



**A Sordid Story**

**Great Growling Guineas  
& Gnarly Gnasty Gnats!!**

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& Gnarly Gnasty Gnats!!**

**Marv Walker**



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Photos by: Marv Walker [Marv@MarvWalker.com](mailto:Marv@MarvWalker.com)

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Marv Walker

1202 Old Agateville Road

Hillsboro, GA 31038



*Guineas Can Sense Fear*

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Equal Time Interjection

And Then There Were Three

Thank You!!!

## *Introduction*

Helmeted Guinea Fowl have a large cult following. Guinea believers preach the ugly looking birds are the answer to everything that's bugging you from ticks to toads to tsunamis, and earthquakes. They testify the birds continually seek out infectious insects of every kind and description. To hear the acolytes say it, the fowl's single minded vermin focus is the answer to the infesting insect plagues in every back yard and farm yard in America.

And some insist guineas even eat snakes.

Guinea believers fervently feel the only reason America is not debugged and de-snaked is there simply aren't enough guinea believers in the world to raise and protect enough guineas needed to do the job.

True guinea believers believe guineas are the answer to every problem known to man.

One gains great respect and rewards as a member of the Cult Of The Guinea for honoring guineas in any way shape or form. Things like praise websites, favorable articles - no matter how made up or exaggerated, positive perjury or other feathery fluff are greeted with back pats, kudos and luxurious mental, social and physical rewards.

The Guinea Cult life is seductive. All you can think of is your next flutter once you have taken part in a Guinea Gushing and felt the flutters above you. You want to keep your guinea brethren close to you at all times so you can feel the warmth and the guinea wing breeze against your face.

You see it's a short flight from receiving warmth to taking heat. You don't want anyone in the guinea world to even slightly suspect you may be getting cold or feeling a bit of a chill to the adored bird. If anyone suspects you are not tightly gripping the perch they will shove you out from under the Guinea Cult wing and you won't even hear the flap of the wing that separates you from the guinea group. No more back rubs, praises, awards or living the high flying Guinea Cult life. And there is the most feared part of Guinea Cult shunning - there will be no more flutters.

The loss of flutters fear is the guinea glue that binds the Guinea Cult together. Once the boy feels the flutters it is nearly impossible for the boy to return back to the normal world.

I said, "Nearly impossible."

Once every thousand years or so, one of the Guinea Cult hears the music of the greater guinea good and puckers up his lips and begins to whistle; a note here, a note there and before he realizes what has happened he has sung the sordid sonnet and the Guinea Cult has shunned him so thoroughly it's as if he never existed.



In this sordid tale a pigeon sails into the Guinea Cult flight of fancy and discovers birds of a feather flock together alright. He discovers they flock together to pluck pigeons one peck at a time.

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### *About Marv Walker*



*Marv Walker*

My first guinea experiences, like most of my life's experiences, occurred around horses. Born and raised in the Cedar swamps of Upper Michigan I knew about birds. I knew about turkey, partridge, crows, hawks, owls, eagles, deer, bear, varmints, fish. And I knew about horses. I just didn't know anything about guineas.

And I knew about gnats. We called them black flies, midges and sons a... well. The swamps spit them things out in black clouds during the couple months of warm weather. After a while you kinda developed a taste for them as if you really had a choice. The one good thing about the gnats, no matter what we called them, the mosquitoes, or skeeters as we used to call them, couldn't fly through the clouds of gnats. Good thing. The swamp skeeters were so big they used to say, "Shall we eat him here or take him home?"

When I came to Georgia I would often hear people talking in hushed tones about the Georgia gnats and the Georgia Gnat Line. Gnats is gnats to a Cedar Savage and I was above the gnat line anyway so I

naturally dismissed the gnat talk.

Then we ended up on a farm just a couple inches below the Georgia Gnat Line.

Those couple inches were more than enough to keep the fairer, thinner skinned folks barricaded in the house for most of the summer. I could live with the gnats, they couldn't.

Stricken with desire to help my friends out I searched the world of gnats for a cure. In the course of my search, I heard a sermon on guineas. I remembered a guinea encounter from a decade or so before and found myself converted and slowly indoctrinated into the Guinea Cult.

I thought I saw the light at the end of the tunnel but by the time I realized it was just sparks from gnat wings rubbing together, I was deep into the Guinea Cult world.

When I finally managed to turn my back on the Guinea Cult I realized I had to bare my soul for the good of mankind on top of bearing the Guinea Cult shunning...

This book is about that progression and contains everything you need to know to save yourself from the foul fowl.

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### ***Don't Judge Me Harshly***

This book may be hard to take by many, but it had to be written. It's about a deed of disgrace taken up in haste, but forgive me, I was being literally bugged from all sides and I needed to purge my psyche and conscience.

I thought about writing this sordid tale under a pen name. Actually, I first thought about writing this sordid tale anonymously but then it occurred to me people might not take it as seriously as it needs to be taken, so I dumped that idea and that's when I began toying with pen names. I dumped the pen name idea after I asked myself, "Self, are you so ashamed of the truth that you won't stand up and be counted?" I often call myself, "Self." I didn't have an answer for myself. So I decided to use my real name just like any politician.

So I decided to bare my soul, face up and confess how I became the butt of a seldom, if ever, talked about affliction and recount my experiences with the fine feathered fancied fancy fowl simply referred to by all those who love them as "guineas." Those who don't love them have been unable to come up with a suitable name for them they can all agree on.

You see, I used to be a flying high guinea guy. You did notice the words "used to be" didn't you? It all started out great guineas and I really didn't intend for it to turn out like it did. No one wakes up one

morning and says, "Know what? I'm going to fly blindly off into the world of guineas and end up skidding along in the garish guinea gutter on my face in distasteful disgrace." I should have realized that flying and I weren't all that compatible when I ran off the garage roof with a bath towel cape tied around my neck. The first flight obviously needed a bigger towel. So I limped off to see if I could find a bigger one. I quickly found out flying was not the problem it was those vertical landings. Then it occurred to me those guys who flying were using parachutes and they were jumping higher. Me and the sheet limped off to the barn. I'm not real sure what happened. I could have sworn I held all four corners.

If you are already into the guinea gutter it's too late for you. If not, the word "guinea" should make you turn and flee in horror.

Right off the bat let me tell you there are a number of inconsistencies in the following foul fowl account.

For instance, guinea numbers. The guinea numbers in this confession are all over the board and may vary widely even when referencing the same event in different parts of the manuscript. They may even vary widely within the same paragraph. Don't be real surprised if they vary widely in the same sentence. This is because more than two guineas are very difficult to count so any number used, whether it's 5 or 500, simply means more guineas than you can count.

Another inconsistency is tenses. Tenses are simply words that indicate when something has happened, when something happens or when something is about to happen. Guineas tend to make you lose your sense of tenses. Guineas can get you coming and going to the point you really don't know what tense it is. Getting you tense is different than grammatical tense and in guinea grammatical anything can happen. Tense is tense in the world of guineas.

Yet another inconsistency is interjections. Interjections simply means something got thrown in because I felt like throwing it in. The dictionary says an interjection is just something thrown into a sentence for added emotion, such as "OH NO!!," "Yikes!," and the Canadian favorite, "eh?" and the Dutch, "Ain't so, hey?" Guineas bring out emotions and make you feel like throwing things in, or out, sometimes. The injections may be pro or con comments from others with, or without, rebuttals or replies from me. The interjections may also be pro or con comments from me with, or without, rebuttals from me. They may flow with the account or they may just muddy up the waters or they may even have no bearing at all on the account. If you get guineas, you'll learn to speak interjections flewently (that's not a pun or a sic).

Number, tenses and interjection confusions and just plain confusions are all part of the world of guineas.

I fully expect to be picked on, picked at and pecked to death like a bug when this bombshell blows up in the foul fancier world. Given the amount of whistle blower apprehension I felt before coming clean it's a wonder I wasn't committed.



## ***Bugged To Death***

As I said earlier, I used to be a guinea lover. For a few years there I eagerly sought out guinea knowledge. In looking back, what happened was while I was looking for guinea knowledge I was also looking for guineas at the same time. One really needs to have the knowledge before one actually finds the guineas. As the Bible says in a number of places, "Get wisdom before you act." Look before you leap, don't leap before you look at what you're leaping into.

Some folks say, "Life is what happens when you're making plans." In the seductive world of guineas it's, "Guineas are what happens while you're checking out guineas." By the time you're up to Plan "G," you have forgot Plans A, B, C, D, E and F.

Exactly how does a guinea guru fall from the heights of guinea grace? Gracious, it ain't easy, but it can be done. You see, the guineas are more than willing to help.

My first experience with guineas was rather benign. Benign means, no harm, no problem. I rented a pasture where I kept my horses years ago. I'd go by every day after work and feed the horses. Work and feed horses... Work and feed horses... Well, that's another story. A few times I'd arrived in time to see this single file parade of weird looking birds crossing the road way down at the end of the pasture. There must have been about 50 of them, all lined up in a row, like ducks. I don't know why they say, "like ducks." I don't think I ever saw ducks lined up in any kind of row. Geese, yes, guineas, yes, ducks, no. They should say "lined up like guineas."

Anyway...

