

And God Laughs...

The Arthur Jones Autobiography

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“I just ask a girl to dance with me, and then come right out and ask them to fuck me. And, yes, I get slapped a lot, but I get fucked a lot, too.”

Ray Olive

Starting to work for my father when I was about two years old, a woman named Enna Rhodes that we called Peggy lived with us for about ten years. She worked in my father’s office during the day but spent most of her time in our home and was primarily responsible for taking care of me when I was very young. She was probably about sixty when she started working for my father and she had to support her father, who was about eighty years old.

He lived in a very small, four-roomed, wooden house in a place called Byrdtown, Arkansas, about eighteen miles out on a dirt road from Morrilton, where I was born., Shortly after the Civil War he walked clear across this country, from coast to coast, four times, primarily supporting himself by hanging wallpaper any place he could find such a job. But he was also a master craftsman in several fields, could build or repair almost anything. He used colored pictures of birds, animals and fish that he got by removing the covers of magazines devoted to the outdoors as wallpaper for his house; every room in the house apart from the kitchen was papered with these pictures.

There was no running water or plumbing of any kind, he got water from a well located just behind the kitchen and used a bucket that he kept under his bed to shit and piss in. He bathed only twice each year, once in the fall and again in the spring, always bathing in a creek that ran through the property behind his house. He removed his outer clothing at night but did not remove, or change, his longhanded underwear for about six months; put it on in the fall and never removed it until the following spring.

He had an obvious but not unpleasant body odor and never appeared to be dirty. There were several other very old men living nearby and most of them were veterans of the Civil War, and I spent a lot of time talking to these old men, and listening to their stories. I once asked one old man if he would like to live his life over again, and he said . . . “No, once was enough, I don’t believe I could stand it again.”

But I did not believe him; I did not say so, but thought to myself . . . “Yeah, sure, you old bastard; you’re saying that only because you know you can’t do it. But given the chance to do it, you would probably be willing to give both of your balls for the opportunity.” But, sixty-odd years later, I do believe what he said: once is enough, thank you.

Peggy’s father also believed that he could keep watermelons fresh throughout the winter by painting them with several coats of whitewash; painted them and then stored them under his bed. I saw such painted watermelons several times, but still don’t know if painting them produced the desired result.

When I was very young he made me a number of toys; a tractor that was powered by a rubber band was constructed from a spool that thread came on, a couple of large kitchen matches and other parts that he made from pieces of wood, and it worked beautifully.

He taught me how to catch crawfish, which we then called Crawdads, and small harmless snakes, and taught me how to identify many of the stars; to me, at the time, he appeared to know just about everything. He was just short of being a century old when he died, so I knew him for quite a while. The only way he had to get into town was by riding a very crude bus that somebody had constructed by using a very old truck, a truck that was probably built during or very shortly after the First World War. This bus made a trip into town and back every day of the week, but the eighteen mile trip into town required about three hours, because the bus stopped at every house along the way; a trip to town on this bus, and back home later, then cost only a dime; but you had to sit on very narrow and hard wooden benches, and the bus was usually packed solidly with people, chickens, pigs, goats and sometimes even cattle.

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Somewhat later, then about eight years old, my father wanted to send me to Oklahoma City on a bus, but I refused to go; at the time I had never seen a bus except for the one I had ridden on in Arkansas, and was not about to ride a distance of sixty miles in something like that. But in later years I made trips all over the country in busses, and usually spent the entire trip talking to the drivers. Most bus drivers like to talk as much as barbers do.

My father owned a large, two storied house in Morrilton and had built a small hospital directly across the street from it; a hospital that failed and caused my father to move to Seminole, Oklahoma, in 1926. But he could not find a buyer for the house, did not manage to sell it until several years after the Second World War, and then got only \$2,500.00 for it; today, such a house would be worth more than \$100,000.00 almost any place in this country, and probably \$250,000.00 or more in California.

We went back and forth between Oklahoma and Arkansas frequently while I was a child, and when in Arkansas I stayed either in the house in town or in Peggy's father's small house in the country. We always had so-called bird dogs, both pointers and setters, and usually had several other types of animals. At one time both my sister and I had white rabbits that were identical; later, when one of them died, it being impossible to determine which one, she came running into the house and told me . . . "Your rabbit just died." But I got even with her a few years later: we then each had a collie dog, and I entered both of them in a dog show, and her dog won the first place prize, but I gave the judges the wrong name so it appeared that my dog won.

