

# And God Laughs...

## The Arthur Jones Autobiography

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“Can you believe anything?”

Anon.

In 1974, I saw some beautiful color illustrations of the results produced by medical tests based upon the use of a heat-detecting camera; these were published in the National Geographic magazine, the official journal of the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC, a branch of the Federal government. But the illustrations were phony.

I called the author of that article, a woman doctor on the staff of the state medical school in Oklahoma City, the school where my mother got her medical degree in 1936, and told her that I had similar interests and would like to visit her. Later, when I did go to see her, I learned that the actual test results were in black and white, that somebody had added the color to her illustrations without her knowledge or permission.

On the way home from that trip I stopped off to see an airplane dealer near Memphis, Tennessee, and ended up buying two airplanes from him; one being a six-passenger, twin-engined Beechcraft airplane that had a cruising speed of 230 miles an hour and the other being a simply beautiful and much larger airplane, a turbo-prop airliner called an F 27, a design that originally came from Holland but was later manufactured in this country and sold to many major airlines. The larger airplane had been modified to produce a very roomy executive version that carried only eighteen passengers rather than the forty-four carried by the airline configuration. Any airplane that carries more than eighteen passengers must provide a stewardess, so they did not exceed that number of seats.

I had never flown such an airplane, so would be required to get a type rating for the F 27 before I could legally fly it; but, unfortunately, the only FAA Inspector in the area who could issue that type rating was the same guy, Inspector Carrier, that I threw off of the airport a few years earlier, after offering to whip his ass, and after stuffing his head down between the rudder pedals of his airplane. So I suspected that he might be somewhat difficult for me to deal with. Some people don't afterwards like you very much regardless of how well you treat them.

So I had to find somebody who was qualified to fly the F 27 until I could get the required type rating someplace else. I called around the country and eventually located the pilot who had been flying that same airplane, a man named Dan Baldwin, who was in Las Vegas when I located him but who was from a small town in Virginia. I hired him over the phone, for a weekly salary of \$250.00, having promised him nothing apart from at least two weeks of employment. So he came to Lake Helen, Florida; and when I first saw him he looked like a drunk, had a big red nose and blotched cheeks. In fact he did not drink at all, so my initial impression was wrong.

I hired him, and told him . . . “If you want a permanent job here then you are going to have to find something apart from flying, so look around and see if you can find something else that you can do here, then come tell me about it, and I'll give you a chance to try it; and if that works out well then you will have a permanent job. You are now too old for the airlines and there is not much future in private flying, as I'm sure you know, so come back to me when you find something else to do.”

He had an Airline Transport Pilot certificate with a type rating for the F 27 and told me that he had a total of more than 10,000 hours of flying experience; which last statement was a lie, I later saw his first flight log book and instantly realized that his actual level of experience was much less than he claimed. He started flying only six years before I hired him, and could not have flown 10,000 hours in that relatively brief period. Later, when I flew with him, it was immediately apparent that he did not have much actual experience; he did not know many simple things that he should have known given his claimed level of experience.

He was constantly bragging about his vast experience in mountain flying, but did not know any of the requirements for mountain flying; would have killed himself if he had ever tried to fly around any real mountains. The mixture of fuel and air must be carefully adjusted for high altitude flying, and if not a plane won't even taxi out of its parking spot never mind taking off, but he was not aware of that, always flew with a wrong mixture of fuel and air. Modern jets

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make such adjustments automatically, but the older planes that we were flying required manual fuel air adjustments, and provided instruments that were required to make proper fuel air adjustments; but Dan did not even seem to have ever noticed these instruments, and certainly did not understand them, simply ignored them.

When a man who claims to be an experienced surgeon then fails to even recognize a scalpel you have good reason to doubt his qualifications. Dan's ignorance of the basics of flying were very similar to that.

A few years later while he was trying to land a small jet of mine on the airport in Del Rio, Texas, he would have crashed if I had not taken over the controls at the last moment and prevented a crash that was only seconds away. And the last time he ever flew one of my jets he lowered the landing gear at an indicated speed that was 100 knots faster than the proper speed, and did so while staring at a large sign on the instrument panel that was there as a warning to the pilot. I was surprised that the landing gear was not torn off of that plane because of the excess speed.

The fuel air mixture on an airplane when the mixture control is in the full rich position is set with the assumption that you are at sea level and that the temperature is 59 degrees; but if your altitude is higher or the temperature is hotter then you must lean the mixture in order to get the power required for takeoff; too much fuel and too little air is just as bad as too little fuel. The mixture must always be proper in respect to the existing conditions. On the airport in Bogota, Colombia, at an altitude of 8,400 feet on a hot day the engine won't even start with the mixture in the full rich position.

