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TURPENTINE CREEK
ARKANSAS' REFUGE

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Journalism

by

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Ouachita Baptist University
Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communications, 2007

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This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this Master's thesis film project was twofold. First, I wanted to explore the problem, huge but relatively unknown, of the ownership of exotic pets in the United States of America. Second, in conjunction with that problem, I wanted to see how Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge (TCWR) approached it and what, as an organization, they do to help resolve this problem locally and nationally. In turn, the film also provides an in-depth look at a very unique refuge in the state of Arkansas. Using my own equipment, I shot and edited a short-form documentary about TCWR. The film is comprised of interviews and footage of the refuge and staff located just outside of Eureka Springs, Arkansas.

The idea for this film came from a combination of two completely different subjects: nuclear missiles and elephants. During my coursework at the University of Arkansas, I completed another film about a now defunct nuclear missile program that was located in Arkansas. The idea that something so powerful, yet unknown to the general public, existed in this state, made me want to find any other secrets that Arkansas still had. As I was posing this idea, I stumbled upon a painting by Sue Coe called "The Death of Jumbo." The scene depicts the once famous circus elephant Jumbo being hit by a locomotive. It brought up the question, what happens to these exotic animals after their "show days" are over?

With some guidance from my professors, I was encouraged to investigate two such sanctuaries that existed in Arkansas: Riddle's Elephant and Wildlife Sanctuary and TCWR. After talking with the staff at TCWR, I knew I had a story. What followed was two years of research and filming about a little refuge on top of a hill that has one message: Big cats do not make good pets.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Exotic wildlife has always been an area of interest for mankind. People go to zoos by the droves every year to see an animal other than just dogs, cats and other household pets. Those who want to take the next step, go on safaris in Africa and Mexico to see these rare animals in the “wild.” Yet there is one more type of person out there: the person that wants an exotic animal as a pet. This is a larger problem than the public is aware of. Most people who own such pets cannot provide the special care, housing, diet, and maintenance that they require. Many animals who have become too difficult for their owners to care for, or who have outgrown their usefulness as "pets" or profit-makers, end up languishing in small pens in backyards, doomed to live in deplorable conditions, or are abandoned or killed. A very few lucky ones are placed in genuine sanctuaries to live out the rest of their lives. That’s where Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge comes in.

In 1978, the Donald Jackson family acquired their first lion, Bum, while living in northeast Texas. Bum was found in a parking lot, tied to a cinder block, with seemingly no hope for rescue. Donald Jackson decided to rescue the cub. Daughter Tanya Jackson Smith, current president of Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge, was only 8 years old. In 1982, they acquired another lion, named Sheila. Although it wasn't easy taking care of two lions in their backyard, the Jackson family was successful. The Jackson family, along with Bum and Shelia, eventually moved from their home in Hope, Arkansas, to Eureka Springs. The animals remained with the Jacksons for the rest of their lives (Smith, 14 July 2011).

Fast forward a few years. Katherine Gordon Twiss, a breeder and black market dealer, arrived with 38 big cats crammed into two cattle trailers. A fugitive from the law, she desperately

needed to find a home for the cats. A friend of the Jackson family lived on a ranch in Eureka Springs, Arkansas, and offered temporary refuge for the cats. Later, the property was bought by the Jacksons for a permanent home. The 38 big cats were moved to the nearly 500 acre ranch near Eureka Springs, which in 1992 officially became Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge.

The labor intensive job of quickly building temporary cages for the 38 big cats was soon completed, but because of this sudden growth, phone calls began to pour in from all over the country from "big cat pet owners" looking for a home for their cat. The Jackson family: Don, Hilda, Tanya, and Robert, stepped up to this challenge and did what most would only dream of -- they sold everything and formed the refuge.

Today there are over a dozen reputable sanctuaries for big cats around the country, and Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge truly stands out as a frontrunner. The United States has thousands of its residents keeping dangerous big cats in their backyards, basements, garages, and warehouses. People acquire these animals as pets and soon find they have made a grave mistake and turn to places like Turpentine Creek for relief.

Turpentine Creek is a rare place. It is the only large cat sanctuary in Arkansas, and one of the few animal sanctuaries in the state. What makes it different from other animal sanctuaries is the access available. Most animal sanctuaries are not open to the public, only special visitors and staff are allowed. Turpentine Creek is open every day of the year, except Christmas, for the public to come and view the cats. While it may be a heart-warming story, it covers up the sad stories of what had to happen for animals to arrive there in the first place. Turpentine Creek hopes that with making these animals accessible to the public, and telling their stories, they can educate the public that "Big cats do not make good pets."

II. RESEARCH

As I talked with members of the staff and interns, one question I asked constantly was, “What do you think the main purpose of this facility is?” Almost robotically, they would always respond with the phrase, “We hope to teach the public that big cats don’t make good pets.” At first, I was slightly amused. Surely people were smart enough not to own a pet tiger or lion just because they could, but I made a note anyway and continued on with the interview. Only later when I began looking through studies did I discover how rampant this problem was.

One document, *Zoonotic Diseases and Exotic Pets: A Public Health Policy Analysis* put the whole problem in perspective, even though it primarily focused on the spread of animal-borne, or zoonotic, diseases. As a public health policy analysis detailing exotic animals for the Washington State Board of Health, the document answered some of the main questions I had. It outlined the law structure in place for the United States in dealing with exotic animals and what problems came from those situations.

Going state by state, one discovers that not everyone is in agreement on this topic. For starters, this issue is patchwork regulated. There is a mixture of federal, state and local regulations on each topic. According to the *Animal Protection Institute*, only 12 states in the union actually prohibit the possession of large cats, bears etc., where another 7 allows certain exotic pets with restrictions. So that means the other 31 states allow for possession of exotic animals, with 15 of them only requiring a license. The big question was where do these animals come from?

