



Photo credit: Carole Noon

World's First Astrochimp HAM
Born: 1955, Cameroons,
Equatorial Africa.
Died: 18 Jan 1983, North Carolina
Zoological Park, NC.
Ham was trained at Holloman AFB,
Aeromedical Research Laboratory.
His name is an acronym for
Holloman Aero Med. Ham's train-
ing culminated on Jan. 3, 1961, by
riding in a capsule perched atop an
83-foot Redstone rocket launched
from Cape Canaveral, Florida,
reaching a top speed of 5,800
mph and an altitude of 155 miles.
He was recovered at sea 420
miles down range from the launch
site. Ham proved that mankind
could live and work in space.
— Dedicated March 28, 1983

This terse plaque inscription outside the New Mexico Museum of Space History encapsulates the 28-year life of Ham, America's first primate in space, from his capture in Africa to his death in a North Carolina Zoo. The February 10, 1961 issue of *Life* magazine referred to Ham as "a patient beast," as it recounted how "Poor" Ham's journey took him 41 miles higher, 124 miles farther down-range, and 1,500 miles per hour faster than he was supposed to go. Poor Ham, indeed.

I wrote an article a few years ago that included a picture of a man bestowing upon Ham a trophy apple upon his return; his mouth gaped wide open flashing brilliant white teeth, as though smiling in anticipation of the simple, delectable treat. Dr. Jane Goodall justifiably repre-

manded me for thinking his display was a happy one and pointed out that the look on Ham's face was a look of extreme terror.

Ham's historic flight paved the way for Alan Shepherd to become the first human primate from America in space. But while Shepherd, John Glenn and others returned to hero's welcomes and confetti-filled street parades, Ham, Enos and other "chimpanauts" faced a grim future. The chimpanzees who were once dizzily spun in immense centrifuges to assess the body's ability to withstand the power of acceleration against the earth's gravity (G-forces) and silenced in consciousness-depriving decompression chambers, were not discharged from their involuntary military service with honors. Instead, they were forced to undergo decades of further insidious, painful experiments at the hands of humans. They were used to test seat belts, "pumped with caffeine in studies of long-term sleep deprivation," as reported in *The Wall Street Journal* in 1997, and leased out to biomedical research institutions for invasive experiments on AIDS, hepatitis and other human ailments.

The 65 chimpanzees taken from their jungle homes in Africa in the 1950s (plus their offspring and other captive-born animals) ultimately were deemed by their "owner," the United States Air Force (USAF), as surplus property in the late 1990s and the USAF decided to divest itself of this excess responsibility. The original 65 chimpanzees were now 144 chimpanzees, and a fierce battle erupted over who should get the animals: researchers, notably The Coulston Foundation (TCF), which would continue to conduct experiments on them, or sanctuaries that would provide these sentient creatures with the retirement they so richly deserved.

The news reports during the divestiture process told a telling, though deadly, tale: "The 144 chimps, mostly housed at the Holloman Air Force base in New

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The Mission To Discharge Chimpanzees Honorably

By Adam M. Roberts

Mexico...”; “As the future of 143 chimpanzees hangs in the balance, Congress is asking questions about the way the Air Force is operating the divestiture process...”; Penny and Robin “are among 141 former chimpanzees that the Air Force officially parted with yesterday.” You see, even while the USAF was deciding to whom the chimpanzees’ lifetime care would be entrusted, they were being leased by TCF, one of the bidders. This meant that only the Foundation, and its founder, Frederick Coulston, had access to all their medical records and other vital health information, thus giving TCF an unfair advantage over the other bidders. It also meant that while the animals were suffering in windowless cells in New Mexico for Coulston’s profit, they were dying: 144, 143, 141....

Laboratory or Morgue?

TCF spokesman Don McKinney once blithely opined: “We’re about science and veterinary care. And we are about life.” But TCF has an atrocious litany of violations of the Animal Welfare Act for cruelty and negligence toward the chimpanzees at the facility. In August 1995, for instance, a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) press release reported that in December 1994, TCF employees “failed to provide water to 14 nonhuman primates...causing all these primates to become severely dehydrated and causing the death of four of them.” The previous year, in October 1993, the temperatures in one den reached a reported 140 degrees Fahrenheit “causing the death of the [three] primates” therein. While at least three of the 144 chimpanzees that the Air Force leased to Coulston died, the USAF ultimately awarded 30 chimpanzees to Primarily Primates, a Texas sanctuary, and the remaining 111 to TCF.