One afternoon I arrived with my exuberant 8 month old Black Lab who only had one speed, rocket. He shot here and there like an inadvertently opened frozen soft drink. He shot off exploring and I went to feed. I had just touched the key to the lock of the feed shed door when there was this horrendous paralyzing explosion. My knees started sagging into prayer posture. At first I thought the building had collapsed. When my knees locked back up so I could stand again and I pushed myself away from where I had collapsed weakly against the door, it dawned on me the blast had occurred behind the feed shed.

I nervously went around the shed to investigate. I was looking all over for the smoking hulk of an airliner. I was looking halfway right but instead of looking on the ground for an air vehicle I should have been looking up. I discovered there were guineas in the trees, there were guineas on top of the feed shed, there were guineas on top of the barn. There were guineas everywhere but on the ground and they weren't the least bit happy. The Lab looked at me and gave me a "You shoulda seen it! It was really sumpin!!" look. My deductive reasoning told me he had burst on the guinea gang like a mouse on a society ladies tea party and the impact had blown guineas everywhere.

I was born and raised in the Cedar Swamps of Michigan's Upper Peninsula and I didn't know guineas from... Well, I didn't know guineas. I wondered why someone would have so many of them. Little did I know I'd find out years later. Someone told me they were for insect control. It kinda went in one ear and out the other and I gave it a polite "Okay," and went on about my business. People are strange. You never know what they'll collect. I just couldn't see it. There are none so blind they won't see. No way that would ever happen to me. Like I said, there are none so blind they who won't see.

My rise to the heights of guinea glory and the resulting slide from guinea aficionado to guinea agitator began with a bugging.

The Kamikaze Georgia gnats have often been a problem here on the farm. Having been born and raised in the mother of all Deer Fly, NoSeeUm and Black Fly blood sucker breeding grounds in the Cedar swamps of Upper Michigan where each breath was a bug meal during the summer, I myself could live with them. Some of the fairer, more delicate folks on the farm could not, would not.

Georgia has has this little blemish called the Gnat Line. It is an imaginary line that extends west to east, or east to west, the gnats don't care which way you look, across the approximate center of the state. Live above it and you are gnat free. Live below the Gnat Line and you are gnatty. Living on the Gnat Line can get a little knotty as well. And, like the armadillo plague, the Gnat Line appears to be moving farther north each year.

You have been warned.

No gnasty Georgia gnarly gnats were going to keep me indoors for most of the summer. I was fine. Like I said, I could live with them swarming around my face. I didn't chew tobacco but I could spit with the best of them during the gnat glut. I decided to see if I could do something to help bring the other farm folks out of their 8 room air-conditioned, gnat filtered shell and into the light of day.

Sprays and other types of poisons were out mostly because spraying would have been a full time job and I believe in the old adage, "What doesn't kill you makes you stronger." Stronger gnats were something I did not want to risk.

I sought solutions to the GP (Gnat Problem) from friends and foes alike. I was all ears and all eyes for answers.

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### ***Insectivore Infected***

Here's where the guineas raise their ugly heads into my life.

At the suggestion of guineaists from far and wide, I decided to try and silence the gnasty gnat grumbling with some gnat gobblin' greedy guineas. Every one of the guinea fanciers swooped down on

me like a guinea on a Junebug and sweet talked me into their guinea loving flock. "Ya oughter git yew sum ginnies! Dey'll fix um!" "Yew'll luv 'em! Thay is sow ugley, butt da keets is kewt!"

"Hmmm..." I says. "Guineas???"

Numida meleagris (Helmeted guineafowl) are some mugly utts but they have some exuberant fanciers. They even have an association of guinea admirers whose goal in life is to extol the virtues of these birds whose heads look like a 4 year old who has discovered his mother's unattended lipstick and make up collection.

There were a few nay sayers in the guinea group but for the most part the pros out-numbered the cons about 100 to 1. But you know what they say about numbers, they can say whatever you want them to say. Figures can lie, liars can figure. Looking back, I think gnats got in my eyes. All I could see were guinea gushings.

Our neighbor had a half-dozen guineas and they were always in our pastures just a peckin' away. Not that the gnats seem to notice. It woulda took a guinea the size of Guinilla, the guinea that destroyed Tokyo, to make a dent in them. So I figured they must need some help, especially since her half dozen guinea flock tapered on down to one over time for some then unknown reason. It was obviously a numbers problem.

So I set about to build a flock of a gaggle of guineas.

One June a couple years ago I got 7 guinea keets from some folks I know. They let me have them for free which I found real social at the time. I kept them in a "brooder" in the office trailer until they outgrew it. The guru guinea guidance I had received told me you had to keep them contained for a while until they recognized home is not where you hang your helmet, home is where the food is. You just can't release homeless guineas into the world. Or, as the friendly folks I got them from said, "You have to keep them contained until they are big enough cats don't get them and they become dog wise.

Since we have 4 tailless dogs, three Australian Shepherds and one Corgi, a long tailed GDD (Georgia Ditch Dog), and two cats, one old and very wise orange thing and one very large and heavy black panther pretender, it maked sense. When I went to get the keets the friendly folks' large dogs seemed to avoid their carpet of guineas. They had so many guineas running around I figured they must know what they are talking about.

They looked too big to get out of the dog run so I thought I'd keep them in one of the dog runs until they got a little bigger. I turned them loose in the dog run I had carefully prepared with a smorgasbord of scratch. In much, much, much less time than it takes to tell it the only one in the dog run was me. You'd be surprised at how easily a softball sized guinea can go through golf ball sized cyclone openings without even slowing down.

They were around for about a week then I was down to one living in what we called the "Bat Shed" because of the bat colonies that lived in its rafters. Then even the lone survivor disappeared after another week or so.

The following August I got 14 guinea keets from the same friendly folks as before. I was a little wiser this time and I brooded them in the three horse slant load. When they got too crowded in the trailer I decided they were big enough to move to one of the dog runs. They were big enough to where I was absolutely certain if they got out of the dog run there would be a flock of guinea heads going around the yards looking for their bodies. Not one of that trailer brooded guinea gang wasn't getting out of the dog run intact.

But first I had to get them into the run to keep them in the run. Trying to catch guineas in a horse trailer full of gittery guineas with your bare hands is hairy so I went to town and bought a fish net. That way I could snatch them airborne or grounded.

Catching them was somewhat better with the net, not much. They weren't crazy about being hand caught and seeing the fishnet come into the horse trailer made them completely forget about hands. All of the 14 guineas thought death was imminent. They were flying around like dirt in a Dyson vacuum in a blurry mass of dust and feathers while squawking and shrieking at the top of their amazingly effective lungs. The stupid birds couldn't seem to grasp I was trying to help them out by moving them to fancier, more spacious digs.

They were ducking and diving and I was stabbing the net into the screaming swarm and every once in awhile I'd manage to get one. With a deft flip of the wrists I would flip the net over itself and the hapless captive would go open-beaked catatonic ready for its imminent death. Then I needed to get out of the trailer with my catch.

Now there were too many gnats outside for me to get anyone out of the house inside to brave them and help me get in and out of the trailer by working the door. I'd binder twined the outside latching door shut from the inside. I knew going in there wasn't a whole lot of sense in trying to catch them guineas with a door flopping wide open.

There I am. I've got a cloud of guineas sailing around the inside of the trailer, hands full of quivering, shaking, guinea loaded fish net, with a quite snug binder twine knot holding the door closed. The lock knot is at the nearest to the door spot I could find to make it, the stall panel latch some three feet from the door. Since the goose neck was jacked up enough to get the truck out from under it, gravity automatically swung the heavy door open if the knot wasn't carefully undone. Untying the knot while keeping the door shut with one hand long enough for me to get to it while carrying a fully guinea loaded fish net exactly just so to prevent escape in the other hand was just another test of character. Once I got to the door I had to slither out of it like a snake while making sure nothing else slithered out with me while I was slithering out.



And then I had to reverse the process at the dog run. Most of the time the keets would lay as if dead making no effort to help me remove them from the net. Their legs and heads would be sticking out of the net netting. I'd no more get a part free and it would somehow find another place to stick through. A hole in the top of the net about the size of a ready to burst basketball big enough for the whole bird to sail out of and it tries escaping out through the netting. I discovered I could dislodge them from the net by tossing the whole mess into the air and quickly flipping the net like a salad. The keet would then flop out in a flapping frenzy.

Four keets managed to escape in the process but I managed to move the rest to the run and get them contained. Meantime, this full grown guinea shows up out of nowhere and starts running back and forth along the edge of the woods yelling, "HEAD FOR THE TREES!!" over and over at the top of its surprisingly effective lungs. Pretty soon my four escapees have joined forces with it and formed a gang dedicated to forming a guinea underground railroad.

As I said earlier, the neighbor had had a half dozen guineas or so but over time they were weeded out down to one according to the neighborhood scuttlebutt. I figured my guinea rabble rousing rustler was her one remaining guinea.