Then after takeoff, while climbing, you must constantly continue to lean out the mixture as your altitude increases; if not you are wasting fuel while losing power at best and may not keep flying at worst. None of which was known by Dan, an ignorance that was clearly illustrated by his actions, or lack of actions, while flying. When I saw what he was doing I could hardly believe it; but was hesitant about even mentioning his mistakes to him. Finally did mention the subject, and showed him what to do; an action on my part that he initially seemed to resent, but eventually he thanked me in a rather grudging manner.

Pointing out people's mistakes, regardless of how much doing so helps them, seldom wins you any friends. And Dan was no exception to that general rule.

But I needed the use of that type rating for the F 27, so I continued to employ him even after it became obvious to me that he had very little actual flying experience and that he had lied to me. Then, a couple of weeks after he started to work for me, he asked me a question . . . "Your problem is lack of production, isn't it?"

When I told him it was, he said . . . "How would you like a new plant in a place where you can hire as many good workmen as you want? In a place where the people all have an outstanding work ethic."

When I told him that I did not have the money required to build another plant somewhere else, he said . . . "I can get that for you too; I can get the state of Virginia to put up all of the money that you will need for a new plant, for the land, and for all of the equipment you will need. I know the Governor of Virginia, and they are desperate for new industries in Virginia; they have plenty of work there for women in textile plants but there is almost no work there for men. So they will give you anything and everything that you need to establish an industry that will employ large numbers of men."

And he did get everything I needed. Money, land, buildings, equipment and as many men as I wanted. The way that the deal was worked out I ended up putting up something less than nothing; actually got a new plant free and a fairly good profit, money up front in my pocket with no investment on my part.

But then I made the mistake that the author warned us about in a book called The Peter Principle: eventually, he said, everybody is promoted to their own individual level of incompetence. Having reached a level where they cannot function, they remain at that level, cannot then be demoted but cannot function where they are.

I promoted Dan much too rapidly, and he could not function when given great responsibility.

When I hired Dan he was living in a small, inexpensive house with a large mortgage on it, was driving a car that cost very little when new but was then nearly nine years old and not in very good shape, and I doubt if he had fifty dollars in cash or savings; about twelve years later, when I sold the Nautilus company, he was a multi-millionaire living

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in a mansion and driving a new Mercedes and flying his own twin-engined airplane. A large part of which wealth he stole from me; then, afterwards, he made threats about filing a law suit against me in an attempt to steal even more, but backed down when I told him to do his worst and that then I would do mine.

Recently, at the age of sixty-one, he was diagnosed with cancer of the bowels and does not appear to be responding well to multiple treatment protocols, so is probably terminal. I still speak with him on the phone occasionally and he always seems reasonably friendly, but probably hates me; I made him very rich and he responded the same way that most people do in such situations.

I also tried to teach him how to fly properly, and he always resented that; wanted to create the impression that he was the world's greatest pilot, when in fact he could not fly worth a shit. And I was always very diplomatic about my attempts to teach him anything; diplomacy on my part that was never appreciated. Years later, I realized just what his real problem was: Dan was impotent when I hired him, and in an attempt to appear like a real man he went to great lengths in his attempts to impress other people. He liked to travel with very young and beautiful girls, and I provided him with more than a dozen of them over the years; but he was never able to fuck any of them, and every single one of them told me that he was utterly impotent, simply could not get it up, no matter what the girls did in an attempt to help him get it up.

But, apparently, he wanted to be seen in the company of such attractive girls in an attempt to impress other men; and he spent money on them by the buckets in order to hang on to them, gave one a new Corvette that cost him more than \$30,000.00, provided fancy apartments, furniture and expensive clothes and jewelry for several other girls. All of which activity he prevented his wife from finding out about, of course. But I am damned sure that he could not fuck his wife either.

In the spring of 1974, when I hired Dan, I had already purchased nineteen acres of land right in the middle of Lake Helen, Florida, directly across the street from the City Hall, and had built ten large buildings for manufacturing purposes. I had planned to build a huge building of 90,000 square feet and had purchased all of the materials for it but had never erected the building; did not erect it because the DeLand State Bank tried to cheat me on an offered loan. I did not go to them for a loan, they came to me; then offered to loan me \$500,000.00 with nothing apart from my signature as collateral. Based upon that bank's promise I bought the materials for the big building; but when I went back for the promised funds their terms were simply ridiculous; I would have been required to pay them interest on \$500,000.00 while actually getting only \$92,000.00. So I told them to shove it.