Since then, the death toll at TCF has mounted, as have the number of charges, violations, and investiga-

tions. According to whistleblowers at the facility, a chimpanzee named Gina died in June 2000 after being locked outside in the oppressive New Mexico summer heat for hours. It was over 90 degrees that day as the sun beat down on her sweltering body. Donna, a 36-year old chimpanzee at TCF, died miserably after carrying a dead fetus in her womb for sometime between two weeks and two months. Dr. C. James Mahoney reviewed the case information and noted that Donna had a liter of pus in her peritoneal cavity and a ruptured uterus “with the partially decomposed fetus’s skull visible through the tear.” In addition to this blatant animal cruelty, the Food and Drug Administration notified TCF that it had over 300 violations of “Good Laboratory Practices,” which are in place to assure the quality and integrity of experiments and their results.



Photo credit: NASA

Ham, the first chimpanzee to travel into space, is prepared for flight launch aboard the Mercury capsule.

Awarding chimpanzees or federal financial support to TCF is a grotesque injustice on the part of the Government of the United States of America. It is also an injustice that would not go unchallenged.

“They’re off-limits. They don’t work any more.” — Dr. Carole Noon

Dr. Carole Noon is a biological anthropologist who has worked with chimpanzees for over 15 years,

focusing on resocializing these magnificent creatures. With the help of world renowned experts such as Dr. Jane Goodall and Dr. Roger Fouts, and the Doris Day Animal League (DDAL), Carole founded The Center for Captive Chimpanzee Care in St. Lucie Co., Florida, in an effort to provide sanctuary to chimpanzees formerly institutionalized in laboratories across the United States: “The Center’s goal is to create a retirement sanctuary where the chimpanzees will be cared for in the best environment possible.”

They say you can’t fight city hall, but Carole knew that she couldn’t let the USAF get away with giving most of the chimpanzees to TCF for further painful tests and none to her for peaceful retirement. So she fought back, bringing suit against the Air Force for its egregious mistake — and she won, the Air Force capitulating and awarding her 21 of the chimpanzees. Said Carole, “There is a feeling of debt. If we are going to take away their freedom and health, don’t we owe the Air Force chimpanzees something in return?” Now she gets the opportunity to repay these wronged beings on our collective behalf.

On Thursday, August 17, 2000, the Center hosted a groundbreaking ceremony to commemorate the beginning of the sanctuary’s construction, where chimpanzees would ultimately live “in a complex and enriching environment geared toward their intelligence and natural curiosity.” A year later, the chimpanzees had reached their new home.

The first group of 11 animals arrived on April 22, 2001, under bright blue southeastern skies. Carole referred to it simply as “the culmination of three-and-a-half years of work.” Chimpanzees, like the humans with whom they share over 98 percent of DNA, have individual personalities. According to the Center’s web site (www.savethechimps.org), Gromek is estimated to be 38-years-old and

was a baby when he was captured in Africa for the Air Force space program; Hanzie, estimated to have been born in 1959, “is adept with tools and will spend hours dipping a stick into a fruit smoothie placed outside the cage till the bowl is empty”; 16-year-old Faith was born in captivity on April 29, 1985, and likes to tease and trick her new caregivers, displaying an intelligent sense of humor; and 18-year-old Kendra is “the hands-down beauty queen of the group.”

These 11 individuals have begun the socialization process and are living as a group; and the ten late arrivals (who made it to the Center on June 14) are starting to catch up so that someday soon they will all be able to frolic and groom and play together on jungle gyms and tire swings on the Center’s 150 acre orange grove sanctuary. Carole reported a wonderful story about one of the initial meetings:

So far things are going like a dream. But there was one introduction heavy on my mind. Waylon and Garfield, who arrived together, meet-

ing Wes and Emory, who arrived together. I separated the four of them into different cages. Garfield, who is just a kid with no manners, and Emory, an adult who likes to follow protocol, met first. They ignored each other, which I considered a blessing.

Then Waylon, who is among the most screwed up of all the chimps, met Wes. Waylon is huge — 164 pounds. Wes is also a big guy — 145 pounds. I opened the door and Wes approached Waylon. Waylon didn’t turn and run, which I expected. Instead, he kept facing Wes as he backed up a few feet. Wes kept approaching and Waylon kept backing up.

Then Wes sat down and slapped a foot on the ground — a typical chimpanzee play invitation. Waylon didn’t have a clue but he didn’t go anywhere. Wes stood up and slapped his foot on the ground again. Waylon didn’t get it but didn’t move. Finally Wes walked towards Waylon wearing a smile and laughing softly. Waylon figured it out and by the time Wes reached him, Waylon was smiling and laughing too.

