

And God Laughs...

The Arthur Jones Autobiography

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“I don’t care what the problem is, the solution is violence.”

Larry Gilmore

In the late 1940s, shortly after the Second World War, an outbreak of Aftosa, or foot and mouth disease, occurred in Mexico; starting in the then very wild southern part of Mexico, near the Guatemalan border, the disease was spreading towards the north and if unchecked would eventually reach this country. There is only one way to stop the spread of Aftosa, you must locate and kill all of the infected cattle. But most of the area where the infected cattle were located had never before been visited by outsiders, and many of the people there were not even aware that they were living in a country called Mexico. Money, what is that? Wealth was measured only by the number of cattle you owned.

Let us kill all your cattle, you say, and then you will give us a piece of paper; and when we take the paper to a place you call Mexico City, they will give us something called money in exchange for it? No way, Jose. So they killed an American veterinarian who went to their totally isolated village in an attempt to stamp out Aftosa before it could spread even more.

Then a Colonel of the Rurales surrounded the village with his troops, lined up every male in the village who was twelve or older; rode his horse slowly down the line and asked each person only one question . . . “What do you know about what happened to the Gringo?” And if the answer indicated even an awareness of what had happened, he shot that individual through the head and then moved on to the next one in line. If the answer indicated no awareness of the incident, that person was led away in chains, but none of the ones removed were ever seen or heard from again.

The word spread rapidly through the jungles and mountains, and no more Aftosa workers were killed, but it still remained an almost impossible job; on my next trip into southern Veracruz following the terrible trip with the two British women in their car, I met an American veterinarian who was working on the Aftosa eradication project and bought a young jaguar from him. Later he introduced me to another American veterinarian who became my junior partner in Slidell about a year and a half later, a man named Owen Baker. Through him I also met the girl that I married there later that year, 1951, a girl named Eva Saenz that he introduced me to on a trip to the beach in Puerto Mexico.

These two American veterinarians had then been working in the jungles and mountains of southern Mexico for about two years on the Aftosa eradication project, under terrible conditions, first locating and then killing thousands of infected cattle, but had learned more about that area than anybody had ever been able to learn before. So they knew the places that could be reached, and those that could not be reached, and knew what I could find in different places; so they provided a gold mine of valuable information for me, information that was unavailable from any other source since almost nothing was known about that part of Mexico before they started working there. While little more than a thousand miles below the southern border of Texas, it still remained almost entirely unexplored even in 1951, and the wild animals were there in their millions, in great variety.

The night of the day that I married Eva I spent alone in a hotel room in Minatitlan where she lived and had been working in a government office; but she refused to join me there that first night and would not let me stay with her in her room in her parents home. So the following day we flew in a Douglas DC 3 to Veracruz, where I had left my truck on that trip while I went to Minatitlan by air in order to marry Eva. That was the second trip with the new big truck and the weather would not permit me to go over the jungle trails from Veracruz to Minatitlan at that time of year, and a couple of weeks later would have made the landing strip near Minatitlan impossible to use for several months.

The first night together in a big hotel in Veracruz Eva was initially terrified, did not really know what to expect and was not looking forward to it with much confidence; I was aware of her fear and proceeded very carefully but she ended up briefly trying to hide from me under the bed, and full penetration did not occur until about two weeks later near Mobile, Alabama, where we paused for a few hours on the way to Tarpon Springs, Florida, with a load of snakes and animals, most of which we picked up in Colima on that trip because of the bad weather in Veracruz.

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After Mike and Trudy made their move later that year that forced me to leave the Tarpon Zoo, I first hauled a load from Colima to Ross Allen in Silver Springs, Florida, and then built an animal exhibit for a man near Golden, Colorado, while waiting for the time I intended to start building an exhibit for myself. On our way to Colorado we stopped overnight in a motel, and Eva was heavily pregnant with our first child, a boy that we named Gary who was born that summer in New Orleans. Some guy checked into the room next to ours during the middle of the night, signed the register as R. C. Cola, from Walla Walla, Washington, and then left after setting off a thermite fire bomb in his room. When I became aware that the place was on fire and opened the front door I instantly realized that it was impossible to leave our room that way because of the flames, so kicked out a rear window and carried Eva out that way safely. My truck, parked just in front of the room, suffered some damage from the flames, and the motel burned to the ground. That motel had just been opened by two brothers who built it with their own hands, but apparently somebody did not like them.

