

A Message from Pano

William G. Conway

The memo attached was found in an unstamped envelope with no return address on the grounds of the Bronx Zoo. It appears to have been written by a chimpanzee on assignment from a clandestine organization in Africa.

TO: The Most High Primate
The Supreme Simiate
Lord of all the Forests from the
Kasai to the Bemie and from the Gambia
to the Mountains of the Moon

FROM: Pano Troglodytes, Field Representative

SUBJECT: Resignation from Field Service

It is with the deepest regret that I submit, herewith, my resignation and final field report. Lest you judge my leaving to be unjustified or more precipitate than my record warrants, I beg leave to remind you of the long service of my family to the Supreme Simiate in the cause of wild apes and monkeys, and of myself as your agent within the Western Medical Establishment.

You will recall that it was my great-great-great-grandfather on my mother's side who conceived the idea of infiltrating the human establishment as an investigative technique—to "ape" man as he put it. At that time, it was only rumored that human primates held themselves superior to the biological laws upon which the safety of the biosphere is based. "And, after all," great-grandad said, "if Charley Darwin can pass as a human, why can't others?" By 1861, our present program was underway, "...to insure the future of wild primates through self-sacrifice in the cause of Western Medicine." It was just a decade later, I beg to remind you, when another member of my family led Henry Stanley to Dr. David Livingstone. The fact that this historic meeting was so distorted in the reports of human primates should have acted as a warning. "Dr. Livingstone, I presume"—indeed! Stanley wouldn't have known the good doctor from an Igorote. It was my great-great-aunt Panzee who made the proper introductions.

William G. Conway is General Director of the New York Zoological Society. This memo was reprinted from Animal Kingdom 81(4):17-25, 1978.

And it was about this time that the family discovered that Uncle Charley Darwin's scribblings were being taken seriously, with the result that our own ape ancestors have been taxed ever after with the most incredibly obscene paternity suit since before the Pleistocene. Yet, the Supreme Simiate was not warned, and my family has continued to serve—surviving one disgraceful transposition of its efforts after another.

Remember Edgar Rice Burroughs? When grandfather found this starving ingrate and got him a job as a railway detective, he had already failed as a cattle drover and a gold dredger. Yet, in repayment for this aid, he stole and transposed grandad's greatest manuscript, a true story to be called "Tarzan of the Humans," which had held such great promise for our efforts to educate people to the conditions of the slave trade in living monkeys and apes for pets. When, in 1932, Merian Cooper pulled the same human business—with grandad's true report of a biomedical researcher's incredibly destructive behavior in the Cameroun rain forest, entitled "King Kong"—the old anthropoid never recovered.

Father, you remember, volunteered for the NASA program and eventually became the first anthropoid to orbit the earth. "A giant swing for primates," he was reported to have said. He missed becoming the first primate on the moon when he was "washed-out" of the Moon Landing Program—partly for ethnic reasons and partly because a pilot was found whose name suggested strong arms. Discouraged and disconsolate, dad regained his spirits through his popularity at a sex clinic in St. Louis. You will remember our surprise at his report that the receptivity of human females, unlike other primates, is almost continuous. It is no wonder that man is outbreeding monkeys! monkeys!

It was in 1961, exactly one century after our infiltration of human society got underway, that father finally managed to slip out the first comprehensive reports on the true extent of the biomedical slave trade in wild primates. Between 1958 and 1960, 634,000 monkeys were sacrificed to the development of the Salk polio vaccine. A justifiable sacrifice we are tempted to say—but is the decimation of an invaluable research resource justifiable? After all, man is subject to other diseases whose solutions may lie within primate research. And the fact remains that not one significant primate conservation or captive propagation program has resulted from the polio program.

Shortly after dad smuggled out his report, he was apprehended by the AMA. When last heard from, he faced termination so that his liver might be used to aid a sixty-eight-year-old alcoholic human in an hepatic coma. I was the agent sent to New York to replace father.

Attached to the National Institutes of Health research and testing laboratories in Maryland, I was infected with this and that in the vaccine-monitoring program for more than a year—all without being able to determine whether my efforts were really contributing to medical science, to say nothing of the protection of apekind. I did learn that primate imports to the United States are declining, but not because more are being bred here or that researchers don't want as many as before. The imports, now running at more than 40,000 wild monkeys and apes each year, are down from the 70,000 or more of five years ago. This is because we are disappearing and becoming more expensive to obtain. Some of the countries where we live, such as India

and Brazil, now are concerned about us, too, and have restricted the slave trade. But medical scientists have done little—little, that is, but protest conservation measures and ignore the need for proper propagation programs. A rhesus monkey of my acquaintance stated a truism when he remarked, “A laboratory might be a nice place to visit, but I wouldn’t want to breed there.” Zoos, in contrast, breed far more apes and monkeys than they import.

No sooner had I mailed my second report to Your Primacy than I was placed in an experimental regimen which I find painful to recount. I was infected with gonorrhoea and thus attained the dubious distinction of being the first primate other than man to contract this disease...indeed, I was held up as “a model” in the Journal of the American Medical Association early in 1971. When my condition proved refractory to the usual treatments, I moved to California—where, I was informed, nobody would notice—and began impersonating a doctor engaged in medical research.

It proved surprisingly easy to pass as a doctor, for many humans seem to be suspicious of them anyway. I was diverted from my immediate plan, of taking an internship with a major hospital, by an opportunity to appear on television. I worked for two seasons on the “Marcus Welby” show, where my unusual appearance enabled me to play, interchangeably, an anesthesiologist, a hospital administrator, a speech therapist, and a “candy striper.”