One of the other caretakers who was with me said, “I’ve never heard Waylon laugh before.” Neither had I.

In the wild, chimpanzees live in large communities. Carole ultimately hopes to expand the facility to hold 150 to 200 chimpanzees (the enclosures are modular so they can be added onto easily over time). This would be a welcome change for some of the approximately 1,500 chimpanzees who currently languish in testing laboratories across the country — including hundreds still at The Coulston Foundation facility.

In order to care for these animals, the Center needs cash — about \$300,000 a year over the course of the chimpanzees’ lives, which could last up to 60 years. This will increase, of course, with the addition of future residents. It was remarkable to many animal advocates that the Center was not able to raise sufficient funds (upwards of \$14 million dollars) to win the release of all 141 chimpanzees during the Air Force divestiture. Dollars available for animal protection are clearly hard to come by. But now that the Center has a chance to prove itself (thanks to a generous grant by the Arcus Foundation) future donations should pour forth regularly, especially as the world sees what Carole can do for these retirees.

A Bright or Bleak Future?

Chimpanzees in captivity suffer because of their perhaps unfortunate genetic similarity to humans. At the same time, those humans who force chimpanzees into biological servitude divorce themselves from that knowledge, and treat the chimpanzees as simple test subjects. In the wild, chimpanzees are suffering as well and their populations are steadily cascading toward extinction. Once found in 25 West and Central African countries, the chimpanzee is now reported extinct in Benin, Burkina Faso, Togo and possibly

Chimpanzees nurse for five years, and continue to have constant contact with their mothers after weaning.



Photo credit: Carole Noon

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An elaborate moving "tree" is one of many exciting diversions on the Center's "chimp island," which is expected to be ready by mid-November.

Rwanda according to the World Conservation Monitoring Centre. Chimpanzee subpopulations throughout their remaining range are becoming increasingly fragmented as logging companies destroy their forest havens for the valuable timber that brings these multinational corporations enormous riches on the global market. When the forest cover is gone, chimpanzees increasingly lose not only their homes but also their lives to poachers who kill them to sell their meat in markets throughout Africa and expensive restaurants in Western cities. This "bushmeat" trade together with the destruction of their habitat may wipe out the approximately 150,000 wild chimpanzees left on earth in the next two decades. (For more specific information about the bushmeat trade, see "Deadly Delicacies," *Animal Guardian*, Fall 2000, and visit the Bushmeat Crisis Task Force on the web at www.bushmeat.org.)

The United States Congress has weighed in during the past two years to enact legislation to help chimpanzees survive in the wild and be retired from laboratories in the United States. On November 1, 2000, President Clinton signed into law the Great Ape Conservation Act of 2000. Funds dispersed under this law will help local conservation projects in chimpanzee range states, which will contribute to the species' immediate

survival and, hopefully, long-term viability. When the House Resources Committee passed the bill, it reported that it is "necessary for the United States and the international community to take a leadership role in trying to stop the disappearance of these irreplaceable flagship species, such as great apes."

Shortly thereafter, on December 20, 2000, the President also signed into law the Chimpanzee Health Improvement, Maintenance, and Protection Act, to provide for a system of sanctuaries in the United States to care for chimpanzees when they are no longer needed in biomedical research. The "CHIMP Act," as it is known, was introduced by Congressman James Greenwood (R-PA) in an effort to enable these intelligent creatures to be retired from research permanently, and have the animals' physical health and psychological welfare met in group settings, devoid of the chronic distress and abnormal behaviors that evolve after years of confinement in small laboratory cages. A recent poll conducted by Zogby International for the Doris Day

Animal League found that 79% of Americans surveyed feel that the government should pay for the permanent retirement of chimpanzees after their life in the laboratory concludes. Further, 89% felt that it was inappropriate for chimpanzees to be kept caged alone for decades.

Congressman Greenwood acknowledged, "We would not have a space program if it had not been for the contributions of the chimpanzees in the program." Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney (D-NY) added: "Without this legislation, these retired chimps will continue to be housed in expensive facilities that

provide marginal or inhumane care." Not only would the sanctuary system envisioned in the legislation save chimpanzees from continued cruelty and loneliness, but it would also save American taxpayers money since care for these animals should be cheaper in a sanctuary. Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL), who helped shepherd the bill through the Senate, concurred: "Therefore, if the Federal government is to keep using chimpanzees to advance human health research goals, long-term care of the animals is a pre-requisite. This legislation will help ensure that the Federal government fulfills that responsibility in a more cost-effective and humane way than is currently done." The legislation makes available up to \$30 million to construct and operate the sanctuary system envisioned by the CHIMP Act.

