

The Grouse House Gazette

Weekly Thoughts on Music, **Nature**, and Politics, from the Catskill Mountains

SCANDAL ROCKS GROUSE HOUSE!

LABOR ACTION BY SQUIRRELS
MAY IMPACT SUMMER TOURISM!

Interview by Tucker McDaniel
(Gazette Staff Reporter)

As a Grouse House Gazette reporter I never know where my stories might take me. And as I sat down to interview both Gilbert Hetherwick (the editor of this esteemed publication) as well as a representative of the Squirrel's division of the "Union Of Wildlife Entertainers" (U.O.W.E. local 926 – Catskill Division) known simply as "Ralph the Squirrel", I realized that this "dual" interview was probably a VERY bad idea.

Although the two have worked well together over the past four years to build The Grouse House's reputation as a place known for the highest quality wildlife entertainment they were now in a heated labor dispute that is threatening the late summer tourist and recording business. Mr. Hetherwick recently built and installed a new "ride" (his word) in the *Grouse House Animal Circus* which he calls... *Squirrels in Space*. The device is basically a ten-foot tall spinning beam with bird feed in a cage at the top as bait. The idea is that when the Squirrels make it to the top, their weight will have them spin around until they are upside down. Think about it as if the cute little critters were running along a very fast moving "second hand" of a wristwatch. Mr. Hetherwick has called it "harmless & entertainingly fun for everyone."

But the Squirrels at The Grouse House are boycotting the *Squirrels in Space* "ride" and claiming that it is unsafe but more importantly they say it makes them look "ridiculous" (their word) and their attorneys are demanding extra compensation for the obviously coming onslaught of personal humiliation for the Squirrels. A similar labor dispute at the time of a particularly rich hickory nut harvest shut the entire "Squirrel Show" down for three weeks following Labor Day two years ago in September. Management claimed the Squirrels abandoned their posts and should not be paid for the days "off the job" while the Squirrels blamed the Grouse House supplied food



"Ralph the Squirrel" in happier times...Getting in a little early morning ground feeding.

which they claim simply can not compete with hickory nuts eaten fresh off of the tree. The U.O.W.E. has been fighting unsuccessfully for a "three weeks off" period for the Squirrels in September for the hickory season.

The three of us sat down together on the second level deck of The Grouse House as the late afternoon sun was bathing the grounds in brilliant colors against a crystal blue sky.

T.M. / GAZETTE: "I want to thank the two of you for meeting with me today to discuss the current labor situation at The Grouse House..."

HETHERWICK: "Tucker... There IS NO labor situation here at the Grouse House and everything is running smoothly. We don't want to panic possible Manhattan escapees...Who might be on the edge of booking a weekend here... They could be scared away by even the rumor of a 'worker action' similar to September of 2009".

RALPH T.S.: "ALWAYS with the 'September 2009' references... Rubbing it in that we Squirrels still work through hickory nut season". **CONT. PAGE 2>**

FOX WATCH: "I WATCH FOX SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO"

From the emails I receive I know that my "Fox Watch" column is perhaps the most popular part of the Gazette, and I apologize for having let it lapse for the past few weeks.

The reason was the Casey Anthony trial.

As much as I believe and honor my "pledge" to watch Fox News so you don't have to, I have also pledged to myself to NOT watch a single minute of coverage of the Casey Anthony trial. Nowhere is the line between entertainment and news more blurred than in this ongoing reality show of massive media coverage of the latest "crime of the century." With all of the thousands of children killed by their parents every year, it is hideous the way the media singles out one perfectly "cast" horrific incident to regurgitate across our television screens and newspapers in a precisely orchestrated spiraling intensity of coverage up through the day of the verdict.

Because they were so much a part of it, I laid off of Fox watching for a while.

After the trial I tuned back in to Fox News... And while searching for (and not finding) any signs of their coverage of the Rupert-Gate scandal, it was interesting to see how Fox News (and thus the Republicans) are spinning the negotiations about raising the debt ceiling. On nearly every show, Fox News has been broadcasting (to more viewers than any other news outlet) that Obama is threatening to destroy the economy unless the Republicans give in to his demands for HIGHER taxes! Which is kind of like saying that the parents of a kidnap victim are guilty of murder because they couldn't afford to pay the ransom and the kidnappers killed their kid. Maybe it's a bad analogy... But it could maybe be a HIT reality show next season! **GH**

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GROUSE HOUSE SCANDAL!

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HETHERWICK: “You Squirrels are not only well fed but you are actually ADVERTISED as being ‘the fattest squirrels in Ulster County’. I thought you were PROUD of that!”

RALPH T.S.: “Have you ever TRIED fresh hickory nuts off of a tree? NO... Of course not... Because humans don’t generally eat them... Which is just another thing that makes them REALLY great. And for three weeks of the year we need a break from sunflower seeds and peanuts... It seems so simple.”

HETHERWICK: “But I thought that the shelled peanuts were considered to be the ‘champagne’ of the Squirrel world. I believe I am giving ‘the best of the best’ to my little Squirrels.”

