

# And God Laughs...

## The Arthur Jones Autobiography

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**“Well, I’ll ride down to south Texas with you to visit your snake hunters, but I am not going across the border to visit the Mexican whorehouses.”**

**Sam Mutrux**

Sam Mutrux lived in a nice house that he owned near Port Orange, Texas; he had a very good job with Gulf Oil Corporation, a wife and attractive teenage daughter and he was a thief and an alligator poacher. More than six feet tall and very powerfully built he was one of the best outdoorsmen I ever met. And I was the only man that he ever met who was stronger than he was.

For years he captured hundreds of large alligators inside a Federal game reserve, hunting them during daylight hours and digging them out of their caves, and he was never caught during these poaching activities. Eventually he became infamous under the assumed name of Pelu and after several years of such poaching the Federal government hired the famous hunter Sam Mutrux to track down and capture Pelu; but, somehow, Sam never quite managed to catch himself. Afterwards was literally uncatchable; because he could always claim that he managed to get Pelu’s alligators but that the poacher escaped.

His house and garage were both filled with stuff that he had stolen from his employer; hundreds of cases of dynamite, large quantities of oil field pipe and many other things. But they never caught him doing that either. In his back yard he had a large mud hole surrounded by a chain link fence where he kept his alligators until they were picked up by customers. And he also had several huge Alligator Snapping turtles in the mud hole; these turtles sometimes reach a weight of 200 pounds and are very dangerous if you attempt to handle them, can easily bite off a man’s hand.

The water in the mud hole was about three feet deep, was filthy and was dark green in color from algae, so it was not easy to locate the alligators in order to catch them. One very cold day, finally having caught all of the alligators out of the mud hole, a friend of Sam’s said he would catch one of the big turtles and give it to me. Then he prodded around in the pool with a long pole looking for the turtle. When he located one he then reached down under the water with both hands, intending to grab both the front and rear of the turtle’s shell, which is the only safe way to handle one; but the turtle’s mouth was open, and he stuck his hand inside its mouth. When I saw the expression on his face I instantly knew exactly what had happened.

If the water had been warmer the turtle would have removed all of the fingers on his hand, but reptiles are slowed down by cold weather and thus he was not bitten as badly as he might have been, but it was bad enough. We had been tying up the alligators with electrician’s tape and that is impregnated with creosote, so his hands were black with this residue from the tape and the wounds in his fingers were made much worse by all of the crap that was forced down inside his crushed fingers. It took a doctor all night to get all of that shit out of his wounds; the flesh was cut badly and most of the bones in his fingers were crushed into powder. It was a mess.

Ray Olive and I stopped by to see Sam on many of our frequent trips to south Texas to pick up snakes from my hunters who lived along the border; and we tried to get him to go with us on those trips, but he always refused. But, finally, he agreed to go, but said that he would not visit the Mexican whorehouses with us, would stay in Texas while we visited Mexico.

But, a bit later, he did agree to cross the border with us, still insisting that he would not go to the whorehouses. But finally did go to a whorehouse, then refused to leave; said he had found a home, that he was going to stay there, was never going back home. And he never did go back home; stayed in Mexico for several years looking for gold and later worked for several years in South America. Was accidentally electrocuted while trying to save the life of a man who had made contact with a high voltage power line buried under a street where they were digging a hole; when the other man was electrocuted Sam grabbed him, was almost killed himself and was badly burned on one hand and arm, had terrible scars from the accident when I next saw him.

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Years later he moved to Brownsville, Texas, married a Mexican girl and had several children by her; by then he was fluent in Spanish and almost never spoke English again. He was a Cajun and also spoke French fluently.

Somebody got one of Sam's teenage sons hooked on dope and Sam went to great lengths trying to straighten the boy out, but eventually the boy hung himself while he was in jail. Then Sam decided to find the man who sold the dope to his son, intending to kill him. But in his attempts to find the dope pusher he came in contact with a government snitch, an informer, and was then accused of being a dope pusher himself. Was indicted, tried, convicted and sentenced to prison; but jumped his bond and fled to Mexico. He managed to avoid capture for quite a while but was eventually caught, brought back to this country and sent to prison. Sam was many things, not all of them good, but he was never a dope pusher, so they sent an innocent man to prison. Sam is now nearly seventy, but is still a very powerful man, more than capable of defending himself, so I don't believe many other prisoners will be tempted to fuck with him; and will die if they do.

Mike Tsalickis, one of my partners in the Tarpon Zoo in 1951, was caught trying to smuggle in about 11,000 pounds of cocaine and went to prison. Mike established an animal collecting compound in southern Colombia, in Letecia, on the Amazon river, and exported hundreds of thousands of exotic animals and hundreds of millions of tropical fish from there for a period of nearly thirty years. Later built a hotel that he named the Anaconda and started taking tourists on trips to visit local Indian villages. Finally bought a large island in the Amazon and started stocking it with huge numbers of squirrel monkeys; there are probably at least 100,000 monkeys on that island today. If they could now be legally imported they would be worth tens of millions of dollars.

On my first trip with Mike, in 1951, I got the impression that he did not like girls; but changed that opinion later, when I learned that he had fucked practically every whore in Colombia and large numbers of them in Brazil. His string probably extended into the thousands also.

Based upon my earlier experiences with Mike, I was not surprised when he got arrested for dope smuggling and I am very happy to know that he will stay in prison until he dies; he belongs there.

