

Imposition Stories

The Old Cat

I don't know how old the cat was, but he was well past middle age. I noticed him at first hiding behind the boat. He seemed friendly, so I fed him table scraps. We had a bad winter that year and I made a box for him on top of the freezer where it was warm. He was a large tom and he had a persistent sore on his right front leg. He didn't like the leg touched so I let him alone. One day I noticed he was very unsteady on his legs. His eyes were glazed over and he did not eat his food. I decided that I must intervene and take him to the vet. It wasn't until late the next day that I managed to catch him. By that time he was extremely ill, with a slow continuous froth coming from his mouth. I decided the most humane solution would be to take him to the S.P.C.A. to be euthanized. Is it really humane to put a wild cat into a box and drive him 10 miles into town? Could I wish an hours worth of pure terror at the end of the life of a sick animal? I went into my bedroom and dug through my closet for the rifle. I loaded it and put a spare bullet in my pocket. I went outside and put the barrel of the rifle against his head. He rubbed his froth covered head against the tip of the rifle as I released the safety and pulled the trigger.

Kaa's Surgery

Kaa was donated to the small park that I work at in the summer. We used him as part of an educational program for school classes. I had always kept him at home rather than the park office so I could make sure he was healthy. When I left the park to go back to school, I left him with one of the other park employees. She grew tired of caring for him and returned him to the park. She remarked that his teeth were showing through his lip on the right side of his mouth. A vet told us that this was mouth rot, a very common disease for this type of animal. We treated it with antibiotics, salves, and even herbs. As the disease spread the tissue of his mouth rotted away, distending his lips and barring his vision with the inflammation.

When I returned to work in the summer I decided to take him to a specialist in another town. The specialist excised the decayed tissue and sewed his lip back down. In a month the stitches had rotted through the tissue and some of his teeth had fallen out. I have a old friend who has a clear head and a steady hand. With her help we operated once again on Kaa. Although it had been suggested that we were indulging in heroics, we repeated the process as before. We cut away all the dead and rotting tissue until we hit clean tissue and blood. Since the bone had been affected we used a die grinder with a small circular saw blade to cut away the bone. Kaa did not squirm or fight which was surprising considering the fact that we had no anesthetic. We stitched his lips back down leaving long whiskers of silk in case the stitches slipped. Three weeks later I noticed that his

behavior changed markedly. He thrashed about aggressively when held and more teeth had fallen out. I find it strange that I could operate on him and yet I could not be there when the vet euthanized him.

Chickens

I bought 11 shaver starcross chicks in the spring. They grew quickly and started laying eggs in the fall. The following year they slowed down in their production and by winter 11 chickens were producing only a few eggs a week. In past I had given my old hens to Heather, who dispatched them and used them for stewing. That winter Heather had her freezer full and the task of getting rid of the old hens became mine. I decided to make a device which would make this task easier. I made a large cone from sheet aluminum and hung it about a foot below the clothesline. The tip of the cone was cut off. I could turn the chicken upside down and place its head through the hole in the tip of the cone. In such a position the chicken always becomes limp and dazed. With the chicken held in the cone I could put the barrel of the shotgun against the chicken's head and shoot its head off. When the hen was cold and stiff I removed it from the cone and buried it in the garden.

Eating Venison

For a few years my social life was restricted to hanging out with Bob and Paul. They liked to hunt and were reasonably successful at it. Bob's mum was an excellent cook and liked to feed people. She often had dinner parties and on one occasion she fed us a traditional english sunday dinner. The food was superb especially the meat. I told her how much I enjoyed it and she remarked that this was the fallow deer that Bob and Paul shot on Sidney island. My only previous experience with venison was some horrible tough gamey meat that my mother cooked. Now that I know how good venison is, I can't look at the deer that roam around our property in the same way. Bob says that these ones don't taste very good, and I will have to catch one and feed it on grain for a while before we butcher it.

Poisoning Rats

I heard them very late one night. That scratching and rustling was unmistakably the sign of rats in the attic. The man at the feed store told me that there was no point in live trapping them since they would just return. He sold me some rotonone soaked grain and told me to put it in a dish with another dish of water beside it. I climbed into the attic and put the dishes down on a piece of insulation. I heard more scratching for a few nights and then nothing. The next day when I was watering the lawn I saw a rat. It was walking straight towards me. As it came closer I

could see that something was wrong with it. Its eyes were glazed over and it obviously had no idea where it was as it wandered aimlessly up to me, hit my leg and fell over. I went into the house and got the rifle. The first shot did not kill the rat. The rat merely crouched low to the ground with that peculiar look that is so common to retarded people. The second shot went through the rats eye. This shot was clean and the rat rolled over convulsing and dripping blood through its mouth. I threw the rat deep into the bushes. I haven't had any rats in the attic since then.

