

## **Throckmorton's Story**

**By Peter W. Cassady**

In early 1955 I read in the newspaper that a young man who lived in Culver City had a large menagerie and was taken to court for having too many animals as pets. According to the newspaper, the court found that albeit that he had nothing in his collection that was illegal, he had just too many things so he had to cut back. Among a host of things he had, he possessed two small alligators.

I called information and got a hold of this man and he became a good friend of mind until his untimely death at the young age of 64. However, as a result of my calling he gave me the two alligators. One was about three feet long and the other about 18”.

In 1956 I joined the Army and while I was enlisted my father took the alligators to a high school teacher who I admired who agreed to take care of them until I returned.

In the summer of 1972 I was transferred to Austin Texas by my employer and I took the smaller of the two alligators with me and left the larger one with the high school teacher. At that time the small one just fit inside of a four ft wooden flower box which was tucked neatly between the two front seats of the car. We used the car's air conditioning and we drove at night just to keep the alligator cooled down. In transporting the alligator to Austin we drove each night and slept during day in adjoining rooms of a local Ramada Inn while having a complete set of reservations along the way while the alligator was submerged in one of the room's bath tubs. The trip took three (3) nights of driving.

When we got to Austin, the fence for our house was not completed so we had to place the alligator on a private ranch in a kiddie's pool. This worked for a while but his teeth kept puncturing the pool and we had to replace the pool often.

My boss was the VP of the Southern Region for the company. When he learned of my strange pet he asked if the alligator had a name. I told him it did not and he said he always wanted to name an alligator so he declared the name of Throckmorton from the old radio days Fibber McGee and Molly and the character Throckmorton P. Gildersleeve (with the "P" standing for Philharmonic). We named him in 1972 and the name has stuck with everyone except Throck himself who seems to be underwhelmed with the whole naming thing.

In the late fall of 1975 I was again transferred by my employer but this time it was to go father east to Pittsburgh. The heat was not a problem so we drove during the day about the same distance as it was for the first journey. However in this case the alligator had grown considerably. Texas was good to him. He grew 20% of his length and girth in less than 10% of his life. Since he no longer would fit in a flower box, for this trip we put him in a refrigerator carton that was loose fitting to give him some room and sufficient fresh air.

Whether he learned this behavior or it was an unwitting case of chance all he had to do to get loose was to urinate in the carton and scratch with his hind legs and he was out of the box within the first 24 hours making his transportation more hazardous.

In 1977 I was again transferred but this time to the west coast in San Jose. By now I had my own version of a menagerie. To move all these animals it took two trips and we flew them to LA. There were two airlines that had animal restrictions of their own. One of them had no restrictions on venomous reptiles but had a flesh limit of 250 pounds of flesh per flight and the other had no flesh limit but did not allow venomous animals.

Both airlines required that a person accompany the animals on the flight. So my wife took one group and boarded that plane and I took the other and we both flew to LA as early in the day as we could to avoid the heat on the ground. For Throck we built him wooden box with a lot of

holes drilled into it for ventilation. From LA when both flights had arrived, we drove everything to San Jose without an incident.

In 1989 I accepted a new position as VP of Sales in a small company in Southern California and we transported everything back to Southern California into our home in Camarillo. During this trip we let Throckmorton run loose in a VW van blocked from getting to the front by book cartons. We drove two vans in tandem with one watching the alligator make many attempts of to climb over the barrier. In the last 20 years Throckmorton has not been moved until now. Throckmorton has a diet of fish, chicken or rats.