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### ***Flipped By Feathers***

I must make a terrible degrading confession. It was a deed of disgrace, it was really bad taste, I should hide my face but I'd had it, I needed a recession. I was up to my beak in guinea gripes anyway over the work a few guineas demanded when I noticed a pile of pearl feathers. It kind of pushed me off my perch because I struggled so hard to keep every one of the psychotic self-destructive dodo look-alikes alive. I did see one of the ones I grabbed and confined to its room in one of the dog runs the day before had a wound on its side so the feathers may have come from a close encounter of the protector kind. But I assumed the worst and thought one of the escapees had chosen death before detention. I hadn't seen the remaining gypsies since they turned tail feathers and headed off during all the capture cackling, mine, not the guineas, when I had slipped into my Dog, the Bounty Hunter mode and managed to capture 10 out 14 of the pippers so the feathers could have even come from one of them. I really don't know, there was a lot of stuff flying and flapping around bout then.

Or the feathers could have been my share of a predator meal left there by supersonic hawk or the remnants of a raid by them poultry hating Holstein cows over-running all the Chick-Fil-A billboards around Atlanta.

I once had a feral cat who took to me and an office house with a hole in the floor at another farm we used to have. A good number of mornings I would come into the office and there, in the exact center of my keyboard, would be exactly half of the rodent du jour (that's fancy French talk for "Rodent Of The Day) and not one you find on any menu marked, "Market Priced." It would either be the front half or the back half, but it was always exactly half of whatever it was. It looked like it was surgically dismembered. I went through a number of keyboards before I solved the problem by putting a thick layer of paper towels over the keyboard each evening.

The last thing I needed was some fond of fowl, and me, predator leaving half, physical half and not numerical half, of my guineas for me.

I tenderly gathered up the remains of the fine feathered fowl and at that point I kind of lost it. I was verbally berating the remains and telling them if they would have remained with the guinea gang they would still be alive. I went to the dog run fence next to the feathered felons who were screaming habeas corpus like a bunch of tin cups on cell bars and demanding what sounded to me like phone calls and lawyers. The closer I got, the louder they got.

I slowly pointed at each one then just as slowly drug the tip of my thumb across my throat while making a terrible grimace of indescribable horror. One after the other, all the jailbirds got the point and the grimace. About the third guinea it dawned on me the strained, gagging gasps I heard off in the distance were actually coming from me and not the guineas. But by then, I was too caught up to pause my perverseness until I'd pointed them all out one by one.

After I did the two finger eye poke on myself and the two finger jab at them I held out the handful of feathers, may PETA forgive me, but they had egged me on too far. I let the feathers slowly drift their way from my fingers to the ground. Guinea eyes got big and wide, guinea wattles stuck straight out, wings flapped in horror and they instantly went screechless.

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### ***The Cool Hand Luke Capture***

Not too long after the shameful feather display I happened to see the escapees going in and out of the next cell in the run so I sneaks up and slam the door and they are caught. Now I have guineas in two sections, the dog run, not the guineas. I want them all in the same section so I can feed and water them as one batch. I grab the fish net and get in the section the escapees are in and one by one I catch them all and put them with the rest. In counting I find I now have 15 guineas even though I left the trailer 14 times. Seems I have caught the gang leader too. It dawns on me that it is the neighbor's guinea. So I call her and leave a message on her answering machine, "If you're missing your guinea, I got it here with mine and I'll let them all go in a couple weeks. If you want it sooner, let me know and I'll try to catch it out."

About a week later she tells me her guinea is in her coop. But, I have 15 in my "coop." So I have an extra guinea from somewhere. It seems the lone survivor from the first seven had managed to stay out of sight and live off the land until the terror screams from its kindred compelled it to come into civilization and rescue the captives.

When I thought they were accustomed to their surroundings I released the batch. They immediately decided to spend half their time, the night time, over at the neighbor's and half of their time, the day time, here.

I really didn't care where they spent their nights as long as they showed up for work here. Unbeknownst to me, the neighbor did.

A lot.

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### ***Keetnapping Kareer Kaper***

The next summer I was mowing through some tall stuff with the big tractor and the 6 foot wide finish mower and looked back in time see a bunch of eggs that had managed to avoid the whirling blades. I'd heard guinea eggs were tough but not that tough. So I go to town and buy an incubator and move the eggs into the office trailer. Three of the fifteen hatched. I put them in my brooder.

Not too long after that, I says to my self, "Self, that one guinea has been hanging around that thick nasty thorn patch for days. There is NAR for it to be there all this time. (NAR is short for No Apparent Reason and I often call myself "Self" when I talk to myself) Chances are there is a hen in the patch." So I go and look using my tracker skills and quickly see a little patch of white under the over growth. I reached down to move the undergrowth aside for a better look and a rattle guinea struck me on the hand.

Guinea keets do not do well outside under the hen's control. Dew, rain, cat canapes and what have you, is real hard on them. So I schemes to catch her and move her and the eggs to a better place. I slips up and closes the little trail tunnel into the nest with the net. There is absolutely no way she can escape capture. Seems someone forgot to tell her. Make a long story shorter, she manages to escape my net and resists my efforts to catch her as I chase her around the farm. I give up and go gather up the eggs while 7 other guineas show up to back up the parents who by now are buck-wheating loudly for help and tell me they don't like me all that much. So I have 15 new eggs in the incubator.

I step outside the office trailer where I have set up the incubator an hour later and the Democrats are still out there complaining. I happened to see this little fluff ball making its way through the ankle high grass. Then I see four more. They are obviously only a day or two old. I chased them around the yard like a hopping dog looking for an elusive mouse in tall grass. Good thing we live out where the world ends because if anyone had seen me pogoing around after those keets, well... I finally caught them and threw them in the brooder in the office trailer with the other three earlier pipped keets who are now twice their size. The new ones immediately disappear under the older ones.

The prisoners are peeping like 5,000 crickets and the adults are running around outside the office trailer trying to find them. They finally gave up after a couple of hours. I was making my way up to the house when I heard flapping wings behind me and I looked in time to see the hen making a pass at me from behind.

The next day the entire lynch mob is still looking for its guinea child snapper. When they spot me they line up and head toward me full bore, wings wide spread, heads low and ready for battle, screaming, "MOTHERS!!! HIDE YOUR BABIES!!!"

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## ***I'm Egged On***

Over the next few days I managed to find a couple more piles of eggs. Into town I go for another incubator. This incubator buying can drain a wallet faster than dynamite drains a beaver dam. Well, in the interest of honesty, the incubators aren't really all that bad price wise. It's the motorized egg turner and the proper humidity maintaining fan that whirled your wallet.

Now I have a problem. Problem is, I have over 100 eggs in the incubators and with my luck they are ALL going to hatch by the end of the week. Well, on nearly 40 acres that alone is not that much of a problem and I can certainly deal with them.

It's not an egg problem, it's a brooder problem. And the one I have barely holds 10 keets the size of ping pong balls. So I decide to turn the three horse slant load into a large brooder. For some reason my fuzzy logic figured it worked for 14, it ought to work for 140. Nothing to it, just a bunch more electric meter dizzying heat lamps, a dozen or so creep feeders, a few hernia causing, boot drenching gravity guinea waterers and I'm good to go.

Incubators, turners, fans are bad enough. Throw in a bunch of proper heat lamps (I'm beginning to really hate the word, "proper."), creep feeders, waterers and your green can turn brown faster than eggs through a hen. I keep telling myself guineas are advertised for 10 bucks apiece on CraigsList and I've got... Well, I don't really know for sure how many I actually have, I got a lot of 10 buck birds I need to keep alive and you have to spend money to make money.

It quickly comes to my attention the feeders and the waterers have to be tended and moved twice a day. The guineas are neither dainty eaters or drinkers. If they are not watched the bedding around and under the watering and feeding station rapidly turns into a high-rise maggot hotel. Surprise! The bug eaters don't eat bugs disguised as maggots and the maggots know it and make no effort to hide.

Now that really shoulda been my first clue. Big bunch of bug eaters and not a one of them had any interest in the bug buffet. It was a lot of work, and feed, keeping them healthy, the keets, not the maggots, but I figured I could deal with them better when I got them out of the trailer and running farm free.

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## ***The Fly In The Guinea Ointment***

On nearly 40 acres a 100+ guineas shouldn't be any problem. I had visions of a giant Hoover vacuum in the shape of a guinea cloud sucking up bugs. Our neighbor, who has the other 40 acres of what used to be one 80 acre farm, however, didn't share my dream. It seems one man's dream is his neighbor's nightmare. Much to my surprise, much to my surprise. (It bears repeating.)

I had figured since she had guineas at one time that she was an admirer of the helmeted fowl. You see, she had a half dozen guineas at one time and they spent most of their time over here pooping. Well, not literally pooping, that I know of anyway, I wasn't watching them that close, but pecking around the



road apple piles feasting on the resulting bugs. Not that we minded, mind you. Ennyways, the guinea numbers kept decreasing until they didn't come around any more. I kinda chalked the guinea shrinkage up to nature and all. I had it in my mind I was going to give nature a hand and do my neighbor a favor and build a super flock of gobblin' guineas that would benefit everybody.

Well, as I said at the beginning of this guinea and gnarly gnat groan, I got sucked into the nasty Georgia nasty gnat war and geared up to do battle. I don't know specifically who it was who turned me onto guineas and I don't want to know, I prefer to think kindly of everyone, but I thought since 14 didn't get the job done 140 would.

But all that was before I found out the neighbor wasn't near as fond of guineas as I was. That came as a complete surprise, and I mean, a complete surprise, a complete surprise (it bears repeating) since she had actually started the Agateville Road guinea gathering.

