the same time.

Another ranger who was in charge of a game park that was very close to the southern border of Mozambique, in an area where terroristic activity was an almost daily occurrence, also helped us in another crocodile catching operation. In that instance we ran into a situation that was very confusing at first: when we flew over the lake where we intended to hunt, during the day, we saw large numbers of crocodiles; but that was during daylight hours, and then when we went out in a boat at night to capture crocs we did not see a single one. They appeared to have vanished.

They seemed to come and go, there during the day but gone at night; whereas, normally, it is much easier to locate them at night.

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But, eventually, we solved that apparent riddle: a hippo had either died in a fight with another one or had been killed by a poacher, and his carcass was floating in a small backwater near one end of the lake, a place we did not look at first because the water was very shallow and it was difficult to reach that spot in a boat. But when we did go there at night we found the water almost alive with crocodiles feeding on the dead hippo. So eventually we caught more crocodiles than we needed, or wanted; but captured these extra crocs because the ranger wanted to relocate them to another lake that did not have enough crocs.

It is also true that all of our problems in Natal were not created by Player: both Bill Binnings and Herbert made contributions in that direction. On the first day that we filmed in Natal, with the assistance of Joel Wallach, the American veterinarian, I wanted to film the darting and capture of a big rhino; so Joel, Bill and Herbert started crawling across the ground in an attempt to get close enough to a herd of rhinos to permit Joel to hit one of them with a drug-filled dart fired from a crossbow, and while this was going on I was filming them from behind, recording a scene that showed all three men and the herd of rhinos.

But, during this stalk, Bill kept getting farther and farther behind the other two men, and was constantly glancing back over his shoulder towards the camera with a look of stark terror on his face; which made it impossible for me to use what would otherwise have been a very good scene.

On another occasion, in a desperate attempt to get Bill into a film in at least some capacity, we filmed a sequence that supposedly involved Bill's apparent return from a hard day in the bush; he rode up to his camp on a horse, covered with dust, got off of the horse and removed all of his clothes in preparation for taking a bath in a horse-watering tank; all of which was filmed from an angle that would not show his genitals even though it would be obvious that he was stark naked.

The plan being that a tame hyena that Jan had raised would then be released and that it would jump into the tank of water with Bill; which it did, but in spite of the fact that the hyena was tame Bill was so afraid of it that he tried to push it away from himself and went too far in that direction; the result being that the hyena eventually got pissed off and started trying to bite Bill on the arm. Whereupon Bill leaped out of the tank and then tried to climb a tall but very weak fence made out of reeds in an attempt to escape from the hyena; and while he was trying to climb this fence the hyena was attempting to bite him in the balls, which really got Bill's attention.

All of which was performed in plain sight in front of two women, Joyce and another young woman who was helping us. Bill undressed in front of these girls with no slightest hesitation, but did not like what happened afterwards.

Following a long list of similar fuck ups on Bill's part, all of which made it obvious to the rangers that Bill was a craven coward, he started spreading bullshit stories about me in an attempt to save face in front of the rangers; believing, I suppose, that if he could convince the rangers that I was some sort of dangerous lunatic that this would justify his actions. Instead, it just created more problems for all of us.

When this came to my attention, knowing that trying to explain to Bill just how counterproductive his actions were would be a waste of time, I looked for another solution to the problem, and eventually found one. Or so I believed for a short while. So I took Herbert aside, carefully explained the problems that were being caused by Bill spreading stories about me, and told him that I needed his cooperation in order to stop Bill from spreading such stories. Then Herbert and I worked out a very carefully worded script for a staged situation that I hoped would bring Bill to his senses. With Bill in the next room of a small house, clearly aware that he could hear every word that was spoken, I read the riot act to Herbert; accused him of exactly the same things that Bill was actually doing, carefully spelled out the damage that this was causing and in the end Herbert admitted, for Bill's benefit, that he was guilty of my accusations, but that he had not previously realized just how much damage was being done, and then apologized and promised that he would not do anything similar in the future.