Leaving Eva with the wife of the man that I was building the exhibit for, a man named Scott Lamb, I made a long trip with Lamb in his car, pulling a big trailer, down through south Texas to visit my snake hunters, then to Miami and finally to visit a woman snake hunter I knew west of New Orleans. The hitch on the big trailer was very bad and we lost the trailer twice on that trip; once it turned over as I swerved to miss a car that tried to pass another car on a bridge and nearly hit me head on, and another time when the trailer broke loose, then passed us and finally ran down a steep grade and almost ran into a deep canal. I have had lots of similar trouble with such trailers over the years; if not loaded very carefully they are dangerous as Hell. Had another trailer start whipping from side to side in a very dangerous manner when two big alligators that I was hauling moved back towards the rear of the trailer and threw it out of balance. Another trailer started whipping and nearly smashed into an oncoming police car, missing them by an inch or less; I expected at least a ticket and perhaps a fight over that but they never turned around to pursue me; probably because it scared them so badly that they could not even continue to drive.

After we left Colorado we met Carl Cooper and first flew out in a small airplane to Las Vegas, Nevada, in search of a good location for an animal exhibit, but did not like what we saw and decided to build in Slidell. Then attended the rattlesnake roundups in both Okeene and Waynoka, Oklahoma, where I put on snake handling shows that earned a lot of money and then bought several thousand pounds of rattlesnakes and went to Slidell to start building the exhibit there.

Carl Cooper decided to leave even before we were finished building the exhibit so that left only Eva, Kit Beecher and me, and we opened the exhibit in the spring of 1952. A few months later I heard from the American veterinarian, Owen Baker, that I met about a year earlier in Veracruz and he accepted my offer of a junior partnership in Slidell and joined us that fall. I gave both Owen and Kit junior partnerships in the business although neither had a cent invested in it. But having met Owen in Springfield, Missouri, when he insisted upon hiding upon the floor of the backseat of the car, covered with a blanket, as I was passing through a small town in Arkansas at night, a place he had once lived, I began to suspect that perhaps I did not know as much about him as I should. Little did I know, but I learned very clearly later; too late as usual.

In the spring of 1953 leaving Kit and Owen running the exhibit in Slidell, I went to Managua, Nicaragua, in order to establish a compound there for holding tropical wild animals; I knew that a man named Jack Hamm was already there and that he was shipping animals to Ralph Demers in Miami, and I was particularly interested in getting so-called White-faced Ring-tailed monkeys, which are the most attractive and popular type of Latin American monkey. The ones from Nicaragua being more attractive than those from farther south; these Nicaraguan monkey's faces were covered with perfectly white hair while their overall color was black, the ones from farther south were also black but had bald faces that were less attractive. In addition to these ring-tailed monkeys there were many other types of animals and reptiles there as well.

I visited a town on the east coast of Nicaragua called Bluefields but did not like the area so returned to Managua, and within two weeks had a large shipment of animals ready for shipment to New Orleans; and once these animals were shipped, I caught a plane south to visit Costa Rica, Panama and Colombia.

But my passenger plane departed before the cargo plane that was supposed to haul my animals to New Orleans did, and unknown to me as I flew south the cargo plane was sent to Mexico City rather than to New Orleans; which left

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my load of animals sitting on the Managua airport unattended. While I was there I never met Ralph Demer's agent, Jack Hamm; since we were competitors he avoided me although he knew who I was. His compound was located in the middle of the city, immediately next to the Grand Hotel, but it was inside a large wooden building and I never learned its location. I had seen Jack Hamm in the hotel but did not know who he was since he did not introduce himself to me.

When Hamm learned that my load of animals was sitting unattended on the airport, he immediately went to the airport and convinced the authorities there to let him haul my animals to his compound so that they could be properly cared for; then sent my partners in Slidell a cable telling them what had happened to the shipment of animals from me. He then cared for and fed my animals for a few days and then arranged other transportation for them to New Orleans, sending my partners a second telegram telling them when to expect the animals to arrive. Without his help, all of my animals would have died sitting on the airport; so when I later learned what he had done in the way of helping me I was certainly appreciative, considered it to be one of the nicest things anybody had ever done for me, especially in light of the fact that we were competitors. And Hamm refused any payment for having cared for my animals.

