

And God Laughs...

The Arthur Jones Autobiography

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“Walk softly and carry a big stick.”

Theodore Roosevelt

LBJ said . . . “Never apologize and never explain.”

Long ago, I learned to apply the suggestions of both Roosevelt and LBJ, but also tried to update those rules to bring them more into line with today’s changed world . . . “Sneak around and carry a Thompson sub-machinegun.” It is simply amazing what you can accomplish if you just do it, while it is frequently shocking to discover what happens when you try to adhere to the letter of the law. For one thing, the people who are supposed to enforce the laws and regulations imposed by the government seldom understand their own rules; for another thing, the people in charge of enforcement are given wide latitude in regard to just what a particular rule means. One official will tell you yes, and the next will say no; so if they don’t even understand the rules themselves, how in the Hell are you supposed to know what is right and what is wrong?

My attitude has always been: if it doesn’t hurt anybody, and you can get away with it, then do it. But then keep your mouth shut afterwards; because somebody will object to almost anything you do if they find out about it. People who have political ambitions appear to have a compulsion to ram their opinions down the throats of everybody else; the latest buzzword out of Washington is ‘virtue,’ which is about as common in Washington as sabre toothed tigers are in the Bronx. I am not sure that I could define virtue, and I know that the politicians damned sure cannot. And, in general, the people in the media are even worse: while calling themselves reporters they do everything but report, instead have become very biased editorialists, shaking their fingers under the noses of anybody that they disagree with or do not like. And, given their enormous podium on the nightly news and in the headlines, this makes them very dangerous indeed; and has turned them into the most arrogant bunch of bastards on the planet.

In New Orleans, when the schools were integrated, members of the media arrived on the scene by the hundreds, expecting riots; but when that did not happen, they tried to create the news rather than reporting it accurately. They hired demonstrators and provided them with large signs and then filmed them marching up and down in front of schools; hoping, I’m sure, that their phony demonstration would provoke a riot.

Everything was shot on 16mm film at the time, and when they brought their film to Pan American Films to get it processed in time for the news that night, they got thrown out on their asses. Were told . . . “Process it yourself, in the toilet in your room if you have to; we are not in the business of producing propaganda films.” Everybody there was clearly aware of just what the reporters were up to, heard them talking about it among themselves.

I first met Roger Caras, who did most or all of the segments devoted to animals on the ABC Network show 20/20 hosted by Barbara Walters and Hugh Downs, in New York in 1968; and it was immediately apparent that he was the most arrogant bastard I had ever met; I was strongly tempted to kick his ass up and down the street like a dog. Later, having read one of his books, my opinion of his arrogance was strongly reinforced.

Later yet, in 1984, I employed Jerry Arlege, the brother of Roone Arlege, the man who was then in charge of the ABC News Department, and through his connections with his brother he was able to arrange for a camera crew to go with us to Africa to pick up 63 young elephants in one of my big jets. But when I learned that Roger Caras would be part of that crew, I said . . . “Oh, shit.”

I do not know whether Caras remembered our earlier encounter in New York, but neither of us mentioned it; he stayed in a room in my house near Ocala, Florida, together with the rest of the ABC crew, and immediately started hinting about just how nice it would be if his wife could go on the trip to Africa. So what else could I do? I invited her to go, and she flew down to Florida the next day. During a conversation before she arrived, somebody made a comment about somebody else’s wife being fat; whereupon Caras immediately said . . . “Well, my wife is certainly not fat; a bit overweight perhaps, but not fat.” Sure.

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She turned out to be the least fat 300 pound woman I ever saw; weighed about the same as her husband. And I quickly learned just why both of them were so fat. Each of the bedrooms in my house are laid out as suites; enormous rooms with lavish furnishings, big closets and huge bathrooms and with a private bar and well-stocked refrigerator in each room. The bar and refrigerator having enough liquor for an orgy and enough food for a banquet; but apparently this was not enough for Caras and his wife, they cleaned out both the bar and the refrigerator, leaving not a drop to drink or a crumb to eat. If I had not seen it myself I would not have believed that any two people could drink and eat that much in a week, never mind overnight. All of that in addition to three heavy meals in restaurants during the preceding day.

When we got up early the next morning, just before flying to Miami in one of my small jets in order to get on my big jet for the trip to Africa, both Caras and his wife ate an enormous amount of food for breakfast; then, less than two hours later, as soon as we got to Miami, they immediately went to a restaurant and ate another big meal. Our first stop for fuel out of Miami was in Barbados, just off the northern coast of South America, and during that relatively short flight Caras and his wife ate everything on the plane; then went to a restaurant on the airport in Barbados and had another huge meal there. The next leg of the trip was a long, twelve hour, nonstop flight to central Africa, a distance of about 7,000 miles; so we had a catering company supply enough food and drinks for all of the twenty-three people who were on the plane, assuming that this would be enough for everybody during the long flight.