Later, Bill approached me very hesitantly, told me that he had not intended to spy on me but that he had overheard my conversation with Herbert, and that he, too, had been guilty of similar things; but that he had not previously realized just how much damage was being done. Then apologized and assured me that he would never do any such thing again.

Sure. Well, in fact, he did stop spreading such stories, for a day or so; but quickly reverted to square one.

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Another problem with Bill was a result of his sex drive, accompanied with almost nothing in the way of an ability to attract women; Durban was a resort area and was filled with attractive young women looking for adventure and many of these were attracted to an American film crew, so the other men with me were getting more pussy than they could handle. But not Bill.

So, in a desperate attempt to keep Bill happy, because I had been hearing rumors to the effect that he had been making threats about quitting and going home, which action on his part would make me look very bad in the eyes of the rangers, I located an attractive young girl and hired her for the purpose of having her seduce Bill.

A situation was created that would make it appear that he had picked this girl up as a result of his own efforts, when in fact she picked him up; but when they ended up in Bill's room in the hotel he made no attempt to fuck her; wanted to, but did not know how to go about asking her. She spent several hours in Bill's room every night for a period of about a week, and he still did not fuck her. Then when she would leave Bill's room in the middle of the night she would come immediately to my room and fuck me, while telling me in great detail about her situation with Bill, and asking me for advice about just how she should proceed in order to get Bill to fuck her.

In contrast, George Bergin, who had always been a cock hound, almost literally fucked himself to death on that trip; by the time we were ready to leave he was so weakened by almost nonstop fucking that he was sick all the way from Durban back to Europe.

Herbert, who was not a coward, who was willing to attempt literally anything that I suggested with no slightest hesitation, nevertheless soon reverted to form. Leopards do not change their spots: so Herbert started sneaking around in an attempt to get rich in a way similar to what he attempted to do in Brazil, by buying up all of the stuffed birds in town. In this case he planned to buy up all of the used spears in southern Africa; convinced that he could ship them back home and get rich reselling them.

All of which, of course, had to be hidden from me. But then he found it very difficult to hide several thousand spears, so eventually his plot leaked out. Additionally, he spent most of the trip fighting with Joyce, and once went so far in the direction of insulting her in front of the entire film crew and several rangers that were staying with us in a large house in one of the parks that I could no longer ignore the situation; was forced to call his hand, and did so in a manner intended to make everybody there clearly aware that enough was enough, already. Herbert ended up by locking himself inside a bathroom in an attempt to prevent me from whipping his ass in front of all of the people who were there at the time. In the end I did not whip him, but I did fire him and sent him home, and I also clearly established the rules for acceptable conduct in the minds of everybody else who heard what I had to say. Offered to whip the ass of anybody, or everybody, who disagreed with anything that I had to say; and they believed me. But, strange as it may sound, it is usually easier to intimidate a group of people than it is to scare an individual; because people in a group usually hesitate, want somebody else to make the first move, and in the end nobody moves.

Many of the men in that group were larger than I was, and all of them were younger, some much younger, but the ability to intimidate people has very little to do with size; the sheep clearly recognize a tiger when they come face to face with one. Every man who was in that house was scared almost shitless by my actions and statements, but rather than making them hate me it actually caused them to respect me; all of these were very tough men, and they respected anybody who was even tougher than they were.

With me, violence is not a joke, I take it very seriously; on or off, balls to the wall, all or nothing, and once started I seldom stop before my opponent is either dead or reduced to such a state that he will never again be a threat to anybody. Many men are more than willing to fight, some even look for an opportunity to fight, but very few want to go all the way.

Secondly, I was by far the strongest man there, and the fastest, and they were all clearly aware of both factors. All of them had been witnesses to demonstrations of both my strength and my speed. As I said earlier, the rangers were constantly testing us in every way possible, and I had passed all of their tests; usually in a manner that almost stunned them.