Well, it seems my little flock of 15 guineas would rather sleep over with the chickens in the neighbor's chicken coop. I don't have a problem with that since they do show up for work every day. In a discussion with the critter sitter who works for both us and the neighbor at times, I find out to my shock, not all is great in Guinealand. My neighbor is not the least bit fond of my guineas camping out at her place, seems they push her chickens away from their feed, and she is making gorging guinea gourmet comments. I couldn't imagine anyone not liking the bug bashers. But as the critter sitter reported the situation it seems the neighbor, who I assumed to be a guinea lover, suggested keeping my guineas at home while making remarks about having room in her freezer, I began to suspect she had little, if any, guinea gratitude. I thought, well maybe, it's just a joke. There was nothing left to think.

So here I am with garrison group of growing guineas, a neighbor who is not guinea gracious and a couple of other farm gnat hating, but now not all that guinea fond, residents, who warn me I am not to make the neighbor mad.

See my problem?

Let me 'splain it to you...

I've got this multitude of guinea keets on the way. They have already started the journey, they are cracking shells one after another and the incubator is filling with quarter sized little fluffy keets. They have sprung out like daffodils through a snowdrift, demanding attention and I'm surrounded by not so guarded indifference from those close by who I'm trying to help no matter what I do. I begin to suffer outbursts of "MAKE 'EM STOP!!!"

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### ***Enter The Internet***

So I take my problem to the Internet. 52,968,345,537,421 pages on the Internet about anything. One would think there ought to be some guinea relief in that mess. In addition to the 50 trillion plus pages on the Net I also am known to about 50 email discussion lists as well so I spill my guinea gut gnawings

to a few of the groups I'm on before I end up with a bunch of guineas under glass waiting in the neighbor's freezer.

I want to thank the horde of folks who sent me the gaggle of gushing guinea guidance. It really is a comfort to have all the support as I grovel through this guinea garbage and guidance getting out the gems.

But, since almost all of the people who sent me advice favored the guineas, and weren't thinking too kind of the guinea dislikers I was surrounded by, you can see their advice did little to endear me to the people who surrounded me.

I had folks tell me that I need to sit the little gnippers down and tell them what I needed to tell them. I kinda discarded that because I have tried talking to several batches so far but they act just like they don't seem to have heard of me before. And then there are folks who shared their guinea gnaws which caused me to think, "Been there, don't want to go back." And there was someone who kept her guineas in her house for a couple of years (or decades, I forget) figuring that would imprint them to home only to have them promptly leave town the first time she let them venture out.

Someone else told me I need to catch them up each night and tuck them in until they get the no sleepovers idea. The thought of chasing 130 plus little keets around in the sunset kinda took my breath away. I couldn't even hire a cat herder to pull that off.

And then there was the spay and neuter crowd along with a few adoption agencies, small critter auctions and even a farmer's market. One little eye searching my face and asking, "You wouldn't do that, would you? Would you?" forced me to block those ideas out.

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### ***Interjection Insertion***

And then there were the marriage proposals...

*Marv, I will marry you and together we can deal with the guineas, or go on honeymoon and forget about them! ~Susan*

To which I reply...

"Trust me! I am not as pretty as I sound." ~ Marv "" Walker

And this one...

*I don't require a prenup. Send picture of goose neck brooder. - Jane*

To which I reply...

"Send picture of truck and recent credit report." - Marv "" Walker

And this one...

*My husband doesn't like poultry. I'm going to be a good looking widow really soon! Interested? - Shotgun Sherry*

To which I reply...

"Moved! Left No Forwarding Address!" - Marv "" Walker

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### ***Understanding The Problem***

I seem to be the only one who realizes the significance of the guinea glut.

It's a little like Zell Miller telling about his neighbor with the fantastic pair of beautiful tall mules. The mules kept scrubbing their ears on the stall ceiling and blemishing their beauty much to the neighbor's annoyance. One day Zell found the neighbor raising the whole barn to give his mules ear clearance. Zell asked why he just didn't dig out the stall. The neighbor looked at him and said, "Son, you just don't seem to understand. The problem is that it's their ears that are too long, not their legs."

Folks, it's not that there are too many guineas (Ouch, I just had a sudden flash back. It didn't last very long, it was only a flash, but I think it was a link to a guinea recipe site or something like that!). It is an illegal immigration problem. I thought about fencing off the border between us and the neighbor's but then I remembered how the guineas went through the dog run cyclone fence like a bad burrito meeting Irritable Bowel Syndrome. I'm just trying to come up with a solution before they bust the brooder.

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### ***Internet Interupptus***

I fear I may have made a grave guinea goof-up by unloading my keet konsternation on the Internet. As some of you know my email seal of authenticity is what has become known as "snigtags" such as "Marv 'Guineas make the best pets. You can always eat them when you're tired of them.' Walker."

Ennyway, once I started snigtagging people wouldn't let me stop. If there was no snigtag it wasn't a true message, folks considered it a scam and ignored it.

But, since I slipped up and put a snigtag in the anonymous email request out of habit, folks knew it was me and that I really had been kidnapped and carried away into the guinea world.

And the email guinea gusher began.

This guinea thing has taken on a life of its own with folks from all over emailing me and guilting me into continuing until my problem is resolved. Some folks didn't seem to get the idea I am trying to solve the problem. One emailer even offered to load her SUV up with 31 more and deliver them to me. As I read her offer I screamed, "GET THEE BEHIND ME, SATAN!" at the monitor.

If my new idea works I may take her up on her offer.

About that time I happened to see this torso going down the road. I'd seen disembodied things like that before. Sometimes I'd just see legs. I have even seen people with the tops of their heads gone. The answer to the mystery dawned on me after some thought; they were wearing cloaks of invisibility. So I chased down the torso and asked it, "What is the secret of invisibility?"

And the torso said, "Camouflage." And like a true horse person I said, "Whoa!!!! Whoa!!!! Whoa!!!! Whoa!!!!" I'd seen spray cans of the stuff in hardware store paint departments. Suddenly my problem didn't seem as visible as before. I decided to buy 180 cans of the stuff; it was looking like the keet population was going to grow into that in the next day or so. I'm going to liberally coat each keet with camouflage and then when they go a waltzin Matilda the neighbor won't see them.

I don't know why I didn't see the camouflage invisibility solution before then, it was right in front of my eyes. It was better than my first idea to start looking for a few hundred of those reindeer antlers they put on dogs toward the end of the year, guinea size, of course.

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### ***Can't Find My Invisibility***

You'll remember how I came up with the earlier idea of spraying the little buggers with a can of Invisibility Cloaking, known in the south as "camo." Well, you know how paint gets all over everything? The wind never blows around here until it isn't wanted... Well, anyway, before I knew it there was so much invisibility on everything but the keets and I couldn't find my hands after a couple of spritzes. I had spray tested a spot on one of the boxes and the keets kept running out through the hole as fast as I could put them back.

I was getting desperate. The sheriff was sitting on his hands implementing my "Guineas For Prisoner's" rehabilitation program. The sheriff greeted my "Guinea Guardian" idea, or as he called it, "Crazy Cluckers For Cons," with "Son, ya better talk to yer neighbor yet an come to some sort of agreement!!"

I want to make it very clear I have no hard feelings about the neighbor even though she did fire the first guinea. Okay, so she isn't fond of them, but then there are things I'm not fond of either like the Bangladesh Biting & Barking Behemoth dogs who occasionally come over here and guard our flock of non-existent sheep instead of staying home and guarding her large flock of actual sheep. We bought one half of an 80 some acre farm, she bought the other half and a few green as grass pound-in fence posts driven along the survey line keep us apart. As far as neighbors go we have no complaints. Except she doesn't like large flocks of other people's guineas making her home theirs. I don't have OP guineas, I have my own and there-in lies the problem. It is not my fault guineas are not loyal pets.

Oh yeah, I read about guinea relationships on the Net. One woman even had a couple as house pets. They was house broke, had a fondness for TV which they watched snuggled up against her on her shoulders. Since everything you read on the Net is true, I was looking forward to a bunch of warm feathered fuzzies to warm the cockles of my heart as well as watching them mercilessly slaughter unrelated pests. However, enough guineas have flown my coop in the last 2 years, in spite of my best Motel 6 hospitality efforts, to convince me IT'S ALL LIES!!

Birds of a feather flock together all right, but they do it somewhere else.

The guinea sized antler idea is still on the burner. I'm going to see if what I picked up on CD-L (Carriage Driving - List) can be used to put together a couple of 40 guinea teams of sled birds. There is



this chubby white-bearded guy here in Hillsboro who has a big pile of antlers in his backyard. I need to hurry with the keet koop so I can get over and strike a deal with him. He drops outta sight for a week or so around the end of December. If I'm going to do a deal, I gotta get flying.

If you love something let them go. If they don't come back hunt them down and kil... Sorry. I don't know what came over me, it must be the high guinea pressure. Am I beginning to moult? In the case of guineas, it wouldn't be much of a hunt. They'll probably be at the neighbor's.

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### ***Designer Guineas***

I got this email from someone expressing concern over my guineas fraternizing with the neighbor's chickens...