I trained both of these dogs not to eat until I told them to and they would not touch their food until given my permission to do so; but would stand quivering over it leaning so far forwards that a touch on their ass would probably have caused them to fall on their faces into the food pan.

But once given permission to eat my dog would then spend most of his time running back and forth between the two food pans, apparently convinced that the other dog was getting something better.

I always had as many snakes as I could find, primarily rattlesnakes; plus a wide variety of animals, rabbits, skunks, a fox, coyotes, a large owl that I caught when it broke its wing, and I raised white rats to feed my snakes.

Sometime in the late 1930s, I caught a younger boy named Leonard McGee when he tried to steal some white rats out of the cage that I was raising them in, a cage located in a corner of our garage. Some older boys sent McGee to steal rats from me since I had refused to sell any of them. But I liked McGee and we became close friends.

At the age of about ten he started fucking his somewhat older sister, and even offered to let me fuck her; but I never did. But I did fuck several other girls that he brought to me. His father made his living by buying damaged oil rigs and repairing them; he had invented and built a machine that was capable of restoring the original shape of heavy pipe that had been badly bent and was then generally considered to be worthless. So he bought such damaged parts of oil drilling towers, repaired them and then resold them for a good profit.

He had a large truck that he used for hauling his very heavy machine on, and had a powerful winch on the truck that he used for loading and unloading the machine. McGee started driving this big truck before he was twelve years old, then used it in order to steal cattleguards that he then sold as junk metal. Cattleguards were used as a means to keep cattle inside a fenced area without the need for a gate; you could drive over a cattleguard but a cow could not walk across one. So they would dig a deep ditch covered with a cattleguard made from heavy pipe. I have often wondered just how many farmers around there came roaring out in a car at night and then fell into the ditch since McGee had stolen the cattleguard.

So far as I know he was never caught stealing cattleguards, but he did get caught trying to steal a boat from a place called Danielson's lake, and the old man who owned the boat almost shot him.

McGee's father bought a small airplane in 1939 and both McGee and his father quickly learned to fly it; when McGee was twelve he frequently landed that plane in his back yard. Neither he nor his father had a pilot's license of any kind for several years after they started flying; but eventually McGee did get a Private Pilot's license.

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Just about the time the war in Europe ended, a few weeks after I married Gladys, McGee and I were flying an ex-military plane in southern Texas, chasing large herds of deer, when he hit a high-voltage powerline and that caused us to crash.

There was a lot of military flying for training purposes there during the war and that powerline had previously been knocked down by airplanes several times. So the last time it was repaired they decided to make it so strong that it could never be knocked down again. They used very heavy wire and braced half of the poles with a so-called deadman, a pipe buried under the ground and attached to a heavy steel cable that was also attached near the top of a pole. The idea being that such a pole could not be knocked down.

Well, we knocked down six of these poles, and yanked three of the deadmen up out of the ground; but the powerline itself did not break. We ended up with the stump of a fairly large tree shoved clear through the airplane immediately behind my seat, and the plane was utterly destroyed; although neither of us even got a scratch.

When the owner of the place, a man named Marbach, arrived on the scene driving a truck, we were both still laughing; laughing probably as a result of the release of nervous energy because there really wasn't very much funny about it.

So Marbach said . . . "Just what the fuck are you laughing about? You just knocked out the power in this whole end of the county; and now I've got to milk over two-thousand cows by hand. If you don't stop laughing I'll make you two bastards milk all of them."

Just before we departed from the airport in that rented plane, the plane's owner asked me what time we would be back. So I told him . . . "I don't know since I don't know just how long it will take us to walk back from wherever we leave the crash." Which, later, he did not believe was very funny.

About two years later, having been unable to locate McGee in the meantime, the FAA revoked his pilot's license and sent a registered letter to that effect, a letter that McGee never received, or so he said later. For the next eleven years after his license had been revoked, he continued to fly all over this country, worked as a commercial pilot, gave flying instructions, hauled both freight and passengers for hire, and nobody ever asked to see his license. In the Old West it was not considered to be polite to ask a stranger where he was from, and even today few pilots will ever ask to see your license. A rather long list of people who never had a license of any kind have been caught flying as a captain for a major airline.