Thus, about three months later, when I got a cable asking for financial help from Hamm, I sent it to him immediately, and then went back to Nicaragua to meet him, talking Owen Baker with me on that second trip. Jack Hamm turned out to be a large man almost covered over his entire body with long black hair, a man who at one time had been a senior executive for Pan American Airlines and might have become the President of that airline but resigned in order to go into the animal business simply because he loved animals. Ralph Demers had bounced a large check on him, he told us, and that caused him problems with his bank in Managua and that was why he needed financial help. So then he went to work for me, started shipping his animals to me in New Orleans rather than to Ralph Demers in Miami.

Large shipments then came in from him every week for several months; all of the animals he shipped were in beautiful condition and we made a lot of money.

Then one night, out of the blue, I got a call from Hamm from Miami; he was in his home there and was very sick, so asked me to fly down to talk to him. When I arrived there I found him almost dead; while out in the jungle with an Indian, his intestines became blocked and he passed out, and then the Indian gave him a strong purgative and that caused his intestines to rupture internally. He was taken to a hospital in Managua and was operated on there by Dr. DeBayle, a relative of the dictator of Nicaragua, Anastasio Samosa. Then was flown to Miami; but left Nicaragua owing a lot of money for medical expenses. He wanted me to go to Nicaragua to get the situation straightened out, because he left a young American man named Rhinehymer there running the business and the authorities were giving him a lot of trouble over the unpaid medical bills.

Hamm had supposedly been sending all of his animals to me, but in his house he had a large number of beautiful young ring-tailed monkeys that could have come only from Nicaragua, so I realized that he was not telling me the whole story; so I agreed to go to Nicaragua immediately, but told him I was short of money and that he would have to help finance the trip by giving me all of the monkeys that he had in his house, knowing I could sell them by making one phone call to Maburn Miller, Bo's older brother. He agreed, I sold the monkeys on the phone to Maburn and he wired me full payment in advance to Miami. But then I made a mistake, I left it up to somebody else to ship the monkeys to Maburn and they did not ship them to him; instead took them to Slidell, and they were still there when I got back home from Nicaragua a couple of weeks later. By which point Maburn was very irritated, and with good reason. If you want it done right, do it yourself.

When I arrived in Managua I learned that Hamm had told me only a small part of the full story; Hamm had hired Rhinehymer several months earlier but had never mentioned him to me, and told Rhinehymer that I was only one of many customers, so they had been shipping large numbers of animals to several other people as well as to me. Later, when I got the whole story, I learned the reason Ralph Demers had bounced the check to Hamm was because Hamm had been stealing animals from him as well. Rhinehymer could not speak Spanish, was almost dead broke, was being pursued by the police, could not use Hamm's animal compound and had no vehicle; yet had been shipping large shipments of animals to me every week since Hamm had been flown to Miami about two months earlier. He was totally disgusted and wanted to leave immediately and go back to being a policeman in Miami where he had worked before Hamm hired him.

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So I decided to bring Owen Baker down to run the business from the Nicaraguan end, and he joined us a few days later. We paid off the medical bills, got the police straightened out, got a new jeep, and everything should then have been perfect for Owen thereafter; but in fact it was an utter disaster. Primarily, I believe, because as soon as I returned to Slidell, Owen spent all of his time sitting around the hotel bar bragging about what a great white hunter he was rather than being out in the bush getting animals. Rhinehymer, under terrible conditions, had been shipping me at least 100 ring-tailed monkeys a week; but Owen Baker, under ideal conditions, got only twenty-two monkeys in three months and then could not get these approved for export to the States. The result of his laziness being a major financial disaster for me.

So I sent him a cable telling him to close the compound in Nicaragua and return to Slidell immediately, and when he got there told him I wanted to sell the exhibit to him and leave; and he agreed to buy it, on credit extended to him by me, since he had no money of his own. We carefully went over the books and worked out a weekly payment schedule that he could easily meet from income produced by the exhibit alone, with no income from sales of imported animals. Additionally he gave me a new Oldsmobile that he was making payments on, and agreed to continue the payments in the future. What followed was covered in an earlier chapter: he made no payments of any kind, and eventually I had to take the Slidell exhibit back. Then, years later, in Los Angeles he pulled up at a red light next to my car; but when he glanced over and recognized me sitting in my car right alongside his, he ran the red light in spite of heavy crossing traffic in a desperate attempt to escape. But I did not even bother to chase him.