*Scroll down to see what the guinea-chicken hybrids will look like:*

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gamebird\\_hybrids](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gamebird_hybrids)

*Need help?*

The "Need help?" was part of the signature line of the mail server but I thought it was part of her email. It was a natural assumption and became part of my reply...

"Need help? Yes, I think you really do. You apparently have become infected with the Guinea virus. You are at the stage where you are researching esoteric Guinea Garbage, and as one who has fallen from Guinea Grace, I can tell you it's all Guinea Garbage."

"If you are not careful you will join the ranks of the designers - Horse Designers, Cat Designers, Dog Designers and other assorted critter designers. Trust me, this world does not need to be fouled with Designer Guineas."

Marv "Turn while there is still time, I hope." Walker

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### ***Hello??!! People!! I'm In The Room!!***

I guess there isn't any need to mention this cathartic catalogue is about guinea fowl and their spawn judging from the emails I get from everywhere. The overwhelming percentage of the mail is uplifting. But I gotta say the underwhelming percentage of comments result in some serious ego crashing. I think I'm pretty thick-skinned but my feathers are a little ruffled. I'm thankful one of the lists at least replies to the poster and not the list. At least that prevented some of the guinea minutia from being publicly picked to pieces and ultimately ending up making me look like I'd gone off my roost.

I keep hearing things like Charles McCartney comparisons, things such as, "The Georgia Koot Guy." "Koot" is not a single keeter but a guy whose whole world revolves around guineas. People stop talking when I walk up and sometimes they even talk about me when I'm in the room. I try to keep the Gunnar (pronounced Gooonar) Anderson attitude. Gunnar was a Norwegian farmer in Gulliver, MI, the tiny little keet dropping on the map, where I grew up. He wore his work clothes all week which meant he wore them everywhere. Someone once accosted him in Jim & Jean's Grocery, "Gooonar! You have cow manure clear up to your belt!" Of course, they used a different word for "manure" that one didn't just yell out in a public setting at the time and they also used a word a little lower than belt. To which Gunnar replied, "Ya, und aye hav buttar on my bret too."

But it kinda still stings to be the topic of impolite conversation.

This is why I have been kinda low-keyed about my idea involving guineas, antlers, sleds and approaching the guy who says he uses flying deer to pull a sled in his seasonal job. But I see the keet is out of the cage and my keet karriage plan has flown the koop. Since many of the shoulders I rely on to give wings to my burden are carriage drivers, and many of them are purists, they iron their harnesses before and after they put them on, I really didn't want to offend them. (I really didn't want to go there but I had to explain my full disclosure reticence.)

We had a living legend in Georgia for many years. Charles McCartney was a real urban legend in that every year he'd take to the road and loop across several states keeping to a regular urban route. Yeah, I know, many of you do that, no big deal, you say. You see, Charles traveled with a wagon drawn by a mule and stopping wherever night found him and his big bunch a goats. He was a unique(?) Georgia feature and every man, woman and awe-struck child for states around knew about the Goat Man.

Somehow in my efforts to hide 150 plus, with no end in sight, guineas, I have set myself up to be Georgia's new urban legend - The Guinea Man. If that idea takes off like a guinea who knows where it will land?

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### ***Gracious! Great Guiding Gliding Guineas!***

One of the seemingly most helpful emails I got was from someone who said, "You gotta keep them cooped up for a decade or two and then you have teach them to come when you call them. That's what we did."

You have no idea how my interest snapped on that. "Guineas come when you call them?????" I said to myself over and over and over and over. Turns out you build them a coop and once a day you go in with them and yell, "CHICK! CHICK! CHICK!!" like a fool at the top of your lungs while tossing out a small amount of some fancy, costs more than all the other millet in the world, primo millet. They ignore all the other millet in the world but they love the gourmet stuff. They become addicted, you become their pusher. They come when you yell, "Free Dope!!"

COOP!! Somehow I had completely glossed over that word. No one I knew who had guineas had a

guinea coop. But, hey, it was worth a shot before the neighbor began taking shots of her own.

Several foul fanciers informed me you have to provide your guineas with a coop, like they were chickens or something. They insisted you need a coop so your guineas could come home to roost like chickens. The coop protected them from predators and the like. But I personally knew no one who had a guinea coop and they all, both the guineas and the guinea folks, seemed happy enough.

So I built a coop. Not just any coop, a coop castle, it's the MOACC (Mother Of All Coop Castles). Actually I turned the old rabbit house the previous owners kept their rabbits in into the coop. The thing is about the size of a two Lexus and a HumVee garage. I snake proofed it, put roosts in it, it's pretty fancy and big enough for a honker herd of guineas. I fenced in just about as much floor space outside for an exercise, bug bashing practice area. It's got a tin roof, protection from the rain, protection from predators and all that.

I worked on it day and night for a solid month while the keet konglomerate graduated from their stint in the three horse slant load and finished it the moment they got too big to spend another second in the trailer.

Two hours of keet katching and transporting from the goose neck to the koop and I'm ready for a LONG shower.

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### ***Here, Guinea! Here, Guinea, Guinea!***

The guinea training works like a million bucks. Good thing because that primo millet is not cheap and it goes right down the drains of 140 thereabouts guineas without slowing down. Like the advice said, they take to it from the first hit. I sneak into the adjoining exercise yard while they are sprawled out on coop couches and as soon as the first "Chh" gets past my lips a river of guineas stream out of the coop and begin flowing everywhere looking for millet nuggets.

Now, the end of problem seems in sight. I have trained the guineas to come when called. The solution is so close I am walking on air.

I'm ready. I get in the Jeep and do a diplomacy drive over to the neighbor's to share the guinea gospel.

I get out of the Jeep and greet her and she greets back, "6 guineas are bad enough, 16 are too much! Every night they go in the coop and eat all my chickens' feed as soon as I put it out! Don't you feed them at all????!!!" My feed bill is high enough with all my animals (bunch a chickens, about 40 meat sheep, two donkeys and four pony sized dogs)!"

I diplomatically decide to let her just go on talking. It was obvious she was going to anyway and she had some sort of tool in her hand. I wasn't about to correct her on the number of guineas involved in

the problem mostly because I wasn't quite certain I could make it to the Jeep and escape before she went to work with the tool.

About that time a pair of guineas come out of the woods on the far side of her pasture heading across her pasture heading toward ours. And right behind them waddled 7 baseball sized keets. "And, now there's even more of them!" she informs me directing my vision in case I don't see them.

I saw them, I just didn't believe they were mine. I was totally at a loss to even begin to figure where they could have come from. When you are a guinea fancier like I was (keyword - "was"), you pretty much recognize your birds. All I could think of to do was cast doubts they were my birds and she wasn't buying any of that.

Some time later I discovered the guy up the road had several guineas and he wasn't any more skilled at keeping them home than I was. Guineaes are real wanderers. Apparently the road tripping guineas came from his place. They probably heard about the free great guinea weed that some clown was tossing all over the place.

I really didn't see any great need to rub the down road neighbor in her face at that point. I had a sneaking suspicion she didn't know about the jammed full keet coop. I didn't see any real need to tell her about them just then either.

It's obvious the feed was the main sticking point so I agreed to buy the feed for her chickens and their slumber party friends. The local feed store usually had a skid of feed ready for me when I drove up anyway, what was a few more bags of the stuff? That seemed to satisfy her for the moment. If I couldn't get my soon to be uncooped birds to stay at home the next thing was going to be just having the feed delivered to the neighbor's and taking on the job of actually doing the feeding as well. I really wasn't looking forward to that. But because my guineas was trained to the coop, I didn't have to worry about it.

Thank goodness for the millet idea!

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### ***Decooping The Cooped***

Parole day came and I uncorked the coop. I stood off to the side of the door to the exercise yard and watched them stream out. And stream out. And stream out. And stream out. And stream out. I lost count and I felt myself break out in a cold sweat even though it was about 90 in the shade. I didn't fully realize there were that many neighbor annoyances in that coop.

Then it dawned on me I had left the other door open at the other end of the coop and guineas were hearing and seeing guineas in there as they made their way by the open coop door and in they would go to join them only to follow them out. It was a guinea Chinese Fire Drill.



I dashed around to close the coop door and then went back to the back. Even with the guinea faucet revolving door at the front closed it was still a jolt to see the difference between one clump of 100+ in one place and 100+ individual guineas heading off in a 100+ different directions to do whatever it is that guineas do.

A couple hours later there were guineas all over the place, Here a guinea, there a guinea, everywhere a guinea. I even saw some headed for the neighbor's and I thought, "Better call them home before she gets home."

So I grab a can of Guinea Cocaine from the stash and dash into the coop exercise yard and began screaming "CHICK!!! CHICK!!!! CHICK!!!!" like a fool. Next thing you know guineas are running up and flying in from all over and I'm thinking, "This really works!!" Every guinea on the place raced to get in the pen and I'm thinking, "This really works!!!" There were a few guineas who ran back and forth along the coop wire trying to get at their share of the free dope. They would run right to the corner, a couple inches more and they could have just breezed in, and then they would turn back and run the other way. Back and forth. Back and forth. Back and forth. Back and forth. I'm not thinking intelligence right about then although I had long began to suspect their intelligence ranks right up there with their good looks. I actually had to go out and chase them past the corner and then they would go, "Oh, yeah, there's a door," and go right in to get some free dope.