After further research and interviews, it was discovered that the trade in exotic animals is a multi-billion dollar industry, and exotic animals are bred, sold, and traded in large numbers in the United States. The *American Veterinary Medical Association* believes it to be the second largest black market industry in the United States following illegal drugs and firearms. 13.3% of United States citizens own an exotic pet of some sort. In 2003, they reported that 64 million American households owned companion animals, 20 million of which had at least one exotic pet. But these animals — including, lions, tigers, cougars, wolves, bears, monkeys, alligators, venomous snakes and other reptiles — pose grave dangers to human health and safety.

By their very nature, exotic animals are unpredictable and are incapable of being domesticated or tamed. In many states, (such as Arkansas) people are allowed to keep exotic animals in their homes and backyards without restrictions or with only minimal oversight. Every year, people are attacked and injured by exotic "pets" or exotic animals in roadside zoos; some of the attacks are fatal, and children have too often been the victims. In recent years, people have been mauled by tigers, attacked by monkeys, and bitten by snakes, just to name a few of the tragic incidents involving exotic pets and exhibited animals.

The *Washington State Board of Health* discussed how many exotic animals are carriers of diseases, such as herpes B, salmonellosis, monkeypox, and rabies, which are communicable — and can be fatal — to humans. Zoonotic diseases account for more than 60 percent of recognized infectious diseases and 75 percent of emerging diseases (CTSE 5; US EPW 3). Zoonoses are less common than other infectious diseases (for example, food-borne illnesses and sexually transmitted diseases), but they are a great public health concern because of their potential to cause large-scale outbreaks. Some of the most serious zoonoses are those associated with wild, exotic or imported animals.

Further, the conditions in which privately-owned exotic animals are kept also raise serious animal welfare concerns. Most exotics are usually raised in less than acceptable environments such as cages that are too small or insufficient light. For those that do survive, they are usually fed incorrectly and not given the nutrition that is required for a large animal on a daily basis. Turpentine Creek alone feeds over 7,000 lbs. of meat to over 200 animals per day, many of them who were eating cat food before, the most commonly incorrect food given to these animals (Smith, 14 July 2011).

You may ask, why don't these animals get placed in zoos? Zoos, at least in the United States, abide by what is known as the American Species Survival Plan (SSP). This program focuses on animals that are in danger of extinction in the wild, when zoo conservationists believe that captive breeding programs may be their only chance to survive. The program also helps maintain healthy and genetically diverse animal populations within in the zoo community. The *Association of Zoos & Aquariums* counts currently 172 species covered by 116 SSP programs in North America. So why are privately owned exotic animals exempt from such a program? Most exotic pets usually derive their origin from black-market trades and breeding. Many of the animals are inbred, mating within their own siblings and therefore producing a genetically degenerate animal, something which the SSP does not want to introduce to their genetically diverse lines. This also produces weaker and deformed animals over time, leading to more health issues as genetically they are unable to resist common infections. Since the animal cannot produce a DNA "report card" and trace its lineage, they are not allowed inclusion in the SSP.

This is not to say that the government has not tried to remedy the problem. Every year, and sadly, with every accident, states are reforming their current laws regarding exotic pet ownership. Some of the federal acts are, and not limited to, The Endangered Species Act, The

Captive Wildlife Safety Act, The Lacey Act, and The Animal Welfare Act. Each of these focuses on certain species of animals as well as the trade and possession of the same. More and more people are getting on board with this line of thinking as well. The *American Veterinary Medical Association*, the *Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists*, and the *Humane Society of the United States* are among those that oppose private ownership or support some restrictions on private ownership of exotic wild animals. They maintain that wild or exotic animals are not suited for domesticated lifestyles, that they present serious public health and safety issues, and that the management of captive exotic animals requires resources, knowledge, and environmental conditions that most private owners cannot adequately provide.

Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge has made it their purpose to have the proper knowledge and resources for these animals. The refuge exists to take care of abused and abandoned big cats that they have rescued over the years from private owners. Had better laws been in place, the refuge may not have even existed in the first place. Still Turpentine Creek continues to serve these animals they have come to love, and while they still receive animals every year, they stay true to their mantra, “Big cats do not make good pets.”

III. PRODUCTION NARRATIVE

One aspect of journalism that I was taught in grade school was that when you wanted to find a story of a place, to show up first as a “civilian”. You would bring nothing that would identify you as a reporter, or someone sniffing out a story. From that point, you could see what the place had to offer and see how open they were with information and what parts would require a little more digging. That is how the whole story started in November 2009 when I took a drive up to Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge, paid the fee and took the tour that they provided. After spending all day there, I was able to start forming questions and was ready to start making phone calls to the staff about the possibility of making a documentary.

A. Finding the Story

After talking with the staff and taking the tour at least 10 more times, (I had made arrangements where I did not have to pay every time) I started seeing some parts of the refuge that had more depth to them. For example, there is one black panther named Spike that was the first cat to be born at the refuge, but after further inspection, there really was not much to that story. On the other hand, one day a week, called Meat Day, interns had to sort through hundreds of pounds of meat that they received from Tyson and other large food chains nearby. With stories like these, I then began sketching out the first rough outline of the documentary. I created sections of story that I wanted to cover, though I wasn't sure exactly how they were all going to fit. Finally, I had a set of nine different sections; each dealing with a different aspect of the refuge: Introduction, Meat Day, Tours, Interns, Lessons, Getting the Job, Founding Story and Cat Stories. With these put on paper, I now had a path on which to progress.

Over the course of the project, many of these sections were combined or dropped based on either time or lack of information. While I ended up having a lot of information about Meat Day, the process of how they handled it ended up changing over the years basically making the footage I had outdated and incorrect. This was one lesson I experienced multiple times with this project as I took almost 4 years to complete it. A place changes drastically from year to year and at some point I had to quit filming and decide what was still usable, what was outdated and what I was going to use no matter what. As of now, the documentary does not even mention Meat Day. Interviews were scrapped, graphics thrown away and all that remains is about ten to fifteen seconds of footage of interns sorting meat.

I originally wanted to include a Lesson section where one of the interns taught the viewer something about big cats in general. I had that section divided into three different lessons: Chuffing, Stinky Face and Spraying. Each of these lessons talked about a biological aspect of the cats. Chuffing is equivalent to a purr of a household cat, Stinky Face has to do with a special organ in the roof of their mouth and Spraying is how the cats would mark their territory. Eventually, all that remained of that section was the part about the Stinky Face. It was too hard to try and catch the tigers consistently chuffing and it was also hard and not exactly pleasant to get the cat to spray something, as it usually wanted to spray me.