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This was another story that quickly spread throughout the parks, and nobody afterwards tried to stand in my way. Instead, started trying to lend assistance in any way they could. Most men respect both physical strength and strength of character. As Al Capone said . . . “You can go a long way with a smile and a friendly attitude; but you can go a lot farther, a lot faster, with a smile and a gun.”

The only problem I had on that trip that resulted from George’s actions, or rather a failure to act on his part, resulted from a very heavy rain storm: we were using two airplanes, the Aztec loaned to me by Piper in Geneva and a Cherokee Six that I had rented in Durban, and George usually flew the Cherokee Six. Late one afternoon he was supposed to meet me on a short, rough landing strip located on the side of a mountain, but he did not arrive at the appointed time; so I went looking for him in the Aztec, and found the Cherokee Six parked on a landing strip that was covered with several inches of water from a still ongoing heavy rain storm. I buzzed the house where I assumed George was staying and he came outside to see what was happening; so I shook my fist at him and pointed towards the landing strip where his plane was parked. He understood my signals, jumped in a Landrover and drove to the landing strip; then called me on the radio from the parked airplane, telling me that he could not take off because the water was too deep.

So I told him . . . “Either take off or get killed trying, because I need that airplane, and I need it now.”

So he took off . . . But watching the takeoff from above, I thought for a few moments that I had pushed him too far; the water really was very deep, during his takeoff he looked like a whale moving through shallow water at a very high rate of speed. The plane was hidden from my view by the resulting spray of water and came back into my sight only after he pulled up into the air after a very long run on the ground.

Then he followed me back to the strip on the side of the mountain and landed. By then it was later than I had intended to start filming, but not yet too late to film. The scene that I was trying to get had to be filmed late in the afternoon in order to provide the angle of sunlight that was required. Joel Wallach had brought a young, orphaned rhino that he had been raising in his house to the strip in a Landrover, and I wanted to film the moving of the rhino from the Landrover to the smaller of our two airplanes; could not use the Aztec for that purpose because of the position of its door, but the Cherokee Six had a large cargo door on one side and it was thus ideal for the sequence I wanted to film.

Joel also brought with him his young daughter, a very cute little girl, and I wanted to use her in the sequence as well.

Since we intended to film inside both the Landrover and the airplane, the sunlight had to be almost horizontal in order to light up the interiors of both machines, and such conditions existed only in the very late afternoon.

So we filmed the sequence as planned, or almost as planned, and it was a very good sequence, or would have been had it not been for something that we overlooked at the time; one of the rangers who was helping us, and who appeared in the sequence with the baby rhino and the little girl, was wearing very short shorts, and no underwear, and when he squatted down in the Landrover and later in the airplane to hold the baby rhino, his balls were hanging out of the bottom of his shorts in plain sight, but since the rest of us were looking at the rhino and the girl nobody noticed his balls until much later. So the film could not be used.

As they say . . . “Anything that can go wrong will go wrong.”

The same damned thing occurred again, later . . . In a scene that I filmed in Cinemascope for a feature film, a scene intended to be used as a background for the opening credits of the film, Jan Oelofse was squatting down on a raft in the middle of a lake trying to catch a hippo with a steel noose attached to a long pole, and it was a very spectacular scene, in more ways than one; because the hippo launched an attack on the raft, and because Jan’s balls were hanging out in plain sight. Something that nobody noticed until much later, did not notice until we had gone to the trouble and expense of producing all of the film’s credits that were superimposed over the scene. Which means that we were not the only ones who failed to notice his balls hanging out in plain sight, because the credits used over that scene were produced by a major film laboratory in Hollywood, and none of the people who worked on the credits noticed Jan’s balls either.

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Your eyes are naturally attracted to the principle action that is occurring in a scene and it is thus easily possible to overlook something else that is in plain sight. You literally do not see all of a scene, but only part of it. So such fuck ups are common. Which is only one of a long list of reasons why you have to throw away at least ninety percent of the film that you shoot; or, at least, that is the usual shooting ratio, ten scenes being shot for each one that is used. I tried to keep my shooting ratio down to six to one, and sometimes did better than that. What happens in front of the camera is relatively unimportant, it is only what you manage to catch on film that matters.