One man got a job as a captain flying big jets for Pan American Airlines, flying back and forth between San Francisco and Tokyo; a man who never had a license and had never even learned how to fly a small airplane. And he got away with it for more than a year. His copilots and flight engineers never suspected a thing, always believed that he was fully qualified for his job.

He would sit down in the captain's seat, turn to the copilot and ask him just what the duties of a copilot were supposed to be; whereupon the copilot would say something to the effect that he was supposed to fly in the event that the captain was incapacitated. So then the supposed captain would say . . . "All right, your captain just had a heart attack, so let's see if you can get us to Tokyo." Then would sit there doing nothing throughout the flight.

The only reason he ever got caught was because the airline changed the rules regarding flight crews, had each member of the crew switch jobs so that any crew member could be captain, copilot, flight engineer or navigator; and when it came that guy's turn to navigate it was instantly obvious that he did not know what he was doing.

In 1958, flying a plane that belonged to the owner of the California Alligator Farm, McGee crashed into Lake Ponchartrain just after takeoff from Lakefront Airport in New Orleans. A crash he caused because he refused to pay twenty dollars to repair a hole in the float of his carburetor; so the engine quit right after he got off the ground.

The FAA inspector who fished him out of the lake after the crash later told me . . . "That guy had the damndest license I ever saw: all he had was about half of a photostatic copy of a private license that had been revoked eleven years previously. And he had been flying commercially with it for all that time."

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During the period of more than fifty years that I have known him, McGee walked away unhurt from more airplane crashes than anybody else I ever heard about. Most of which crashes were his fault; he was, in fact, a very skillful pilot, but he was also a very careless one and continually tried to show off.

During the Christmas holidays in 1962 I put on a personal appearance show in Chicago; during the first few days our business was very bad, but it improved greatly during the last few days so we ended up with at least a small profit. So, a couple of months later, when I put on a similar show in Cincinnati, I wanted to be damned sure that everybody there knew about the show. In the direction of making the public aware of my show I hired McGee to crash a B 25 medium bomber on Lunkin Airport; but it had to be done in such a way that the news cameramen and reporters would all have enough advance notice in order to be on the scene.

So when McGee called the control tower he told them that one of the two engines had failed and he did not want to attempt a landing until he had burned off most of his remaining fuel. So he flew around in circles over the airport for more than an hour. Then he called the tower to say that his copilot, Roy Hurst, wanted to bail out with a parachute, and Roy did jump.

Then, later, when he started an approach for a landing with only one engine running, McGee announced that the landing gear would not go down, so he would have to make a belly landing. By that time about a hundred reporters and cameramen were there taking pictures and filming everything.

Before the airplane touched down on the paved runway, McGee opened the hatch over the top of the cockpit so he could get out after the plane stopped moving. But the hatch on the bottom was also open, Roy had opened it in order to jump out; the result being that the airplane appeared to be on fire after it touched down, what appeared to be smoke was coming out of the open top hatch. Believing that it was on fire, McGee jumped up through the top hatch while the plane was still moving, ran to the front of the nose, jumped down in front of the still moving plane and then outran it.

What appeared to be smoke was actually aluminum dust, the paved runway scraping against the belly of the airplane produced very fine particles of aluminum dust that was sucked up through the cockpit and then passed out through the open top hatch. It took McGee more than a week to get all of that dust out of the pores on his face and neck; he looked like one of those gilded men who used to pose as a statue painted silver.

Later, during the show, while I was being questioned by an FAA inspector who was very suspicious about the crash, a visitor came up to us and said . . . "Gee, Mr. Jones, you certainly have a very spectacular way of arriving in town. What are you going to do in New York?" Which was a remark that I could have done without at the moment.

We got an enormous amount of publicity from the crash and the show was a hit, the large auditorium we were using was packed solid with people for fifteen hours a day, for ten straight days. The heat from so many people made the auditorium almost unbearably hot even though the temperature outside was below zero, and even with large doors on both ends of the room standing wide open.

And there seemed to be more pussy available there than any place I had ever been before. Young, beautiful girls just walked up and asked for a key to your hotel room and said that they would be waiting for you there when we closed late at night. I had three different girls waiting in different rooms one night, and during the ten days of the show I fucked nearly thirty girls, all of them both young and very attractive.

I was fucking one of these girls, Mary Ann Green, when her boyfriend phoned the room and made threats about calling the police; so we changed rooms with Roy Hurst, assuming that he would not be able to find us there.