I had my ideas of what was most important but a lot of that began to change as I started setting up interviews with the staff and interns. I knew I wanted to interview at least three different types of people. Tanya Smith was my top goal as it was her parents that had originally started the refuge and she had grown up with it. It was also important as she was now the president of the refuge and worked there on a daily basis. I knew that any founding story or important information that I might have missed would come from her interview. I also wanted to

get Emily McCormack, who was part of the staff and recently promoted to Curator of the refuge. She had more animal interaction and dealt with the interns on a daily basis. Which, after I discovered that bit of information, I wanted to be sure and have a few interns to talk about their experiences on a day to day basis. Most of my story comes from Ashley Bulla and Rachel Meili with some occasional “off-the-cuff” interviews with other interns during the day’s activities.

The “timeframe” problem soon reared its ugly head again as I discovered that the interns worked on a six month rotation, meaning every second or third time I would go up, the interns would be a completely different group of people that would not know me and be wary of talking to me and also having a different view of the refuge. I eventually had to decide on what interns I wanted to film and make sure that the interview would proceed in a manner that whatever they said would most likely stay relevant. Of course, that was not something I could completely control. If you watch the documentary closely, you will see what seems to be a lot of different interns at multiple times. This was due to filming over such a long period of time that the interns were constantly rotating. I did have a fear that this fact would be detrimental to the project and eventually, in early 2011, I had to go and make sure that I got the majority of my footage in one to two visits, so that the “actors” would remain the same for most of it.

B. The Starting Line

As for the actual shooting process, I encountered a very odd challenge early on as I got started. How many different ways can you shoot a cat in a cage? As the refuge was split into two main sections; the compound and the habitats; most of the best cat footage was in the compound. There the cats did not have many places to obscure themselves and you were fairly close to them. At first, I thought that would make for an easy shoot, but in reality it made it harder. I had to be very careful when I shot the animal through the bars to either get close

enough to where I could blur the bars out or have them seen but not make the cat look pitiful or “in jail.” This was supposed to be a happy place for the cats. They were rescued from worst situations to be brought here. At no point in my film did I want them to look pitiful, depressed, caged or sad. I discovered one way to help alleviate that feeling was to get a lot of footage when one of two things was happening: They were either interacting with another cat or they were interacting with a member of the staff that was nearby. It provided a much better feeling seeing the animals receive attention than looking like they were being ignored or avoided. One of the first shots of the film I debated back and forth whether or not to use. In that shot you see a cage which then rack focuses to where you can see a lion behind it staring through. I was very worried that that shot would evoke a feeling of sadness instead of mystery. Yet this also got me to thinking, maybe a little sadness was needed? These animals would not have to be rescued nor put in the refuge if the problem of exotic pet ownership did not exist. The decision was made to keep it in and I think it does what I want it to do.

When I originally contacted the refuge about doing a documentary, they were very helpful in answering questions and I had hoped that I would receive a type of “all-access” pass so that I would be able to get footage of the animals than just a normal tourist would have. I was very well aware of the danger with these large animals and I was not asking for anything like that, but I wanted to be allowed where the interns were and be able to shoot them in action. While on the phone, the refuge was agreeable to this, whereas when I got to the refuge, it took a few months of me being there consistently and, in effect, being a squeaky wheel before they finally allowed me in to the backside of the habitats. Here I was able to get much closer to a few of the animals in a much more natural setting. In the compound, they were all on concrete, which I knew wouldn’t be as appealing as getting them among trees and grass. I was thankful

for the access, but as time went on, the squeaky wheel approach ended up being the only way I could really ever get anything done.

The questions I developed for the interview process were originally generic. I went over the founding story with each of them, what they thought the main goal was, what parts they enjoyed doing, and usually followed up with a few questions about their particular role. During the interviews, I did my best to actually listen to the answers and not be concerned about the next question. This was helpful as more often than not, something they said would open up a different conversation that was unplanned. I had not originally focused on Enrichment, which is the process of creating toys for the animals. Yet each of the interns talked about it as it was one of their main responsibilities and in turn, I think, it created a very fun section of the documentary, because who doesn't like seeing a tiger act like a normal cat?

As I condensed these sections and stories, I had to come up with a way to connect them all. I was reminded that one of the reasons I was making this documentary was to help spread the word that big cats don't make good pets and the best way to show that, in my opinion, was to show what the refuge went through on a daily basis to care for these large animals. During that process, I would share stories of the animals, good or bad, and the troubles the staff went through to care for them, which I hoped would make the responsibility of raising a big cat that much more real and that much more unmanageable by the average public.

With that as my main theme, the skeleton of the story began to come together. In the end, the documentary consists of seven sections: Introduction, Founding Story, Interns, Exotic Pet Ownership, Cat Stories, Enrichment, and Publicity. It was at this point that I made the decision that with the interviews I had, it would be easier to have a narrator fill the gaps and push

the story where it needed to go. I then began to write the script for the narrator around the selected parts of the interviews. I knew I wanted a female voice for telling a story about animals. I felt it would have a more tender feel and just sound better than a man reading it like a news ticker. I wanted there to be some emotion within the film from the narrator and I had just the person in mind to do it.

C. The Break

But then life got in the way. When I originally started the project, I was living in Fayetteville, having recently completed my coursework for the program. My plan was to stay in town and finish the project for ease of communication with the school and also, TCWR was only an hour away if I needed to make quick trips out for more information or video. I was approached with a job offer that was four hours away and I ended up taking it. And yet, while the job was a good one, it provided extra stress and time constraints on the project itself. Looking back now, this extra stress was primarily of my own making. If I had stayed on my original schedule with the project, I would have been, most likely, in the final stages of the project instead of the first stages when I left. If you are reading this and are currently contemplating moving away and working on your project from afar, do so with caution. The old adage “out of sight, out of mind” speaks the truth. Plus every time I needed to work on the project, it was a four to five hour drive just to get where I needed to be. Also, the job I took was to edit video. It became very hard to edit video all day for work, only to come home and edit video in the evening for my Masters. So, the Masters project just sort of dropped off the radar for a while as I told myself that I would get oriented in my new job and then get back to work. That did not happen as quickly as it should have.