Herbert created another near disaster, one that might have resulted in killing several people, by failing to follow my clear instructions. I wanted to film a darted rhino and the Aztec in the same scene, and in order to get the exact scene I was after we had to make careful preparations: the rhino had to be situated in a very carefully selected spot, so we darted him and then followed him with the Landrover in order to make sure that when he went down on his belly as a result of the capture drug he would be located where I wanted him to be.

Then I mounted the camera on a tripod exactly where I wanted it to be, framed the scene I wanted, focused the lens, set the exposure that was required, and then drove off to the airport in Matubatuba to get the Aztec, taking George, Joyce and the ranger John Clark with me. Herbert was told what to do, but, of course, then later decided to change things.

The rhino was down on his belly on top of a low hill, and it was my plan to fly the Aztec down to an altitude where the airplane would actually be lower than the rhino until the last split second of the scene, so that the airplane would not appear in the scene until it suddenly pulled up and passed over the rhino at a distance of only a few feet above it.

This scene also required, apart from the rhino's position, that the ground beyond the rhino, from the camera's viewpoint, was lower than the spot that the rhino was on. Lower ground beyond the rhino being required in order to hide the airplane until the last split second of the scene.

But when we got back to the filming location in the Aztec, we found Herbert had changed everything, had moved the camera to the opposite side from the position where I had placed it; and in spite of the fact that I circled the spot repeatedly while throwing notes out of the window telling Herbert to put the camera back into the original position, nothing happened on the ground, either the notes were not noticed or were simply ignored. Moving the camera also created other problems, made the situation far more dangerous: the way it was planned I would have been flying into a head wind, so my approach speed would have been slow, but the changed position of the camera required me to approach with a tail wind, so the approach speed was much faster. Secondly, the planned approach would have kept the airplane well clear of any trees, but the changed approach required me to fly over and between several trees that made the approach much more dangerous.

There were about a dozen people on the ground watching all of this, Herbert, several rangers and several native game guards. And they had been given clear instructions in regard to one required action on their part: one person was to be selected to act as a guide for the airplane by hand signals. If I appeared to be too low on the approach from the camera's viewpoint, this one man was supposed to hold one arm straight up over his head, indicating that I should pull up; if I was too high he should hold both arms straight down at his side, indicating that I should go lower; if I was too far to one side he should point in the direction that I needed to turn.

At very low altitudes it is difficult to judge just how close above the ground, or a tree, that you are; so it was my intention to make several passes above the rhino, gradually reducing my altitude from one pass to the next, judging my actions by signals from the people on the ground, who were in a much better position to judge my altitude than I was.

Flying back to the airport, driving back to the filming location, killing Herbert, relocating the camera into the proper position, going back for the airplane a second time, and then returning to the rhino's location and filming the scene in the manner that I had planned to would have required more time than I had available; because, again, the angle of the light was critical for the scene I wanted.

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So, finally, I gave up any additional attempts to communicate with the people on the ground and tried to make the best of a bad situation. But, on the first pass over the rhino, instead of one person on the ground giving me signals I had five people trying to guide me; one man pointing up, another pointing down, a third pointing to my right, a fourth pointing to my left, and a fifth waving both arms above his head in an attempt to give me a signal that I did not understand.

Finally, having made about half a dozen low passes above the rhino at what I hoped was an ever lower altitude from one pass until the next, I saw one of the native game guards suddenly break away from the group then standing just beyond the rhino from my viewpoint and run off to one side as fast as he could; quite obviously he had seen something that scared him, so his movement was a clear warning to me of impending danger, but it was already too late.

I was too low, and the game guard realized that I was about to hit a tree, and assumed that I would crash into the group of standing men; which I almost did. He ran because he wanted to get clear of an impending crash; so it appears that he was the smartest man in that group on the ground, because the rest of them just stood there.