The Garter Snake

Linda and I used to job share at a small park. We were responsible for educational programs, some light administrative work, and care of the display animals. She worked in the winter when I was at school, and I took over in the summer. Terry was our boss. He was very nice but his background was in botany and he was useless when it came to dealing with animals. One day Linda found that she had a problem with one of the garter snakes. It was very thin and had managed to get itself entwined in a long piece of masking tape. It hadn't been noticed because the snake had managed to crawl under the paper at the bottom of the cage. The tape had cut off the blood circulation to much of the animals body. When Linda found the snake it was bloated and contorted from the dead tissue. Unfortunately we had used up all possible favours from the local vet, and we were low on money. They disposed of the snake by sealing it in a brown envelope. They put the envelope under the tire of Linda's car and she drove over it. We often laugh about this story at parties.

The Garden

I like to dig in the garden all summer long. Since this disturbs the roots of the plants I have to restrain myself. One summer I was digging in the garden to get a few new potatoes. Unfortunately I had forgotten that I buried six chickens in that spot. A mink killed almost all my chickens that spring and I had buried the corpses there. Mink are senseless animals. They get into a chicken coop and kill all the chickens they can get at. They eat one or two of the heads and leave the rest to waste. I would not be so angry if they took the whole animal.

Small Bear

For many summers I worked in the national and provincial parks. At Mount Robson Park I helped the wardens quite a bit with problem animals. All the park staff were housed in a camp in the middle of the park. Sometimes animals came into the camp. We had a youth crew in the camp and we were responsible for their

safety. They spotted a small bear in the forest around their cabins. We scared him off several times. He was about a year old and was thin and mangey. Mother bears kick the one year old bears out on their own. This one was having a hard time getting food and learning to take care of itself. Gradually the small bear became more adventurous, breaking into our cabins and eating anything he found. The warden had been watching the bear and decided that the bear was too sickly to relocate. He shot the bear cleanly and it dropped into the brush beside the cookhouse. He reloaded the gun and gave it to me to cover him in case the mother was in the area. As he pulled it clear of the brush we could see how badly run down the bear was. It was missing large patches of hair and was heavily infested with parasites.

At the end of that summer, Karen, one of the other naturalists met a one year old bear on a mountain trail. The bear knocked her down and dragged her into the bush. He ate her right arm, leaving only the hand and the bone. I found her about an hour later. She survived and lives in Toronto with her Fijian husband.

Val and the Snake

I have my own way of imposing the presence of the snakes on others. People are frightened by snakes because someone has taught them to be frightened. Fear of snakes is a learned behaviour. My friend Val, who worked in our office this summer can probably thank her mother, or a neighbourhood boy for her fear of snakes. I started my imposition slowly on Val by explaining the natural history of snakes. I made very sure that she understood. Then one of our snakes was sick and we were all very worried about him. He became an object of pity and concern, and thus was capable of eliciting the emotion of caring and perhaps affection. I handled the animal constantly in her presence while treating him for his illness. Slowly Val grew accustomed to the sight of him. On a bet one day Val touched him. She was stuck in the office quite a bit, and loved to go out when we were required to visit other parks. At the end of the summer I took her with me on a visit which involved showing the snakes to other people. By this point, Val's love of a trip outweighed her concern over snakes. It was a busy visit and we showed the snakes to many people. I was exhausted and asked someone to hold the snakes while I went for a rest. This person had to attend to a problem, and handed the snake without asking to Val. When I walked around the corner Val was standing with a group of children and holding the snake. She didn't hand the snake back to me and I didn't ask for it.

2. falcon lure. - The idea behind the sport of falconry is to train the bird to attack another bird and then return to its owner. To do this, a falconer will train a bird to attack a lure. This lure is made of leather with a wooden handle. The lure is used by swinging it around, which makes it twirl. The base is a steel box.

3. falcon lure. - This lure is made with a leather body and the wings of a sparrow.

4. hobbles. - Hobbles are used around the feet of large grazing animals to keep them from wandering. These are made from leather, steel rings, and nylon cord. The support is rebar and extends two feet off the wall.

5. hog shackle. - Hog shackles are used to restrain hogs for the purposes of examination and medication. This shackle is an oak bar covered in leather with steel chain and nylon rope. The support for the shackle is much longer than is shown here. The support extends 3 feet off the wall.

6. cattle tongs. - Cattle tongs are placed between the nostrils of the animal to move the animal from one location to another. The tongs are placed on a section of steel 'I' beam. The tongs are ten inches long.

7. hook and shield for ringhals. - Ringhals are a species of cobra which have the ability to spit venom into the eyes of an enemy. The shield is plexiglass and aluminum. The hook is steel.

8. twitch. The twitch is used to distract a large animal which is known to kick or bite its handler. It is placed around the upper lip and twisted. This twitch is made from aluminum and steel chain .

9. bit. - This bit is made from oak and is hollow through the centre. The hollow area allows the animal to receive food and medication through a tube without the handler being bitten. The strap is leather. The wall support is two and a half feet long.

10. snare. The snare is aluminum tube and stainless steel wire. The stand is on wheels.