This move also brought another problem. Originally I shot a majority of the film on my professional grade standard definition MiniDV tape camera. I was going to edit it at the university's labs using Final Cut Pro. I had just started the process of capturing when the move came up. After I moved, I tried to move the project to my own personal computer which used Adobe Premiere, that way I could edit it at home. This proved to be a bit of a mistake at that time as my computer for some reason had a hard time with the footage transfer and the computer itself was having a harder time processing so much footage. I ended up using my office at work as a place to edit, with their permission. I was back to editing in Final Cut Pro, yet another problem was that they did not have any MiniDV decks, so there was no way I could transfer the footage. This eventually led to an around about way of finally getting it all on the computer through the help of two different computers. It worked, but the process took me a few weeks to complete. In the end, the majority of the film was done in Final Cut Pro and Adobe After Effects for the graphics.

D. Post Production

During the process of editing, I also came to the horrible realization that much of my audio that I had recorded was there, but recorded at a very low level. It was usable, but it was not the best and eventually I had to scrap some of it as it was distracting to the whole of the film. After some tests, I came to discover that an XLR adapter I had used on my camera had an unknown side effect that recorded the audio levels lower than it was showing on the camera. Near the end of the project though, I was able to hire a co-worker of mine whose job was to master audio and in the end, he helped me get the audio to an acceptable level. I always knew audio was important, but over the years as I have worked on this project, I have become painfully aware how problematic it can really be when the audio of a clip is not up to par. You

may have the best shot in the world, but without that NAT sound or interview clip, the shot is nothing. I now use a completely different caliber of audio recording equipment when I go on shoots and interview sessions and it is one of the first things I check to make sure it is all going well. I am still not a pro yet, but I have made many improvements in that area.

Speaking of the interviews, I learned how to transcribe with this project. In my last film, I luckily had a partner who was very efficient at transcribing and she had handled it. This time around, working solo, I figured I wouldn't need to transcribe all of the audio; I would just scrub the timeline and pick out pieces as I came across. This turned out to be a huge mistake as it was hard for me to try and organize anything. I even tried to use some transcription programs I had available to me to do the heavy lifting, only to find out that the southern drawl of most of the interviewees were too much for the program to decipher. Eventually, I bit the bullet and spent a weekend transcribing every tape I had and in the long run, it was the best decision I could have made. It became much easier to go back and find a quote or see how long a phrase was when I had it all written out in front of me. Transcription is very tedious work, but it is very important to the whole process.

After a majority of the narration script was written, along with the sound bites from the interviews selected, I began the actual editing process. I had already loaded all the footage I had and cut them up into different timelines. For example, I had an Intern timeline which primarily consisted of footage I knew I wanted to use during the Intern section of the film. About halfway through this selection process, it became very obvious that I still did not have enough footage to cover the whole film. I had already moved at this point and making the trip up to the refuge was getting more expensive and time-consuming. It was during this time, the summer of 2012 that I began to have problems with the refuge. To be clear, I do not hold any ill will or grudge against

the refuge, but in the last few months, it took everything I had to get anything from them. It has crossed my mind that the timeframe problem was having another effect. Maybe they thought I had taken too long, or my lack of visits meant the project was dead and they did not have time to waste on some willy-nilly student.

In either case, it took quite a few phone calls and emails to finally set up another meeting with Tanya Smith, not really to meet with her but to get access to the Turpentine Archives which contained photos and videos from previous rescues and newspaper clippings. I drove up one weekend and poured over about twenty different albums of photos and clippings looking for something I could use. They did not have a scanner and I was not allowed to take the pictures off property, so I had to rig up a temporary photo booth in which I could use my DSLR and basically copy the pictures by taking pictures of them. The light was not good and it was a struggle to get some of the pictures just right without some glare ruining the picture. After finally going through all the pictures, I then asked for the video collection, so I could browse through and take some samples. All I received were blank stares. I was informed, that all the videos they had were uploaded to YouTube and I could take what I wanted from there. I still pushed for the originals as they would be better quality but I received a firm decline on that.

E. Transcoding

So I was in a new dilemma, this being, how do I get the best quality of video off YouTube and make it usable for the documentary? Thankfully, at my job, pulling videos off of YouTube was done on a consistent basis, usually for examples used around the building. Finally finding a program called MPEG Streamclip and adjusting some settings, I started the process of watching all of the videos that TCWR had available on their YouTube channel. Many of them

were unusable as they had been edited with funky transition effects and bad graphics over the video, but I did find a few gems. The NAT sound also proved to be a problem as two-thirds of the videos had some intern talking over it providing information. While that worked well online, it would not work in the documentary.

It was upsetting to me at the time that I had to sift through all of these YouTube videos when I knew that the original footage was at the refuge, footage that originally had been offered to me in the beginning. It was too late in the game to fuss over it though, so I continued on. In the end product, probably over one-third of the footage in the film is archival footage that I had to pull from YouTube. It did give the film an odd look as many of the clips are of different qualities. Some were shot in high definition, some in standard. Some were used with an older camera; another seemed to be brand new. Part of my editing process was basically getting all the footage into the timeline and having them look overall the same so that it was not too distracting between the different formats. As the process went along, I eventually allowed a few clips to look different because it was obvious that it was archival footage and therefore could be allowed to be different.

The last problem I had of this kind continued on to the very end. The founding story of TCWR involves a certain lion cub named Bum and I relied on that story to set the whole film up. The staff had assured me that pictures of Bum existed and they would get them to me promptly. During my visit to go through their pictures, I could not find any. So I started emailing, calling and emailing some more, asking for one or two Bum pictures. I only got one response saying: "I'm sure they are around here somewhere, we'll send them when we find them." That never happened.