But just as I saw him start to run my left wing hit a tree, the leading edge of that wing was crushed back clear against the main spar that provides support for the wing, the tree was yanked up by its roots out of the ground, and I passed above the rhino and the group of men on the ground with the tree firmly wedged into my wing, dragging the roots of the tree just above both the rhino and the men on the ground.

Just how in Hell the airplane was able to keep flying with a fairly large tree hanging from its wing is more than I can explain, but it did. I was able to climb in spite of the tree, and having flown the approach with my landing gear extended into the down position I then tried to raise the landing gear, and it appeared to come up but also appeared to do so very slowly; so I was not then sure if the wheels were still attached to the airplane.

Thus, when we got back to the airport and I started to approach for a landing I did not know whether I had wheels or not, pushed the landing gear lever into the down position and hoped that the wheels were still there. They were, and I then made one of the smoothest landings in my life. About halfway down the runway, still moving at about forty miles an hour, the tree came loose from the wing and fell off onto the runway.

Another thing that worried me was that my left wing looked like it had been painted bright green after I hit the tree, and since that was the color of the fuel I was using I assumed that the tree had ruptured one of the fuel tanks and that the wing was covered with gasoline; but it turned out that the green color of the wing was produced by sap from the tree rather than gasoline.

John Clark was shit scared of flying, and had been sent on that trip by Player only in an attempt to get back at Clark for having earlier driven a Landrover off a cliff, an incident that resulted in the destruction of the Landrover and serious injuries to both passengers, Player and the visiting VIP. On the way back to the airport Clark spent the entire trip vomiting onto a map that Joyce was holding on her lap. The smell from which did not do much in the way of improving the situation.

Later that night, after I returned to Player's headquarters and told him what had happened, he laughed about it and then suddenly realized that I had provided him with an opportunity for even more revenge. So he got Clark on the radio, and told him . . . "Listen very carefully, John, that whole thing today was a total fuck up, so you are going to have to do it again tomorrow; but I want you to do it right this time, and I want your ass in that airplane in order to make damned sure that it is done right, and I don't give a fuck if you have to make a hundred or more passes over the rhino. That scene is important, so just keep doing it until you get it right. Do you understand me?"

And Clark said . . . "Yes, Mr. Player, I understand." And he sounded like he was about to start crying. But we did not make any additional attempt to get that scene, and could not use the film shot that day.

Visiting tourists had been having problems with a large male hippo that had made several attacks upon small boats and scared the shit out of a lot of people, so Player asked me to try to solve the problem by capturing the hippo and moving him to another lake. In that direction we constructed a large and very sturdy platform out of heavy timbers that we then attached to a number of empty gasoline drums that were needed to make the platform float. And using this

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large raft we then tried to catch the hippo by noosing him from the raft; we assumed that he would attack the raft and that this would provide an opportunity to noose him, and he did attack the raft, but only once, and Jan, who was holding the noose pole while I was filming the operation, missed him with the noose.

Following that one attack the hippo must have assumed that he was overmatched, because he then disappeared and never returned.

So then I had another idea: the lake was salt water, and I knew that the hippos went ashore at night and went into a small mud hole that provided them with fresh water for drinking purposes. The banks around this mud hole were so steep that the hippos could move into and out of the mud hole only with great difficulty, so I assumed that if we made the banks even steeper than they already were that the hippos could then still get into the mud hole but could not get out again.

This worked like a charm, and we caught several hippos as a result of that idea, the rogue male that we were after and several others; but noosing these hippos in the shallow water of the mud hole was not the easiest thing I ever tried to do, we had hippos literally leaping into the air above the surface of the water, charging wildly in the direction of anybody who got too close and generally carrying on as if they were insane. But the results, on film, were spectacular.

But, having caught a hippo, it was damned hard to pull him up the steep banks of the mud hole and shove him inside a large and very strong crate on the back of a truck. In the end that problem was solved by using a powerful winch mounted on a truck, but we had several very close calls; John Clark missed getting killed by the skin of his teeth.

So some of the things that we tried did work out well; not many, but some.