

SO LONG, DANNY, I HARDLY KNEW YA

5/11/99

Whether it's stray animals or humans. I have a propensity for becoming involved in rescuing or rehabilitating both species.

Generally, I have had more success with animals. My efforts with people have usually had little success. Many have backfired and I lived to regret my benevolence. The following is a typical example.

Along with my appointment as forest ranger I inherited three forest fire observers to supervise as a part of my regular duties. One of the three was a fellow I'll call Danny.

Danny was a Navy vet and former carnival roustabout stationed at Bald Mountain. His wife Marilyn, a New York City girl, met him on a visit to the tower. Theirs was a good marriage with Marilyn the obvious stabilizing component.

Danny was a good husband and content with her making all of the decisions. All went well for the first two years of our association and then it suddenly went awry.

They began to have problems and Marilyn left for New York. Danny took it very hard and started drinking. He became very depressed and disinterested in his work.

Woodhull tower had better living accommodations so he transferred there. Soon after he resigned from his job, I held his job open for a short while thinking he might want to reconsider, which he did.

Realizing he needed help, I worked with him in every way possible to get him through what were obviously trying times. We got through the summer and well into the fall season when we hit another crisis.

He called my wife and told her he was going to kill himself. He was sitting on the sill of the open tower window and about to shoot himself. There was little she could do except tell him to please not do it and there was little she could do to prevent it from where she was. When she was able to contact me I checked via the phone and thankfully, he had not carried out his threat.

The State had just purchased Cascade Lake and was in the process of converting it to State use. He was provided with a surplus army land rover and quarters on the property while he assisted in the transition.

At 2 a.m. one morning a phone call from the Hamilton County State Police informed me that he had been arrested for drunken driving. I told them to throw him in jail and went back to sleep.

Shortly thereafter, he informed State Police in New Hartford that he had shot his dog and was about to shoot himself. Two local troopers responding to the call found the dog dead outside with him visible through the window with a rifle across his knees. Luckily for him he never raised the rifle from his knees when they took him into custody.

He spent the next six months as a patient in Marcy State mental hospital where I visited him from time to time. He doctor talked me into becoming his mentor and released him to my care. I found him a job and a place to live, and it looked like he was going to find himself. I even began to congratulate myself for being a Good Samaritan; once more proving to the world it pays to help others.

Soon he needed some money to buy a used car and I agreed to help. Having no money, but good credit, I cosigned a note at the bank with him, much to my wife's apprehension. It was for, if memory serves me right, \$260, which in the 1960s was a considerable amount.

To make a long story short, not long after that he disappeared along with my money, never to be seen or heard from to this day. Danny, if you read this, forget the money.