In the end, the pictures of Bum I did get I actually had to pull off of YouTube. Recently TCWR made a short five minute documentary about the refuge and they also talked about Bum and - surprise, surprise - they had pictures to go with it. Since I already had their permission to use their YouTube clips for my own film, I proceeded to take those pictures out of that clip and plugged them into mine. It was disheartening. I felt I had had a good relationship with the refuge, but near the end of it, I was receiving no help at all.

F. In The Editing Bay

The whole editing process was nothing new to me at this time. This was my third film I had edited, my second one in Final Cut Pro. Having learned from my previous endeavors, I knew that from the very beginning I had to be extremely organized. I set up a master folder and then anything from that point on that I did in relation to that project was stored in that folder. It started with creating a FCP project and moving all the footage I had into it. I created a sequence for each section of the film and as they were completed they were copied into the main sequence. I found it to be much more manageable if I looked at the film in pieces and not as a whole. Every time I looked at the film together, it was really hard to focus on what was to be done because there was so much to do. I was able to schedule myself to complete one section at a time and then move it in and then move onto the next. After the individual edits were done, I then worked on the project as a whole, mainly working on the transitions spots between the different sections. Did they flow into the next spot? If not, what had to be changed? Here the narration script came into play. I originally wrote it during the transcription of the interviews, but as I tried to plug in the sections, not all of them fit. So I started a rewriting process that helped smooth out the entire film.

In order to get the timing correct, I needed to record the narration for the film so that I knew exactly how long the in-between sections would be. My original choice for narration had moved away and at that time I did not have a better selection. So I recorded the narration myself. I read through all of the script and recorded it at the pace I felt was close to what I needed. I then plugged each of those into the timeline to help balance out the timing of the video. This helped solve a lot of problems because it showed me roughly, how long the film was going to be and I could hear where, in some parts, there was just too much talking. After a few months, I did find another narrator, a speech pathologist. I had wanted someone that was fairly understandable and not necessarily have a southern drawl polluting every word. I thought a speech pathologist would fit that need nicely. While she did achieve those two goals, she was so concerned about pronunciation, that there was a lack of “storytelling.” All in all, it was usable but not the best I could have. At this point it was late 2012 and I was running out of time, so I could not afford to be too picky.

Finally having the main audio recorded, I went back and looked at all of the holes I still had. Most were planned to be pictures or graphics that went along with the story. Thanks to previous instructions from my professors, I then went to work in After Effects. I found that all the lower thirds and basic titles were best made in AE as they tended to look crisper and cleaner. I also imported all the newspaper clippings and photos I had gathered along the way. Nothing special was done with these, just basic slow moves that helped fill in a few holes, and on occasion, provide a little emotion. Originally, I wanted to do more graphics than what was done. I had a vision of basically taking the silhouette of a running tiger and using it as a mask that the video would play through at the beginning. While I was able to figure the basics of using such a mask, the next steps proved to much more difficult and the idea was scrapped altogether. For the

Humane Society graphic, I wanted to find a more creative way of showing the statistics of pets in the United States and made that graphic merely as a placeholder. Time got away from me and I never got back around to changing it but looking back at it now, it does the job it was meant to do and does it cleanly and clearly.

The graphic that ended up taking the most time, primarily because of timing issues, was that of the United States map highlighting which states did and did not have laws regarding exotic pets. At first I was afraid I had bitten off more than I could chew as I discovered that I was going to have to start cutting out the different states to provide the appropriate colors. While it was still time consuming, I did find an easier way of grouping as many states as I could together that were the same color. Getting some of the borders to match up was a trial, but it all came together in the end. The hardest part was getting the timing correct as you have to “scrub” the audio in AE instead of playing it real time, so it took a few tries until I had it where I wanted it. I did learn a few new things about pre-composing layers and “pic-whipping”, things that I now use on a daily basis at my job. Honestly because of grad school work, I would say I am a much more proficient artist in AE. I am nowhere perfect, but I remember on the first day in Professor Hapgood’s class where we used it, I was scared of the thing. Now it is a tool I use daily, something I turn to because it is easier than trying to get Premiere or FCP to cooperate.

G. The Right Sound

The final stage of the editing process was sound. I was already having issues with my main interview sound bites and I had no music yet. In my last project, I was lucky enough to have a musician friend that actually wrote a soundtrack that went along with the film. Trying to find music to fit your film is a daunting task, and I missed my friend terribly. I knew that I did

not want music all the way through the film, nor did I want to repeat one song over and over, so that meant I had to have multiple songs that fit together in theme but were also different. It was also a necessity as many of the clips had unusable NAT sound and the film felt incomplete in those places. Again, another perk of my job is that searching for royalty-free music was a commonplace practice. I searched through a number of sites online that I knew of as well as some suggested by friends in the business. My two most used sites were that of Audio Network and Audio Sparx.

I knew I wanted my music to have a jungle feel so I started searching with those keywords. I found out soon enough that jungle music is not what I wanted, as that term relates to a certain type of rap techno. So, rethinking my search, I found a way to search by instrument. I have always enjoyed the sound of marimbas, and they had the tribal, exotic feel I was looking for, so I began looking for marimba themed music. I was able to uncover over four hundred songs and slowly whittled them down to the ones I wanted. The marimba, as an instrument, would be the unifying theme to the music. While each song would be different, the presence of the same instrument kept it all related and smooth. I changed this theme only once during the whole film, right near the end. When the staff really begins hammering the purpose of the refuge and what it means to them, I wanted the music to support their emotion and provided a swelling string arrangement that lifted their message slightly higher than the rest of the film, so if anything stuck out, that part would be it.

After re-watching it with the music in place, I realized it made it a little too busy. The NAT sounds that I did have were being cheated and taken over and I did not like that. I wish I had more NAT sound by the end of it, but I think I did well with what I had. After sending the film to my advisor, he too suggested more limitations on the music, so I reduced it a little more.

Overall, if I had planned more ahead, I would have loved to hire my friend again to write music to the film. It can really bring a whole film together if done correctly.