Thus prepared, I entered upon a protracted series of impersonations, winning, in gradual succession, important research positions in a variety of medical specialties. In each, I tried to learn more of the efficacy of the science to which so many hundreds of thousands of our kind have given their lives and whether our contribution was being properly acknowledged. And, in each, I was given further reason to doubt the wisdom of placing the monkey’s future in the hands of man.

I began as a research assistant in a well-regarded New York institution devoted to cancer research and found myself painting spots on mice. Nevertheless, I persisted in my studies, only to find my interests in basic science threatened by the possibility of promotion to an administrative post—there seems to be unlimited space for monkeys in science administration—so I left to take a research position in reproductive physiology.

Captive of his humanistic behavior, man is beset by shocking overpopulation. Not only is his spread rapidly destroying every other creature’s environment but also he is outgrowing his own food supply. For these reasons, I was astounded to discover that human studies in reproduction are devoted more to curing sterility than to promoting it! And it was at this new laboratory that I suffered the additional shock which initiated the train of events that led eventually to this, my last report and resignation: mother was among the experimental animals.

She was part of a terminal experiment purportedly designed to measure the effects of drug addiction upon pregnancy. Fortunately, she failed to recognize me among the crowd of other doctors. When I had regained my composure, I endeavored to determine how the use of such a rare and valuable being as a chimpanzee for a terminal experiment could be justified. Indeed, it was unclear why this experiment was being performed at all. Even a cursory examination of the laboratory’s library revealed that the experimental procedure was a duplicate of work carried on in Germany several years before,

following the Thalidomide disaster.

The justifications put forth by my human "colleagues" seemed designed to discredit, once and for all, my original belief that human medical research was worthy of wild primate sacrifice. The investigators involved were not only unaware of the work in Germany ("After all, it was published in German") but also unconcerned with the future of a species other than their own—nor could they seem to see that the well-being of the two might be related.

Of course, I left the institute, seeking others where more important and creditable studies based upon laboratory primates might be underway. Successive appointments provided me with the opportunity to see members of our tribes strapped to seats and forcibly made to chain-smoke cigarettes from 11 A.M. to 4 P.M. each day. This work was proceeding at a London research center in order to help man safeguard that part of his population that willfully and voluntarily subjects itself to a comparable regimen—and ripping a health warning off each cigarette pack to do so. Surely this is a behavior no monkey could be stupid enough to indulge in!

Elsewhere, in Madison, Wisconsin, I observed an experiment where monkeys were subjected to continuous "hard-rock" music and other kinds of human noise pollution which permitted the experimenters to determine that enough of it "fatigued" the experimentees. While at a Bronx hospital, two doctors force-fed baboons a diet of 50 percent liquor each day to determine that alcohol damages the liver—"even," I quote, "with a good diet." This less than remarkable result had apparently been anticipated by baboons in their diet over four-and-a-half million years ago, yet these investigations are typical of the way our members are being sacrificed in the study of conditions that man deliberately brings upon himself. "Diseases with no villains," they would call them in Times Square.

Upon news of mother's passing, I initiated APE—the Action Program Entity—within the Simiate's undercover efforts. It was no longer enough to sacrifice oneself, observe, and report. It was time to strike back...and so a "Department of Monkey Shines" was founded. The success of these covert operations against the medical profession speaks for itself in the declining public esteem of which primate researchers and doctors now complain. One of my most notable triumphs was to get myself appointed as a presidential advisor on the swine-flu vaccine program.

By far the most successful of our recent covert missions has been in the field of insurance. Here, with the help of an orangutan and a spider monkey, we found a ready market for our services as victims in malpractice suits. At the height of this program, all three of us appeared in the same court in a two-day period, posing as an achondroplastic dwarf (the result of a botched abortion), a paraplegic (due to a wart removal), and a spastic (because of an untactfully tendered fee). At the same time, I was able to recruit a gelada baboon who subsequently designed Medicaid forms for the federal government, as well as most of the hospitalization regulations, schedules, and forms in use by the three major medical insurance companies today.

However, I have come to realize that not even our most strenuous efforts are likely to check the train of events man has set in motion against monkeys and apes. The truth is that habitat destruction and the spread of human populations over our former homelands have far displaced biomedical research

as the principal threat to our existence. We must look to the medical profession to realize finally its dependence upon us and to react to our disappearance in time to help at least some of our populations to persist. To this saddened simian several truths now seem self-evident: There should be **no** primate collection without primate protection, **no** experimentation which constitutes duplication, **no** termination without propagation, and **no** biomedical use whatever of vanishing species.

With these new perceptions beclouding the objectives of my field assignment by the Supreme Simiate, my ultimate disenchantment and this resignation were preordained, and I have had to cast about to make a new life for myself. My choice was inevitable. A year ago I became a surgeon, and my ability to operate with all four hands has enabled my practice to prosper to such an extent that it is no longer necessary to recommend an operation for every patient. The infrequency of my letters has been one consequence of my new professional status—the IRS has made it imprudent for a physician to put too much down on paper.

In the meantime, I have been made aware of the fact that not all human beings are insensitive to the need to find substitutes for monkeys and apes as experimental animals. A colleague called to my attention a recent address by the dean of a prominent eastern medical school which states in part, "Those who would enter the field of medical science should prepare themselves for self-sacrifice."

Your former servant,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tomo Troglodytes". The signature is highly stylized and cursive, with a large, decorative flourish at the bottom.

Field Representative 1st Class, Ret.