But then I did not have enough money to erect the big building, so the materials remained on the planned building site for about eighteen months, unused. I sold part of those materials but still had most of them when I hired Dan; and, because of inflation during that period, the materials had increased greatly in value since I bought them. So I put those materials into the deal we made with people in Virginia as my part of the funds required for a new plant, at a price that reduced my actual investment to less than nothing.

Then I was about to learn a lesson that I should have learned many times before: it is all but impossible to manage a business at a distance; it quickly becomes a case of 'them' against 'us.' Clear instructions are ignored while they continue to do things that they have been ordered to stop doing; major mistakes are made and then covered up; people are hired who should not be hired and then promoted into positions far above their capability; enormous waste becomes endemic, but is hidden; careful budgets are submitted but never turn out to be adequate.

Initially, the new plant in Virginia appeared to be working very well; so well that I eventually closed down all manufacturing in Florida and made all of the machines in Virginia. Then later built another plant in Mexia, Texas, that incorporated the best chrome plating facility in the world.

All of the design work for new machines and the construction of prototype machines was done in Florida under my direct supervision, with the help of Don Stevens, Clay Steffee and several other men. Fourteen other teams of highly qualified men worked independently, but with my supervision, on projects for the development of medical testing machines; but that turned out to be a very long and enormously expensive project; it took us fourteen years and more than \$40,000,000.00 to develop the first successful medical machine, and involved the designing, building and

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testing of more than 3,000 prototype machines before we were able to solve all of the problems that we encountered along the way.

For many years it appeared that what we were trying to do was simply impossible, and it damned near was impossible. But, in the end, the results were so much better than anything I even hoped for that, even after seeing clear proof of the value of the medical machines, it was hard for me to even believe it.

Because I was so pleased with Dan's work during the first few years I gave him ten percent of the stock in the Virginia corporation as a free gift; then a few years later gave him another ten percent of that stock. Later yet we joined three companies into one corporation and I agreed to exchange Dan's twenty percent of the Virginia corporation for ten percent of the overall, larger corporation. Dan paid nothing for any of this stock, did not even ask for it; this stock was a free gift to him from me, given in an attempt to express my appreciation for his efforts. When Eliza and I were divorced, I gave her twenty-two and one-half percent of the stock in Nautilus, two large houses and quite a lot of land and several other valuable things including more than \$100,000.00 in gold coins. Which left me with sixty-seven and one-half percent of the Nautilus stock.

But, in 1986, when I sold Nautilus, Dan tried to claim that he owned twenty percent of the stock; actually had stock certificates giving him that amount of ownership. I had never seen any of the stock certificates, did not know who issued them and nobody was ever authorized to issue them; obviously Dan somehow managed to get them issued without my knowledge or permission. I have always believed, but was never able to prove, that the certificates were issued by my firm of accountants in some kind of a conspiracy with Dan. Accountants, very frequently, are just as crooked as lawyers. Never trust a bank, a lawyer, an accountant, anybody connected with any government or an expert in any field. And always get all of your money up front; you will seldom see any of the money that is supposed to be paid later, regardless of how carefully a contract is drawn up. When it later comes time to pay they will sue you, claiming fraud or misrepresentation; and will do so even though the contract forbids them from doing so. Most contracts, at best, provide a poor source of toilet paper.

Shortly before I sold Nautilus I fired Dan, when he suddenly announced that he had a shortfall of more than \$5,000,000.00; money that was simply gone and that he could not account for. Did he steal it? I don't know, probably stole some of it and wasted most of it on projects that he concealed from me. He constantly made changes in the manufacturing procedures that he guaranteed me would reduce costs, but inevitably increased costs and produced great losses instead. And he made many changes that he did not even bother to tell me about.

Occasionally he had a good idea, but most of his ideas were not good, usually led to a disaster of some sort. I have had my share of bad ideas as well; one of my worst being the promotion of Dan into a position of authority that he could not cope with, where he was simply over his head.

When I confronted Dan about his claimed ownership of twenty percent of the Nautilus stock, he backed down; agreed to settle for fifteen percent of the selling price of the company and that in addition to my share of the sale I would keep all of the company airplanes, which had a value of more than \$10,000,000.00. If his claim had been legitimate he would never have agreed to take less when the company was sold; thus by his actions he admitted that his claim was not valid.

Sometime later he made threats about filing a law suit against me in an attempt to steal a few more millions from me.

Since writing the above, in early August of 1994, Dan died of cancer.