I did have fun with this project in the sound department, compared to my last two films. I actually hunted down and found sound effects to help spruce up parts of the film. The best example of this was at the very beginning of the film with the slow panning shots of the countryside. I had originally shot that right next to a road, so there was a lot of road noise of cars zooming by. I eventually cut out all of the audio and replaced it with some nature sound effects I had purchased. It was not a perfect fit, but it did help with the visual effect of being out in the countryside and it contrasted well with the spliced in lion roars. When the lion roar had nothing to contrast, it was almost too jarring to the ear. It helped having another sound that played against it.

IV. SUMMARY

Looking back, from the beginning of the editing process to the end, the original film pretty much stayed on track. There were multiple edits to the script before I ever began cutting on the timeline and I think the extra work done in that stage paid off later. The only major changes made after the editing process began were to cut down some of the sound bites. You do not realize something sounds repetitive until you hear the film as a whole and things had to be cut out. There were a lot of moments that I created in the film that I was happy with. I enjoyed how the enrichment segment came together and showed some of the animals with their toys and the NAT sound that went along with it. There was one particularly proud editing moment that I am sure no one will ever notice, but the similarity of shots made me smile. At one point I have a shot of two cougars relaxing in the field and they look toward the camera. As they do, I fade into another shot of two staff members that are basically in the same position with the same look on their faces. The interns always joked how some of the cats were like certain people and it was an inside joke to myself that this was an example of it. I was also extremely happy that I got some lion roars on camera. I cannot tell you how many times I would miss it by a moment. As soon as I had the camera rolling, one of the lions would look at me and stop roaring. So to finally get it was a huge success for me. I think I was able to capture the idea of the refuge on camera and show what its true mission is and how it needs help. To have been able to do that makes me content.

This is not to say that I am perfectly happy overall. Compared to some of my other films, I do not believe it to be my best work, but I think a lot of that has to do with interest in the subject. I learned a very hard lesson: If you are going to make a film about something, make sure you care enough about it that you are willing to spend at least two years talking and

researching it. TCWR is an interesting place, but I had my fill of it fairly quickly, which made it harder to keep the pace up on finding new information about it. My last film, which was about a nuclear missile program, I would still research to this day if I could. You really need to love, or at least stay interested in, what you are filming; there is no other way around it.

Technically, if I had time in the future, there are things I would like to fix. As I have been working in high definition for the past two years, it is really hard to go back and work in standard definition as most of this film was shot in. If I had to redo the film, it would all be in HD. I would also find a different narrator. Again, my current one did a good job, but I still would rather have someone that was willing to tell a story and not just correctly pronounce the words on the page. I would have liked to have better music, or rather music written for it. Finally, I would like to go back and redo all the interviews so that I would have much cleaner audio and not so much post-processing as I did this time.

Story-wise, there were two different directions I wanted to go but could not because of time and legal restraints. First, I would have liked to have followed some of the interns after their stay at TCWR or have found some that are now working at zoos and give an account on how their time at the refuge affected their current life. I was in the process of getting in contact with a current Little Rock zookeeper who was an intern, but there was a communication breakdown. Second, I would have liked to been able to actually go out with the staff on a rescue operation and be able to show where some of the cats came from. This was not allowed by the staff, primarily for legal concerns. Perhaps if I had done a little more legal research and pushed a little harder, this avenue might have opened up.

To be completely honest, I had no idea where I was headed when I first started this project. I thought it might be fun to film wild animals up close and it would make for good video, which, in the end, it did. Once I finally got out to the refuge and began the research on exotic pets, it really opened my eyes on the subject. I am proud of the work that TCWR does on a daily basis. They really are there for the animals and it shows. As I realized this, I wanted to be able to tell their story and I think I accomplished that. This project showed me how time can change everything: I started four years ago, talking about this refuge and already in that time, the refuge has grown by a third. Part of me wishes I could continue to update the film to represent their current progress, but if that was the case, I would never finish. If anything, I have helped provide a summary of their journey along the way and in the process learn more things about myself: editing skills, story-telling, and procrastination and the dangers of it. In an odd way, this film has helped me re-discover my love for shooting video and telling a story with it. There were multiple times during this whole production where I got sidetracked with another shoot. Those shoots were amazing though, as I felt as if I was exercising some new muscle I had gained in the long “work-out” of my thesis film. Without getting too deep, a film can really be an extension of oneself. You pour time, money, thought and determination into a project and in time it comes to represent you, in all its flaws and successes. The road has been long and hard, but it is a road I am glad to have taken. With the help of my professors and fellow colleagues along the way, I have grown not just in the art of story-telling and video production, but as a person.

V. FILM SCRIPT

Turpentine Creek Script

Director: Jacob Bain

(FADE IN)

Starts off with wilderness noises, cicadas, bugs, birds, then a loud roar (separately edited in)

Video being shown is woods, parts of the Ozarks where the refuge is, but not giving anything away.

(Another roar)

Narration 1: *this isn't a jungle (another roar) nor an African plain....*

(Roar)

You're in Arkansas.

N2: *And this is Turpentine Creek.*

(Lion staring through cage as title TURPENTINE CREEK goes up, lion fades, leaving just title, fade to black)

(Map graphic of AR State, zooming in NWA, dotting Eureka springs and TC - fading to exterior shots of refuge)

N3: *Up in the far corner of northwest Arkansas, right outside a town called Eureka Springs, Turpentine Creek, (TC) a wildlife refuge for big cats and other exotic animals, exists. With over 450 acres to build on, Turpentine Creek carries out their mission of providing a place of safety and security for over one hundred cats and other animals such as bears (showing on film) and monkeys. But like every story, it started small in 1978, with one lion cub named Bum.*

(Graphic - Tanya Smith - President)

Tanya Smith 1: *(BUM STORY supplemented by still pics) (break quote)* Actually Bum came from a car dealer friend of my dad, who went to repossess a car in the Little Rock, AR and their car wasn't there, but there was a little baby lion cub, tied to a cinder block and there was nobody home, so he left his business card in the door, took the lion cub to work out whatever they owed on the car.