I was feeling pretty good right about then. All I had to do was act like a fool to fool them into the coop and then while they were groveling on the ground looking for their guinea fix I just closed the coop and they were in for the night. They were grounded guineas, no slumber parties for them.

About this time the neighbor has decided she has little faith in my guinea containment efforts and announces there is no longer any need to bring feed by. She has figured out a way to keep my guineas out of her chicken coop. I'm curious but I don't ask how she managed that. I don't want to re-open that can of guineas. If she managed to keep out 16 she could certainly handle 160.

But that wasn't going to happen because I could herd my guineas into the corral coop each night.

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### ***Millet High***

I'm flying high (figure of speech). I'm the King Of The Guinea Granglers. For almost a whole week I have to hold a gun on myself to keep from patting myself on the back too much. All I gotta do, anytime I want, to catch up all my guineas, is to call them. Who wudda thunk it? At sunset I scream, "CHICK!! CHICK!!!" a couple of times and there is feather flappin and guinea gabbering going on as far as the eye can see. It's like geese flying in formation or rather, guinea groups. When the last guinea swerves into the exercise yard I close it up until the next morning.

I don't have the slightest interest in how the neighbor has managed to keep the guinea guerrillas out of

her her coop because I am able to get them IN my coop ANY TIME it suits me. With power like that you don't have too much interest in little sparks somewhere else.

I sleep like a baby. I'm able to bring my guineas home and bedded before the neighbor comes in from her long commute from her Atlanta job. All is going well in the gnat war.

It was almost a whole week before the rebellion began.

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### ***The Rebellion***

I had a river of guineas I could pour into the coop at will. Like I said, I was flying high. The Bible has a verse that says, "Take heed, lest ye fall."

A half dozen or so guineas suddenly refused to come into the coop no matter what I would try to do. I even left a Hansel and Gretel trail of millet for them to follow into the coop, no luck. They liked the millet fine. They just weren't having any part of the coop. It was like they had never seen it before. They would mill around outside the wire and cackle like Nancy Reagan, "Just say, 'NO!'"

The half dozen became seven, then eight, then ten, and in no time it was an even dozen who were having no part of coming into the coop. I'd give up trying to coax them into nocturnal captivity and would close up the coop and let whatever dark of night predator that happened to them happen to them. It was survival of the fittest and all that. Not my choice, but there wasn't anything I could do about it anyway. At least they would fly up in the trees above the coop and wait for the morning work release program and not go flapping off to the neighbor's.

When you want to live off the grid you have to be resourceful. The coop shelter snubbing guineas decided they would rather spend their nights with their ugly feet wrapped around a limb high in the trees directly above the coop where they could drop what they thought of the coop on it at will. In no time the layers of their thoughts, unneeded feathers and dislodged pine needles laying on the coop roof are pretty disgusting.

In about three weeks the guineas decide they can take or leave the millet. The survey says, "Half the guineas, the coop takers, are coop lovers, half the guineas, the tree takers, are coop leavers." Each evening a tornado of guineas whirls up into the trees and start raining their gross guinea thoughts and other things they have discovered down on the coop roof below. Walking close to the coop around sunset is not a good idea.

Don't know exactly when it happens but all the guineas end up eschewing the luxury of the coop castle for the love of nature like a bunch of tree hugging hippies and each evening the pine trees above the coop bristle with pine cones and feathers.

Night time apparently isn't the guineas' time. One night during a cloudburst, actual rain, not guinea thoughts, I was working away in the office trailer about midnight when there was this tremendous crash against the trailer. It was so loud my first thought was, "Oh great! A limb has fallen onto the trailer and probably poked a hole in it I'm going to have to close up in some way before the water ruins everything." Okay, it was more than one thought but I was startled by the bang that occurred so close to me. It actually knocked my Sprint air card antenna off the window behind my monitor.

I slip a hastily tailored trash bag poncho on and go out into the deluge with a Streamlight to find the damage so I can get it taken care of. I do the breast stroke all around the thorny brush on three sides trailer and find no damage. If you can't find the damage with a Streamlight, there is no damage. I thought, "No way that noise was in my head. I am on a voice name basis with the voices and noises in my head and that boom wasn't one of them. The Streamlight firebeam of light happens to shine below my desk window and there lays this drenched dopey dazed guinea. I figure it fell out of bed and headed for the light. If it had hit the window instead of above or below it I don't know what would have happened. Well, I do a little. It would have come right through and into my lap and something would have hit the fan.

I reach down to pick the thing up. Goofy guinea doesn't want my help. Immediately it goes flapping off disappearing into the drizzling darkness. I'm not chasing it. I go back in the office and hang up my trash bag raincoat to dry. I'm sitting back at my computer for all of 5 minutes when I hear a crash hit at the trailer window behind me. I'm beginning to feel like I'm in a remake of Alfred Hitchcock's "The Birds." Back into the thorn torn trash bag rain bag I go. This time I take the larger and heavier Super Stinger Streamlight in case I'm forced to defend myself if it's not a guinea. No body, no damage, no sign the next day.

In the mornings it rains guineas as they drop from the trees to go where they go. Usually, the neighbor's.

It is as if a raft of guineas had been attending Millet Anonymous meetings. You know, where a bunch of guineas are perched around in a circle taking turns saying, "Hello! My name is Aaacck!! and I'm a millet addict." In MA meetings it's customary for all the other MA members to reply, "Hello, Aaacck!!" to recognize and reinforce their fraternal flock foul connection. After the introductions they all then share their flight from millet misuse experiences.

And when they leave the MA meetings they go forth trying to reach the other guineas groveling at the free millet just lying on the ground who are willing to make themselves coop captives.

You know, I understand why despots, dictators and governments come down so hard on rebels. If you don't, the next thing you know, they've flown the coop and taken the whole country with them. I don't agree with it, but I understand it. Which is probably the reason I have a tree full of guineas and a coop full of weeds. It's academic now, the insurrection has reached critical mass at terminal velocity.

But, before the thousands of chapters of MA around rural America begin to tsunami me with hate

email... I think the main culprits were the Guinea Underground Railroad. I guess it was case of "out of sight, out of mind." In my guinea gathering glee I had forgotten about the few escapees from my first few fruitless attempts at fowl flockdom. Just as soon as I had all the guineas indoctrinated into subserviency the GUR, the (G)uinea (U)nderground (R)ailroad, slipped in unbeknownst to me and began sneaking my supposedly bug harvesting servants away from my guinea guidance under my very nose.

The next thing you know, my fancy guinea coop castle lies forlorn, rejected and abandoned and the guinea gang goes gagging off at will.

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### ***What You Don't Know, Hurts!***

I don't really know what the guineas do at the neighbor's, don't really want to know either, but when they are here they seemed to spend a lot of time bathing. Seems dirt is their deodorant. Any little patch of dirt showing anywhere is a signal to bathe. It doesn't take much of a signal to bathe. When it comes to digging those things are grizzly guineas. They have talons that would put any self respecting bear to shame when it comes to digging. The good bathing dirt seems to be down about ankle twisting deep and located right where one is likely to walk. It's bad enough when one is watching where one steps, it's impossible to watch when carrying a hay bale or it's pitch dark out.

Once guineas bathe and get drenched in dirt they take off running. Guineas are the runningest birds. Where do they run to? Nowhere. They will be running in one direction and suddenly head off in another direction. One will chase another full bore all over the place then the chasee will become the chased and all over the place they'll go again. They duck under things, they go between things, they'll fly over and around things. And all the time they are losing dirt. Every once in awhile they will go at each other and the dirt from the grappling guineas flies up into the air like a mushroom cloud. No matter, they'll just go re-load. A flock of guineas is a fast flying fleet of self loading demonized dump trucks. One moment they are little backhoes digging the holes. The next, they are roaring out with full loads of hole contents.

And they'll re-dirt wherever the fancy strikes them. More often than not, the fancy occurs in a dust bowl free zone. A hundred plus guineas can make a place look like the surface of the moon.

Stepping into one of those guinea bathing craters unawares brings on a perfect impersonation of Walter Brennan, the grand old actor with the high pitched voice from my younger days - "The Real MCoys, Guns Of Will Sonnet." One shoulder goes down as one takes the pressure off a rapidly folding ankle while the other shoulder suddenly disappears into your ear. Then there's a couple of gitchy hops and some squeaky exclamations and interjections as one hangs on the ragged edge of steel screws and metal plates hoping the agony can just be walked, I mean, hopped off.

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### ***Crickets, Smickets***

The guineas are making absolutely no noticeable dent in the gnats, ticks, fleas and various other bugs. The guineas and the bugs follow me around when I'm feeding and they, the guineas, not the bugs, have discovered 34+ year old Dee's bucket contains rather tasty Equine Senior. They hop-fly up on the

bucket, Dee noses them out and they come right back and she noses them out again, and again and again. Her feed bucket is right by the water trough and when I dump it to clean it crickets go everywhere. Why they flee, I have no idea. The guineas aren't the least bit interested in them.