"There is a feeling of debt. If we are going to take away their freedom and health, don't we owe the Air Force chimpanzees something in return?"

The National Institutes of Health (NIH), under the United States Department of Health and Human Services, is charged with administering the CHIMP Act on behalf of the U.S. government. But NIH, which had no problem financially propping up and bailing out TCF with

millions of taxpayers' dollars over the years, inexplicably has been holding up the creation of the sanctuary system called for in the CHIMP Act. Chimpanzees in need are suffering today; this federal foot-dragging prevents money from going to sanctuary development efforts like that of The Center for Captive Chimpanzee Care. Under the terms of the legislation, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services was to have determined within 60 days of passage whether a sanctuary meeting the law's requirements already existed and, if not, make a grant for establishing one. Regulations for operation

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of the sanctuary were to have been prepared within 180 days of enactment. Neither requirement has been met almost a year after passage.

Why go it alone? Collaborate.

We surely don't have to rely on Congress and federal agencies to undertake the work of saving chimpanzees from a lifetime of cruelty. A remarkable undertaking has begun: The Chimpanzee Collaboratory, about which Steven Wise wrote in the Fall 2001 issue of the *Animal Guardian*. The Collaboratory has as its mission "to protect the lives and establish the legal rights of chimpanzees and other great apes." Wild and captive chimpanzees will be assisted as those involved in the Collaboratory work to "promote international initiatives to reduce bushmeat consumption and raise the status of all great apes," educate the public about the cruelty involved in using chimpanzees in entertainment, and work to establish legal rights for all great apes including chimpanzees.

Collaboratory members are a veritable "who's who" of the primate protection movement, including: Steve Ann Chambers of the Animal Legal Defense Fund, Roger and Deborah Fouts, Jane Goodall, DDAL's Holly Hazard and, of course, Carole Noon. The Collaboratory was founded and initially funded by the Glaser Foundation in Washington State.

The types of projects to be undertaken by the Collaboratory are diverse. Workshops will be held to develop a strategy to achieve a Convention on the Great Apes under

the auspices of the United Nations; the Center for Captive Chimpanzee Care will be expanded to include an educational center; work will be undertaken to have the United Nations Environmental, Social and Cultural Organization designate chimpanzees as a World Heritage Species in the hopes of gaining additional specific protection in their range states. Of course, this is just a brief sampling of the remarkable breadth of work in which the Collaboratory will be engaged.

For all they've done...

Ham was sent into space and made it back alive. He was followed less than one year later by another chimpanaut, Enos, who was actually to orbit the earth before John Glenn made his global journey. The Center for Captive Chimpanzee Care's fact sheet on the history of the Air Force chimps tells of Enos's bizarre journey: "Due to a malfunction inside the capsule, Enos was given an electric shock for every correct maneuver he made, a reward-punishment system that contradicted over a year of training. Rather than alter his behavior, Enos endured the shocks and performed the flight tasks he knew were right. The test flight took Enos on a two-orbit ride and landed him alive."

For 50 years we have taken chimpanzees from their families, launched them into space, destroyed their forest homes, incarcerated them in 5x5x7 foot cells, injected them with unnatural diseases, dressed them like humans and

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Photo credit: NASA

Test subject Ham, with bio-sensors attached to his body, is readied by handlers for his trip aboard the Mercury rocket.

forced them to entertain us, and in myriad other unfathomable and dastardly ways, abused our closest relatives. While we can't take back what we have done historically, we can make a measure of amends by affording chimpanzees the life they deserve — a life in which they need not fear having their forest canopies ripped from above their heads, and in which they can groom each other in the sunshine instead of languishing in dark cages, never to see the light of day. Thanks to people like Carole Noon, there is an opportunity for chimpanzees to be relatively free, to be chimpanzees once again, to rest in peace. This is a debt long past due. 🐾

To help Carole Noon's work at The Center for Captive Chimpanzee Care (CCCC), please contact her or send a donation to: The Center for Captive Chimpanzee Care, P.O. Box 12220, Fort Pierce, FL 34979.

You can donate or get further information through the CCCC web site at: <http://www.savethechimps.org>.

To make a donation to enable the long-term work of The Chimpanzee Collaboratory, send it to: The Chimpanzee Collaboratory, c/o Doris Day Animal League, 227 Massachusetts Ave., NE, Suite 100, Washington, DC 20002.

You can email the Collaboratory at: cc@ddal.org.