N4: *and Tanya's father, Donald Jackson, decided he would take care of the lion cub.*

TS2: My dad and mom traded five motorcycles and a motorcycle trailer for the first lion cub.

TS3: ...he lived in Dallas and he had to walk through the zoo every day to get to school and about half the time he didn't go to school, he just ended up staying at the zoo, so he was an animal lover from way back and still is a big animal lover. (:14)

TS4: He decided he was going to do everything he could to learn how to take care of big cats, and he was able to bring that cat around, save its life...

(Story supplemented here from old family photo albums..bring up certain pics, etc.)

N5: *Bum would live for over twenty years with the Jacksons, moving with them from Hughes Springs Texas, and then to Hope, Arkansas and eventually Eureka Springs.*

N6: *Gradually, the Jacksons began acquiring more big cats, saving them from situations that would most likely end with the cat being euthanized. The major event that really got the refuge rolling was when a breeder and black market dealer showed up on the Jackson's doorstep with thirty-eight big cats crammed into two cattle trailers. She was on the run from the law in Texas and desperately needed to find a home for the cats. A friend of the Jackson family lived on a five hundred acre ranch in Eureka Springs and offered it as a temporary refuge. It soon became permanent. It was evident, by incoming phone calls from all over the country from "big cat pet owners" looking for a home for their cat that someone needed to start a refuge.*

TS5: And that's when we formed Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge, was in May of 1992. (:06)

N7: *Since that day, Turpentine Creek has been a refuge for abused and abandoned big cats. The refuge is run by a small full-time staff, an internship program and is funded by donations to the non-profit organization.*

TS6: Well our mission is always just been to save any animal out there that is in distress and facing euthanization, most of the animals here, they are endangered species, if it wasn't for the refuge, these animals would be put to sleep, (:13)

(Graphic - Emily McCormack - Curator)

Emily McCormack 1: Right now the United States Humane Society estimates 10-20,000 big cats in this country and only 15% of that is in zoos or sanctuaries like ours, so it leaves just an enormous amount of animals that are out there, not including primates, bears, and things like that. So what we've done is try, what we are trying to do for all the animals, is build on this property. There is 450 acres to build on.

N8: *The refuge is currently split into two areas: The Compound and the Habitats. The compound mainly consists of cages, where most of the animals are located. The habitats are much larger with room to run and play. The dream and vision is to eventually have a habitat for every animal here at Turpentine.*

EM2: But this is what we want for all of them, I mean to come here and see the animals playing in a pool or wrestling or giving them that piece of freedom that they would never have had otherwise unless they were brought here. A good portion of the animals would have been euthanized, so I think that we are really making a difference in these animals lives and giving them, letting them be a bear, be a tiger, be a lion, for just that little bit that they can each day. (:30)

N9: *Reaching this goal is no easy task, but the day to day challenges are almost enough on their own.*

EM3: Trying to get the amount of work done that needs to be done each day is always a challenge because even though there are 12 interns and amount of staff, there's a lot to take care of. Right now we have 113 cats, we also have the bears, and so it's always challenging making sure each one of them is taken care of. (:24)

N10: *Because of Turpentine Creek's unique mission and cause, it provides a fantastic opportunity for students all around the country: an internship program with hands-on experience. Many students who want to be biologists or zookeepers later on in life find it hard to get good opportunities to work with animals and Turpentine Creek fills that niche.*

TS7: We actually started getting interns because we couldn't rely on volunteers./break/ So we came up with this idea to bring in interns from all over the country, mostly biologist, zoologists, someone that really cared about the animals and just wasn't looking for a place to stay. (:33)

TS8: It grew into a great process, we started out with 3 interns originally and we started soliciting all the universities across the country, we sent out 2200 letters to all these different universities, and then we started getting in applicants. This last go round, we got in over 130 applicants and we can take 12 of those applicants and we house them here at the refuge. It's about a 6 ½ month program now.

(Graphic - Ashley Bulla - Intern, Monroe, NY)

Ashley Bulla 1: Well I was a biology major, I started being a bio major with hopes to go on to vet school not knowing how much schooling that actually entailed... *(break)* and thought this might be a nice alternative to see if I actually enjoyed working with animals because I had never worked with animals beforehand. (:27)

(Graphic - Rachel Meili - Intern, McFarland, WI)

Rachel Meili 1: I think just all my life, I had liked animals, most of the time the situation these animals are put into captivity or born in captivity and can't be re-introduced into the wild, so I want to make their experience in captivity as enjoyable as possible. (:25)

AB 2: So when I came in, I was like wow, this is pretty big, I am never gonna learn all of the animals names, how did everybody do this? (*break in quote*) I didn't think you would actually be this close to the animals even from a guest or tourists point of view, I mean you come out and they are right there, three feet in front of you, which is really amazing, I mean you go to zoos around the country and you barely get to see a tiger or lion because they are hiding or they are far away, there they are right there. So I thought that was pretty cool, then you go out and see the habitats area and that was amazing to see what the goal of the refuge really is and how it was once a dream and how it is becoming a reality. I was really impressed by that. That everything here is for the cats. I was really impressed by that too. (:15)/ (:38)

EM4: The internship works out great, if you are going into the biology and zoology field and go on and work at a zoo, go to vet school, things like that, you need to have experience...

TS9: ...if somebody puts in an application and it says they've worked at Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge for an internship for 6 ½ months and they did 2-3 in a row, then they're almost guaranteed a job, so it's really been a great partnership.

TS10: You know, they also become ambassadors once they leave us and go out into the world and travel all over the country and tell their experiences of working here at this wildlife refuge in Eureka Springs AR, so it's kind of a neat process of watching them grow. (:22)

N11: *Through all this hard work and learning the stories of each of the cats, the interns come to know and understand the mission of Turpentine Creek and how important it is to share it.*

RM2: Our point is to try and spread the word that big cats do not make very good pets. They may be cute and cuddly when they are little but they will grow up to be massive meat eaters and it is hard to provide everything that they need. (:22)

EM5: And I don't think that what people are thinking about and how they are gonna manage that, how they are going to give that animal a proper diet, afford that and how they are gonna keep themselves safe and their family. I mean they are wild animals and you can't take the wild out of them...