Ohhhh! Crickets! That reminds me. I go out one morning and I hear this roaring kind of whirring noise. It's really loud. Sounds almost like a tornado going over. At the very least it's like being at the end of a jet runway. Cicadas, millions and trillions of millions of them. They are everywhere. They have flowed from the ground for their two week or so every 14 years as regular as clockwork visit. They are everywhere, in every tree, on every bush. They crunch when you walk on them. The guineas don't even have to pack a lunch. All they have to do is sit in one spot and scarf bugs. Do they? Nope. Too easy. They fight their way through the brown cicada clouds to get to the neighbor's chicken coop to check out the chicken pickin's.

Over time, since the guineas are not cooperating in the least, I've adopted kind of a "survival of the fittest, let nature take it's course" attitude. As if I had a choice. They are not the most wisest of birds. Little by little nature has taken its share and whittled the numbers down to, I don't know how many, guineas don't cooperate for census taking either, it's still a bunch.

Plus I've attempted to reduce their numbers myself on occasion. I sold a few (it hurt, hopefully time will heal, but hey, I was desperate and those people went into the deal with eyes wide open), gave a few away (it hurt, hopefully time will heal, but hey, I was desperate and those people went into the deal with eyes wide open).

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### ***Bunk Interjection***

Some folks swear by guineas and some folks swear at 'em. That's true of one of the email discussion lists I'm on. Well, several lists actually. Okay, all of the lists I'm on, actually.

One day, on one of the lists, not really sure which because when emotions are involved with guineas stuff can come from anywhere, I received the following...

WANT TO NEVER HAVE TO DEAL WITH TICS AGAIN?  
PURCHASE SEVERAL GUINEA FOWL AND YOU WILL NEVER  
HAVE, NOT EVEN ONE, TIC ON YOUR PROPERTY,  
GUARANTEED. JUST CHECK OUT THEIR WEB SITE:  
[guineafowl.com](http://guineafowl.com)

Yes, they are noisy, but if you get all males, they only make noise when any ting (sic) new comes into their surroundings. Sorry to say, the females "buckwheat" (noise they make) all the time, the males softly chirp or cackle loudly to send out an alarm.

I miss my flock and would have another if it were not for my grumpy neighbor who vows to shoot the first one that wanders in his yard. He is my brother-in-law.

They also provided an moving "hazard" for my driving horse in training.  
Once in a while the birds will remember they can fly and will take off  
unexpectedly, usually when you are passing them with your horse.

By the time it hit my mailbox I was already scratching to keep from going completely over the edge of  
guinea glee and crashing to the bottom of the guinea gulch.

I responded in a weak moment...

Bunk! Bunk! Bunk! Bunk! Bunk! Bunk! Bunk! Bunk! Bunk! Bunk! Bunk! Bunk! Bunk! Bunk!  
Bunk! Bunk! Bunk! Bunk! Bunk! Bunk! Bunk! Bunk! Bunk! Bunk! Bunk! Bunk! Bunk! Bunk!

Nothing against you personally, I know that you have been brain bleached just like I was. I've been  
down the guinea road for going on three years. I heard the preaching and I went to the foul fowl altar.  
While I have since repented I have to live with my dalliance into the world of fine feathered friends.

I started with 7. They were a short lived flock so I really didn't get much into the Guinea gully. Then I  
had 16 or so. They last about twice as long as the 7 but I did manage to find some nests and protected  
them like gold in my silver plated incubators. I called them silver plated incubators because they  
weren't cheep (pun intended, turns out punning is the most pleasure I was to get).

I ended up with about 80 of the peepers (used to like Peeps, wanted them to be a year around product  
stacked high on the impulse buyer's shelves in every store in the country, but the mere sight of them  
now brings psychotic episodes). After coddling them with a fancy coop and training them with the  
finest millet money can buy to come home when I act like a fool and stand there yelling "CHICK!  
CHICK! CHICK!" I found myself going into fall falling into a money coop. They ate a LOT of 50#  
bags of feed.

They quickly turned their noses up to the La Casa Coopa and decided to spend their nights sleeping in  
the tree tops above it where they could continuously crap on it even in the coldest, nastiest weather. It  
was then I decided it was going to be survival of the fittest.

Here it is well into spring and pretty much all of them have survived. During the day they carpet the  
farm with their presence, their shed feathers and their little land mines. About dark, they stream from  
all over toward their fancy coop which they use as a springboard to the treetops.

Some say they only make noise when something new happens. Pah! I spit on that saying! They make  
noise continually. They even jabber all night long in the trees. And all folks wanna talk about is the  
"little boy who cried wolf!" They can't get it through their heads, I'm not a little boy and I'm talking  
about guineas, not wolves. But the wolves idea is getting more and more attractive.



Ooops! Forgot. To be fair, there are times when they are soundless. That's when there is something they should be hollering at; like strangers. It's like they are thinking, "Ohh, they may be up to no good! If we don't say anything they won't see us!"

Some say they won't tear up your flower beds and gardens like other fine feathered fowl friends. Pah! I spit on that saying as well. They are like little berserk backhoes and they dig holes EVERYWHERE THERE IS DIRT! They carry the dirt away by rolling in the dirt they have loosened and carrying it away in their feathers. Get you some guineas and you'll wish you had a large collection of chickens, ducks, ostriches, emus and parakeets instead.

They chase each other continuously for no reason that I can decipher. If one chases another by others they all join in the chase. Sometimes the chaser becomes the chasee. If they should collide and spar, dirt flies everywhere. At the end of the battle they go re-dirt. If they don't come across one of their holes, they make another ankle bender out of any old dime-sized dirt patch.

Guinea proofing horses? Pah! I spit on that saying as well. I have a horse that has turned into a "Excuse me, Boss, I gotta go stomp me some guineas! Hasn't gotten one yet, but, there's always a chance."

I need to stop replying. Blood pressure problems you know. And I need to put the gnat mask on and go pick the ticks off the critters.

Marv "Gather 'round me Guineaers and I will go ahead. On a subject so distasteful that even fools fear to tread." Walker

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### ***Silence So Heavy You Feel It***

I go out in the morning, not a guinea to be seen, or heard, in the morning light. The whole 40 acres is still as glass, it's peaceful as a motionless Lake Michigan. It's almost as though they were gone from my life. But, I'm sure it's too much to hope for. It's little like lowering oneself into what looks like a soft comfortable chair only to have all the chair joints come loose when you are too lowered to stop dropping all the way to the hard floor. If every day was like this, I could live with it.

I know the peace and quiet can't last. I don't dare pinch myself for fear I'm dreaming and I'll wake myself up.

I could actually live with the guineas. We have adopted a "live and let live agreement. Don't mess with me and I won't mess with you." However, as I said earlier, the live and let live agreement apparently doesn't include the neighbor. I hear through the grapevine the neighbor's displeasure and dislike has risen considerably since the truce was signed some months ago.

Since I see no sign of a guinea anywhere and I hear no strident "BUCKWHEAT!! BUCKWHEAT!! BUCKWHEAT!! BUCKWHEAT!!" I can only assume they are off chowing down at the Neighbor's Buffet. I'm thinking, "You know, I really needed to hear(?) that." Sometimes silence is just too loud.

Since one of our main goals in life is to stay on the good side of the neighbor, it's boiled down to it's her way or the highway. Either way, the guineas gotta go goodbye. I'm not really opposed to their traveling. They really haven't worked out the way I'd hoped. Not only am I being bugged by the bugs, I'm being bugged by the neighbor and bugged by the rest of the farm residents I'd hoped to debug originally.

My attempts to debug the world have ended up really bugging me. Shows to go you, you can't mess with nature.

A good friend of mine has this saying he likes, he must, he uses it all the time, "It is what it is." Well, the pressure to change "it" is bulging the sides of the tank and if something doesn't go, it's gonna blow.

Remember how earlier in this tome I told you about the really sociable folks who gave me my original guinea spawn, I mean, seed? They was some tired looking folk who had a really nice place protected by a sea of guineas. The whole family was out in the yard working away, so I dismissed their fatigued looks when I went to get the first batch. They kindly(?) delivered the second batch. I told them I'd take all they wanted to give me. They nodded knowingly and said something about understanding the attraction for guineas.

Back when the second batch numbers started dwindling I called them to see if they had anymore. I called them a number of times. They never did return my calls. I didn't go by to see them. I would have, but I used the GPS to get there and somehow it reset itself. I'm going to say "reset itself" because I can't prove otherwise but one morning not too long after the guinea gifting the GPS was not in my favorite spot on the dashboard. It was like someone had moved it and those scratches by the door lock could have been there all along. The Jeep had 390,000+ miles on it and not even the guineas, in their defense, could have scratched it up worse than it was.

Since the friendly folks I got them from originally didn't take my calls when I wanted more, I was absolutely certain they wouldn't take my calls when I wanted less. I thought it was worth a shot. Missed. Missed again. And again.

I couldn't dwell too much on their betrayal. I had guineas to move. All I needed was somewhere to move them, or the neighbor, to. I briefly considered moving the neighbor but every time I see her she has some sort of tool in her hand.

Like I said earlier, since my guinea gusher has flooded the farm with a layer of feathers and other things too delightful to step in, I have been half-heartedly helping nature reduce their numbers buy

selling and gifting. When the caller ID shows a guinea related number I can't take a chance they want to give them back so I don't answer the phone. I suppose they could be wanting more guineas, but I just can't take the chance. I'm practicing the "The number you have called has been disconnected or is no longer in service," message so that I can at least check to see if they want more, not likely, or want to give them back, likely. If they want to give them back or the tone of their voice tells me I should have left the phone cradled, they get the automated message. I'm desperate enough to explore all avenues for the greater guinea good no matter how remote.