A side by side comparison of a good man like Rhinehymer to a piss poor, utterly worthless man like Baker provides a dramatic example of the inherent differences in people: in three months under terrible conditions Rhinehymer shipped me 1,400 monkeys; in the same length of time under ideal conditions Baker shipped none; Rhinehymer could not speak the language, while Baker was fluent in Spanish; Rhinehymer was almost penniless, Baker had effectively unlimited funds; the police were after Rhinehymer because of Hamm's unpaid medical bills, but no police were chasing Baker; Rhinehymer had no vehicle, Baker had a new jeep; Rhinehymer could not use Hamm's animal compound, Baker did have access to it; Rhinehymer had no difficulty getting all of the required export documents, Baker was never able to get any documents; Rhinehymer had no friends in the country, Baker was close friends with several people who were highly placed in the government; Rhinehymer appeared to have limitless energy, Baker was too lazy to pour piss out of a boot; Rhinehymer had only a high school education, Baker had a veterinary degree; Rhinehymer had never previously worked in Latin American, Baker had years of experience there.

The last time I ever talked to Baker, knowing him quite well by then, I asked him where he got his veterinary degree, and he said Texas A and M; so then I rephrased the question but still got the same answer; finally after I had asked him the same question in five different ways, he said . . . "Texas A and M. Why?" It was the 'why' in his answer that I was after.

So, I said . . . "Because if anybody as dumb and as lazy as you are can get a veterinary degree there in four years, then I could get one of those degrees over a long weekend; even if I was drunk at the time, and I don't even drink."

Earlier that year, when I returned to Slidell after the first trip to Nicaragua, I found my two junior partners, Owen Baker and Kit Beecher, at each other's throats; something had occurred between them while I was gone but I never learned the details, neither man would discuss it. But Kit then left; returned to Florida and went to work for the Tarpon Zoo for \$50.00 a week. Later, when I got the monkeys from Hamm's home in Miami, I called Kit on the phone, hired him over the phone, and instructed him to ship the monkeys to Maburn Miller and then shipped them to Kit in Saint Petersburg. He was supposed to pick them up there, clean their cages, feed them, and then ship them on to Maburn in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Those arrangements having been necessary in my opinion because all of these were very young monkeys, babies; the best and most valuable size for these monkeys, but a size that requires a lot of care, like human babies. Shipping them from Miami to Knoxville would have taken too long enroute for such young monkeys to go unattended. But, again, Kit just ignored all of my careful instructions; Kit too, like Baker, was consistent, consistently fucked up even the most simple things, and has never improved during the more than forty years that I have known him.

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Genetics or environment? Don't be stupid; Margaret Mead's book, 'Growing Up in Samoa,' the outright fable about the wonderful, happy, peaceful lives of all primitive people, has perhaps been the most damaging publication of this century. Damaging because people believed it; when, directly contrary to her stated opinions, the people in Samoa while she was there were the most violence prone race on the planet. Something she might have noticed if she had bothered to check the police records there; which she never had time for, being too busy fucking a local native, a new experience for her since she was both fat and ugly and was never able to find a man in this country who was quite desperate enough to fuck her.

Later, when Pygmalion was presented as a play or a film under the title 'My Fair Lady,' they changed the ending; thereby reversing the whole point of the book, which was . . . "You cannot make a lady out of a whore, even if you are a famous professor." A point I certainly reproved in my relationship with Terri.

Environment does contribute to what you will be, but what you can be is entirely determined by genetics; until and unless we recognize that simple truth and start acting accordingly, the current worldwide disaster will simply continue to get worse. Another major contributor to the myth of environment over genetics was Skinner, who raised his daughter in a box and then published his utterly mistaken theories; but, shortly before he died, he realized his earlier mistakes and then said that he did not believe there was any hope for society, that things had already gone much too far in the wrong direction. At the end, he was right.