(NATS Tiger fight)

...So, a variety of reasons, I think it's just that, because there aren't enough laws regulating in this country, it's too easy for a person to acquire one of these animals.

N12: *In fact, over thirty states require little to no licensing for exotic pet ownership, Arkansas being one of them. Seven states prohibit some but allow others and only twelve states actually prohibit the private possession of at least large cats, wolves, bears, dangerous reptiles and certain primates. (Animated map highlighting these areas.)*

TS11: I think it falls back to your freedoms of being an American, that's what a lot of people will tell me, it's my right to own whatever I want, I'm an American, and that's always a big issue.

EM6: We have a lion that was rescued from, Brody that someone bought at an animal auction. It's that little bit, you know if you went to an auction and saw a lion for \$175, I mean that's cheaper than, I think, an iPhone these days and walk out of there with a lion, because nobody is stopping you. It's too easy for people to acquire them and not think about the future and the consequences that come along with it.

TS12: It's not like everybody is a horrible owner just like every parent is not a great parent or a bad parent, that's just kinda the way it is with big cats too, there are good owners and there's bad owners and unfortunately we see a little bit of it all at the refuge here.... (:16)

N13: *Every animal at Turpentine Creek has a story. In front of each habitat and cage, there is a plaque with their name and how they came to be at Turpentine Creek. Some are good stories, an older couple who took care of this bobcat couldn't do so any more, and on the other hand, Coco was made to sit in a large chair so that people could take pictures with it. Other tigers and lions were left in horrible conditions, barely surviving....*

(Video of Intern doing a lesson on Sheba-no graphic for name)

Intern 1: Her name is Sheba; she is a 9 year old cougar. She's been here about 4 years. She had several previous owners before she came here to Turpentine Creek. She has kind of an unfortunate story like a lot of our cats here, she was owned as a household pet and they realized that didn't work out too well, her second owner actually abused her quite badly, it was a very young owner, they shot BB guns and pellets at her. They didn't know how to properly feed her, so she was very malnourished... (:30)

N14: *While cleaning cages and providing food are the most important tasks the staff handles each day, they do try to provide a little bit of fun for the guests and of course, for the cats themselves.*

(NATS Intern preparing enrichment)

Intern 2: What we're doing here is, we're making enrichment for the cats and what the enrichment is, it basically keeps them in captivity from getting bored, it gives them something to do out of the ordinary

RM3...sort of a mental exercise of such for them.

AB3: Any type of enrichment we could do could be as simple as taking a tree from another habitat and putting it in there, a tree branch, and that now is a different smell and a different taste that they are not used to. Maybe another cat urinated on that branch and now they have a new smell, which they'll go after and rub up on and they will do a stinky face to it... *(break in quote)* What a stinky face is, the scientific term is called "flemming" and basically what this, their Jacobsen organ, they have two holes on the roof of their mouth, and it's just a better way for them to smell it. So they will raise their lips above their front teeth and open their mouth... *(footage of stinky face) (:22)/ (:21)*

AB4: ...We'll make fake animals out paper mache and boxes and basically what we will do is make the box into what we think is a hippopotamus, or elephant or giraffe and they are very boxy, but we end up painting them...(:14)

(Footage of enrichment playing, also cutting to footage of interns building an animal)

Intern 3... you have tucked fur, other scent enrichment, hay, anything, that the cats or other animals will find interesting. They get to dig at it; something for them to do... it is a big puzzle adventure for them. (:18)

N15: *Making enrichment, cleaning cages, and feeding the cats all cost money and being non-profit Turpentine Creek has other ways of supporting itself. Everyday starting at one o'clock, the interns give tours of the compound and habitats. Visitors buy a ticket and then wander the compound looking at each of the animals, able to ask questions of the interns and staff.*

AB5: And then the guided tour allows you to go around our habitat loop, with a guide which is one of our interns, such as myself, and that's a half-mile 40 minute walk around our habitat loop. We have about 25 habitats out there and basically what that is a more natural enclosure for the cats to be in. So right now we have about 70 cats out in the habitats and that is our goal is to get all our cats into a habitat. (:27)

TS13: We have so many goals and aspirations of this refuge can be and will grow into and the fundraising side of it has been the most difficult part of what we do I think. We are excellent at transferring animals and moving animals and training people but we do need that large donor to come and step forward and show confidence in what we are doing so we can expand because there are animals waiting, waiting for us to save their lives and unfortunately sometimes we have to turn them away.

EM7: These animals don't have a voice and so we the people have to be that voice for them and just help educate and help save the cats and do whatever you can to, every little bit counts and adds up.

TS14: You know when we started the refuge in 92, I thought, I'll devote 10 years of my life to this project and we should have all 459 acres developed and everything and then maybe I could go on to be a consultant in other places across the country, that's kind of how I looked at it, and in May it will be will be 20 years we've been doing this and we've just barely scratched the surface ... (:24)

EM8: Even though we make sacrifices, working here with these animals is absolutely the most rewarding job I've ever had. *(break in quote)*Over the years I've been here seeing the animals come in, distrusting, all different circumstances and watch them gain our trust and get to enjoy the rest of their life is just an amazing experience and amazing to see just coming here. (:15)/ (:17)

N16: *Today, the public can visit the refuge on just about any day of the year. In addition to that, the staff and interns have a YouTube channel where they show the progress of new habitats, cats of the week and other news about the refuge.*

(Smattering of YT videos/projects/overlapping)

N17: *With twenty years under their belt, Turpentine Creek continues to grow and help abused and neglected exotic animals. And even with all the new habitats, cats and other animals, their message remains the same:*

TS15: Choose your pets wisely, that's what I would say.
Big cats don't make good pets, choose your pets wisely. (:07)

Ending of "Current Updates" # of animals now, etc.

Credits:

Produced by: Jacob Bain

Narrator: Karlee Smith

Audio Master: Eric Russell

Additional footage provided by Turpentine Creek Archives

Supervisor/Advisor: Dale Carpenter

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For more information about Turpentine Creek Wildlife Refuge

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