When he got caught there were several published statements in regard to just how much cocaine they found; stated amounts varying from 8,000 to 11,000 pounds, so it appears that somebody else may have stolen a lot of that cocaine after Mike got caught.

During the many years that I spent in Latin American countries I never came in contact with illegal drugs, but quite a few of the people that I met in the animal and fish business have subsequently been convicted of drug smuggling. Probably even more than I am aware of.

In the 1950s a Jewish man named Sam Kay pulled a scam on the Colombian government that produced a profit of several million dollars. Sam went to Colombia and established legal residence in the country, then applied for a permit to start an airline; then bought Colombian pesos on the black market at a rate of \$7.50 pesos for each \$1.00 in U. S. Currency; then used the pesos to buy dollars at the official rate of \$2.50 pesos to a dollar; thus turning three million dollars into nine million dollars, which was then wire transferred to Miami supposedly for the purpose of buying airplanes for his airline. But once the money was out of the country Sam returned to Miami; never having intended to buy any airplanes.

When Mike Tsalickis heard about that he tried to pull a similar stunt, but the Colombian government had wised up by then; Mike did intend to buy an airplane, an old surplus flying boat called a PBY, and exported that plane to Colombia; planning to end up with a free airplane and a big profit in a manner similar to the scam that Sam Kay pulled off. He bought the airplane on credit, financed by a bank in Miami. But the Colombian government seized the airplane; the last time I saw it was on the airport in Bogota, Colombia. By then it was rotting and was worthless; the airport in Bogota is 8,400 feet above sea level, so it gets both very cold and very hot there, and it rains a lot; since Mike's plane was covered with canvas it was quickly destroyed by the harsh weather.

Mike never paid the bank in Miami so they lost their investment and the Colombian government got a worthless airplane.

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In 1959 I stopped by the Tarpon Zoo in order to film a chimpanzee that Trudy Jerkins, Mike's partner in the zoo, was raising in her home; it was a remarkable animal, used a toilet, wiped its ass afterwards, flushed the toilet, dressed himself in clothes and shoes, made cakes by doing everything from mixing the ingredients to the baking, then cut the cake into pieces and served them to people as if he was a waiter. Opened and closed gates in fences and damned near anything else that he saw people doing.

Eventually he went too far: he saw a man handling rattlesnakes and decided to try that himself, but was bitten on the hand and died. He loved to hook up a hose to a faucet, turn on the water, and then spray large numbers of monkeys in cages; laughing like mad while doing so.

While I was there filming the chimp, Trudy asked me to help her design a system that would permit her to determine her exact costs for animals that Mike was shipping her from South America; I told her that I did not have time enough for that at the moment, but that I would be back again in about two weeks and would bring her copies of my cost sheets; told her that by looking at them she could work out an identical system that would tell her the exact costs of her animals.

When I later gave her these cost sheets, which were very complicated but perfectly clear, she went through the ceiling, instantly realizing that Mike had been stealing from her. My landed cost for a squirrel monkey was about \$2.75 on the average, but Mike had been charging her \$8.00 loaded on the plane in Colombia; to which she then had to add transportation, import duties and other costs; the result being that her squirrel monkeys were costing her more than four times as much as mine cost me.

I could have sold her squirrel monkeys landed in this country cheaper than the prices Mike was charging her. I had been advertising them for \$6.00 each and Trudy was aware of that; but had always assumed that none were ever sold at that price, that it was a come on intended to attract customers who would then be told that we were out of \$6.00 monkeys but did have them for \$20.00. But in fact I sold thousands of them for \$6.00.

Once, a year or so earlier, when my man in Peru shipped me 1,100 squirrel monkeys to Miami, in spite of having been told to ship no monkeys on that trip because the plane was not going to continue to New Orleans and I had no place to keep the monkeys in Miami, I called Trudy and offered her all of the monkeys for only \$2.75 each, my exact cost. But she turned that offer down, because knowing her costs for monkeys from Mike she assumed that mine must be sick or something. If I had offered her the same monkeys for \$10.00 each she would have taken them.

My cost sheets were much too precise for her to doubt them, and then remembering my offer to sell her monkeys for \$2.75 as well as my advertisements offering them for \$6.00 each, she instantly understood that Mike had been stealing from her on a massive scale for years. So she sent him a cable and told him to get his ass up to Tarpon Springs immediately.

Naturally, Mike then tried to convince Trudy that my cost sheets were phony, that I had made up the figures and given them to her only in an attempt to cause trouble between the partners; but by then she was aware of the truth. From that point on their relationship went straight down hill; Mike is in prison and Trudy is back living in her small house in the woods where I first met her in the middle of a winter night in 1951.

As they say . . . "Everything that goes around comes around."

For many years Trudy made a lot of money selling thousands of monkeys for research purposes, made a profit in spite of Mike's stealing, but she made the mistake of refusing to sell the Tarpon Zoo to a big drug company; then, later, when continued importation of monkeys was stopped by law, she could not even give the place away. All of Mike's millions are doing nothing for him now, and Trudy is living on Social Security. What goes up comes down.

If they had not stolen from me in 1951 they would now both be very rich and would have avoided most of the problems that they encountered later. As the British say . . . "Mike was too clever by half."

After he was arrested, Mike's sister tried to get me to loan him \$500,000.00 to pay a lawyer for his defense; and it gave me a great deal of pleasure to tell her no. I said . . . "Mike is where he belongs; he will never see the outside again."