But when our stewardess went back to start preparing the first meal she found that all of the food was gone; between them, Caras and his wife had eaten a quantity of food that was intended to provide forty-six large meals. They did not leave a crumb for anybody else. Having seen just how they ate and drank, I'm surprised that they did not both weigh at least 600 pounds. When not eating, they were sleeping; they seemed to divide their days into two parts, twelve hours of nonstop eating followed by twelve hours of sleeping.

Their pattern of behavior did not vary throughout the trip, but Caras did at least act in a very friendly manner; then, later, produced a 20/20 segment that was an outright 'puff piece,' one that was so overdone that it was actually embarrassing to me. We got thousands of letters as a result of that show; most were simply addressed to . . . "The Man Who Saved The Elephants, Florida." But we got them even without an address.

Shortly afterwards, I fired the brother of the head of ABC News; fired him for sexual harassment of female employees and for habitual drunkenness. What followed shortly afterwards was not, I believe, a coincidence; Caras then did a second segment on me, but this one was an outright hatchet job; far from being the saintly hero that he had painted me as being during the earlier segment, this time I was an evil villain, beneath contempt.

In his books and articles, Caras has always been violently opposed to the private ownership of wild animals of any kind; but he applies that rule only to other people, not to himself. While he was here on the first trip he went to great lengths in his attempts to get me to supply him with a very rare type of animal, a Galapagos tortoise; several of which I had.

During the hatchet job segment he used taped statements made by a woman in California that he carefully coached in regard to her testimony; during the investigation that we conducted in connection with my lawsuit for libel against ABC Network, they were forced to provide us with all of the so-called 'out takes' that they taped, portions that were not used on the air; so we knew exactly what instructions Caras gave this woman in regard to her testimony.

This woman made vicious statements about me, and talked about just how terrible it was for an elephant to be separated from its herd, said that they would be better off dead; well, in fact, while making those statements she had one of my baby elephants in her own back yard, one that I gave to her when she asked me for it. So, like Caras, her rules applied only to other people, not to her.

Caras said, on the show, that I had lied about my intentions for the young elephants; said that I told him that I intended to keep all of the elephants forever, did not plan to sell any of them. Which was an outright lie on his part, because he was aware from the start that I planned to sell most of the elephants; and he did not offer any objection to that when I carefully outlined my plans for the elephants.

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My libel case against ABC Network went clear up to the Supreme Court, and they ruled in my favor; but it was later thrown out on appeal by a lower court in spite of the Supreme Court ruling. So I got nothing out of ABC Network in the end, but my case cost me not one red cent, while it cost them millions of dollars to defend themselves; which, hopefully, did at least something in the way of reducing the standings of Barbara Walters, Hugh Downs and Roger Caras in the eyes of the network's owners.

The pattern of action displayed by ABC in that case is the usual pattern of the media: first they build you up into some sort of hero, then they try to tear you down and turn you into a villain. The Wall Street Journal did exactly the same thing; first praised me and then later tried to ridicule me.

Just which group, the lawyers, the media, or the people in government, is the most dangerous is difficult to determine; but we would be a Hell of a lot better off if we could get rid of all three groups, none of whom contribute anything apart from nonstop outrages against intelligence and sanity. To a man, or a woman, all of these people appear to be insane; and they are certainly out of control. It will be interesting to hear what they have to say about me if and when this book is published in an unedited form, which is the only way I will agree to have it published. Having carried their own rights to free speech to a ridiculous level, they probably won't want to extend equal rights to me.

Given the media's power to spread their opinions so widely, while presenting them as facts, and given the public's tendency to believe what they hear and see on television as well as what they read in newspapers and magazines, the average person has no defense against them; when they decide to get you, then they have everything required to get you with, and are not at all hesitant about using their power, seem to revel in it. Rather than freedom of speech this is nothing more nor less than freedom to smear, to lie, to twist, to distort. And the more sensational their attempts to smear you become, the better they like it. Their 'Holier Than Thou' arrogance is so great that it would give me great pleasure to burn all of them at the stake; simply horsewhipping them half to death, while doing so would give me great pleasure indeed, would not be a harsh enough punishment to atone for their very real crimes.

While considering themselves to be the people who are saving this country, if not saving the entire world, they are in fact the people who have destroyed almost everything of any slightest value that ever existed in this country; and are being paid insanely high salaries while doing it; but, again, their rules apply only to other people, not to them. If you get rich they hate you, but get rich themselves by spreading their hate as widely as possible.