RALPH T.S.: “DID YOU HEAR THAT? HIS little SQUIRRELS? And it’s more like the CRACK COCAINE of the Squirrel world! He admits that he is getting his workers addicted to exploit us before the human vacationing masses as fragile innocent victims that can be hurled around through space for the viewers cheap amusement!”

T.M. - GAZETTE: “GUYS PLEASE! I need to conduct a respectable interview...”

HETHERWICK: “You know Ralph... With three ‘spot lit’ Deer Bucks on the back lawn every night... And Ursa the Bear bringing the cubs around regularly... The entertainment value of you Squirrels has seriously diminished... AND... I don’t have to design and build all of these elaborate contraptions for the Deer or Ursa the Bear. They just need to show up. WHICH... THEY DO... unlike you guys in September of 2009.”

RALPH T.S.: “I don’t want to HEAR about Ursa the Bear. All she has to do is walk across the lawn and the whole world opens up for her! And how cute do you think those cubs will be on your deck in three years?”

T.M.- GAZETTE: “Can we get back to the issue of ‘Squirrels in Space’?”

HETHERWICK: “It will prove to be a BRILLIANT attraction here at The Grouse House if these fat little fur-balls would just get off of their asses and try it...”

RALPH T.S.: “Running up and down a chain for peanuts... No problem... But being spun around upside down is beyond what we signed up for.”

HETHERWICK: “You run upside-down on the ‘drawbridge’ all the time.”

RALPH T.S.: “Sure... But it’s OUR decision to be upside down... We are not forced into it by some phony liberal ‘I.F. Stone wanta-be’ living in a fantasy world up here in the mountains... This is worker exploitation!”

HETHERWICK: “What?”

RALPH T.S.: “You hide behind the publication of this weekly liberal rag to a few hundred readers pretending to be ‘MR. SOCIALLY CONCIIOUS’ while at home you exploit your entertainment workers and even force us into performing dangerous stunts at no additional pay! AND... They’re also not nearly enough nature articles... OR... Pictures of ‘HOT’ Squirrels!”

T.M. - GAZETTE: “Ralph... is this all really about payment rates?”

RALPH T.S.: “Well... THAT... and also our dignity.”

HETHERWICK: “DIGNITY? You’re a SQUIRREL for CHRIST’S SAKE!”

T.M. - GAZETTE: “A Squirrel that has ON HIS OWN risen to the position of leader of the Grouse House S.S.O. (Squirrel Social Order).”

HETHERWICK: “Tucker... Are you siding with the Squirrel on this stuff? Do I need to remind you that I PUBLISH this weekly online rag?”

T.M. - GAZETTE: “Not at all Mr. Hetherwick... I was just pointing out that this was no ordinary Squirrel and that...”

RALPH T.S.: “ASK HIM ABOUT THE RATS!!!”

T.M. - GAZETTE: “The Rats?”

RALPH T.S.: “The Barn Rats in the garage and under the deck... He FUCKING KILLED THEM ALL! He went ‘medieval’ on their asses! They say he shot over seven of them and poisoned more!”

HETHERWICK: “With a special environmentally safe poison that mysteriously is not attractive to Squirrels or Chipmunks... Only to the Rats... Always looking out for YOUR best interests.”

RALPH T.S.: “Yeah... those Rats will eat ANYTHING... Not like us Squirrels... we have standards AND taste!”

HETHERWICK: “So you are agreeing with my actions on the Barn Rats?”

RALPH T.S.: “That’s NOT what I’m saying... Your actions were hideous, cruel, and sadistic... For all I know us Squirrels could be next!”

HETHERWICK: “And it was a BB gun... A BB gun... And I’m a really good shot. It was quick and painless... And after the \$1800 worth of damage they did eating the electrical system out of my jeep... I would say it was RICHLY DESERVED!”

T.M. - GAZETTE: “I guess that about covers it...”

RALPH T.S.: “Yeah... I’ve got to be going... I’m meeting up with friends down by the pond.”

HETHERWICK: “What for?”

RALPH T.S.: “Just a quick game of ‘fake out’ with the idiot human speeders on George Sickie Road...”



Grouse House Gazette Editor in Chief **Gilbert Hetherwick** poses with his high-power Dewalt “Hammer Drill” after completing the new “Squirrels in Space” ride. The “ride” is designed to spin Squirrels upside down when they go for the bait in the cage at the top. Members of the Squirrel’s division of the “Union Of Wildlife Entertainers” have boycotted the new “ride” saying it could be dangerous and more importantly that it could make the squirrels look “ridiculous”. Mr. Hetherwick next plans to use the drill to film a “classy” remake of “Body Double”. On his way out the door to the Village Diner, Hetherwick commented: “They knew their life in entertainment would not simply be cute hops across the back lawn or nibbling nuts at a damn window. They need to toughen the FUCK UP!”

Hetherwick@me.com