So here I am in a guinea glut and up to my ears in enthusiastic encouragement to lessen their numbers for the good of all involved.

I placed "Come Get 'Em!" guinea ads wherever they would let me. So far, no luck. I've made calls with nice "You have won a free gift guinea," "this is not a guinea call," scripts in front of me. So far, no luck. Not even a nibble from Craigslist, even. So far, no luck. Not even the scammers seem to want them. I have sunk to some pretty deep guineadom gullies; I won't repulse you with some of the things I've thought of, I don't need to deal with PETA, HSUS and all the other gratuitous guinea guards on top of everything else.

I even looked to a shameful Drive By Ducking I once shamefully participated in for an answer.

We had gotten a late night call from some friends on the other side of the county about a pair of Canada geese some dogs had gotten to. The dogs had killed the male and the friends were concerned they would also get the female. Since we had a bunch of exotic birds at the time they just figured geese and parrots were the same thing. So off we go at oh dark thirty to see if we can rescue the goose.

We get there in the darker than dark and split up to find the goose. Everyone else looks around the houses because the light's better there, I guess, I go off to the little lake not too far from the houses. I don't know if it was a lake, it may have been a sewage impoundment because it was sure mucky and smelly. I just figured a goose would not be on someone's porch sitting in a rocker.

I'm slogging through the gripping muck and mud in the dark as pitch, stumbling and tripping over driftwood(?) and fortunately stepping into deep water once in a while which helped wash the gunk off me some, looking for the goose. The splashing, spluttering and gasping should give them an idea of where to look first should I never return. Just as I'm about to step out of sight and sound away from the houses to where if anything happens I'll never be found I faintly hear, "WE FOUND IT!" I begin slogging my way back. This time I know where all the deep bathing holes are.

It's in the carrier and stowed in the vehicle by the time I get back. "It was on a porch," they announce happily.

"Was it sitting in a rocker?" I ask.

"Not quite," they reply. "It was sitting under one."

Back at home the goose is hauled out of the carrier. I seem to be the only one there who knows two things right away. It's not a goose, it's a duck, and it's a Muscovy duck. The term "ugly duck" didn't come from the world of swans, it came from the Muscovy duck world.

Now the question has become, "What do we do with it???"

At the time we were good friends with the managers of the St. Augustine FL Alligator Farm. Yeah, the folks you often saw on late night TV shows regaling everyone with all kinds of weird and often dangerous critters. Any way, we got the idea of sending the duck down there to become an exhibit for the tourists. Anything that ugly had to draw a crowd.

"Muscovy duck??? Those things are the cockroaches of duckdom! You bring it down here and it goes on exhibit in with the gators!"

Now we are up to our bills in ducks. Well, one duck, but when you don't have facilities for ducks, one duck is one more duck than you can handle.

It's one in the morning and we're simply stuck outta luck with the duck when this thought hits me. Down at the corner about a quarter mile away there is a house with a pond. Ducks and ponds go together, like guineas and... guineas and... guineas and... anyway, ducks and ponds go together. So we jam ourselves and the duck into one of the vehicles and head up the road in the dark with our headlights off. We come to the stop sign, I bail out with the duck, slither down the slope to the pond hoping I don't slither in up past my neck and toss the duck into the darkness in the direction of the pond. I'm halfway back up the slope when I hear a splash telling me the duck has landed. I scramble into the vehicle and we're gone. Twenty seconds, max. I was younger and more agile then.

About 8:30 that morning we casually and innocently drive by to see if the duck is still in the pond. We see this couple in bathrobes standing on their deck looking down at the duck with this "And where did that come from?" look on their faces. Went by again at 1:00 and saw a big pile of corn at the edge of the pond and next to the corn was the duck all sprawled out apparently sleeping off its gluttony.

For about 10 years the duck, the pond and the never diminishing pile of corn was a fixture at the corner. We referred to the whole sorry deed amongst ourselves and our most trusted trusted confidants as "our drive by ducking." I can share the story with you now because we don't live near that corner any longer and the statute of limitations passed last week.

I hear you asking, "What does the drive by ducking have to do with the guinea glut??"

Well, to be honest, which infers I'm not normally, I even considered pulling off some middle of the night drive by guineaing. But in the cold light of day when lucidity returned I dismissed the idea. First of all, everyone in the county would know where they came from and the possible redneck reprisals really spook me. Secondly, guineas are so dumb they'd probably be back here before I got back. From what I see of their wanderings and what people from around the world tell me, they are worse than homing pigeons.

It seems the "Stockholm Syndrome" is a crucial ingredient in relocating guineas. The SS came about when a bunch of thugs took a bunch of people hostage for a considerable amount of time. When they were finally released most of them had fond feelings for their capturers. To relocate guineas you need to keep them hostage long enough for them to become fond of you and are willing to stay with you. How long does it take for the SS to kick in? A l-o-o-o-o-n-n-n-n-g-g-g time. For all I know it may only take a few days, but I wouldn't recommend taking any chances. If you decide to get guineas in spite of what I tell you, three years of captivity sounds about right.

I need to find a better, nicer, more luxurious home for my captors.

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### ***The Vegetarian's Nightmare***

Baxter Black, the Emperor of Cowboy Poets, wrote in his Vegetarian's Nightmare poem...

"Last April I planted a garden, lovingly sang it a ballad. But later in June, beneath a full moon, forgive me, I wanted a salad."

My who really never left the swamp behind brazen brother bluntly suggested simply eating them. When I said the thought of plucking a giant group of guineas, even if I forced myself to send them all into the nether world of bugdom was a little, to say the least, well, unpalatable, he said, "Skin 'em. I skin all the turkeys I get." I then said, "Skin 'em?? Hmmm..." Nah, I'd still have to cook them and I don't have a stove. Don't have a freezer either so I'd have to guinea salad them pretty quick before they would spoil, but even at that, how would you tell they were spoiled? All my chicken eating friends(?) turn their noses up at the thought of eating guineas. What is that all about?

Anyway, I'm now wearing the guinea situation around my neck. I don't cook. I know how to cook but I don't cook. I get by, another story. I don't even have a stove and until the guinea venture I didn't even slightly feel the need for one. I have begun to flash back a half century to the days of my youth once in a while to a time when poultry didn't come from a store on every corner. I can still smell the plucked chicken wet feather smell.

So far no luck in finding the guineas new grazing grounds. Not even any spammers from my Craigslist ad with something along the lines of "I'll send you a cashier's cheque for 10 billion dollars and you charter a plane to fly birds to you and then send me a Western Union money check for the balance." I

would have thought the words, "Each bird has a fifty dollar bill stuck to its beak," would have peaked someone's interest. Nope.

So I'm on the phone with my brother and gabbing about the guineas, I tell him to bring his sharp knife with him when he comes to visit next month and he goes, "Oh no!" as in, "It's come to that, has it?"

I said, "While you're down here you can show me that skinning turkey trick you talked about."

He back pedaled like someone walking up on a family of psychotic skunks, "Well, good luck with that."

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### ***The Nancy Reagan Effect***

As I said earlier, I had a river of guineas I could pour into the coop at will. Like I said earlier, I was flying high. Remember earlier I said the Bible has a verse that says, "Take heed, lest ye fall."?

A half dozen or so guineas suddenly refused to come into the coop no matter what I would try to do. I even left a Hansel and Gretel trail of millet for them to follow into the coop, no luck. They liked the millet fine. They just weren't having any part of the coop. It was like they had never seen it before. They would mill around outside the wire and cackle like Nancy Reagan, "Just say, 'NO!'"

The half dozen became seven, then eight, then ten, and in no time it was an even dozen who were having no part of coming into the coop. I'd give up trying to coax them into nocturnal captivity and would close up the coop and let whatever dark of night predator that happened to them happen to them. It was survival of the fittest and all that. Not my choice, but there wasn't anything I could do about it anyway. At least they would fly up in the trees above the coop and wait for the morning work release program and not go flapping off to the neighbor's at sunset.

They'd go to the neighbor's at sunrise after all the detainees were sent out to work. One good thing about it was, the neighbor went off to work at sunset as well and missed all her guests.

I'm sure if Nancy Reagan hadn't become President the rebellion seed would never have germinated. I blame it all on Nancy Reagan.

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### ***Desperate Times Desperate Measures***

I was desperate. The guinea lovers weren't exactly burning up the road getting here to take the treasured tick eaters away and I suspected the neighbor was getting pretty steamed by now.



I started calling all those folks who had admired my guinea gathering activities in the past, I was fully prepared to hang up if the conversation should happen to turn sour. The very last number I called turned up a guy who was willing to talk civilly even though even he reserved the right to turn nasty on a moment's notice. After about an hour or so while we were in the middle of discussing nuclear reaction I quickly blurted out, "That remind me, still interested in guineas?"

Before he had a chance to realize what he was saying his mouth wrote a check his butt was going to have to cash. "Well, yeah. How much?" he asked hesitantly.

I sensed his hesitancy was somewhere around \$10. I opened my mouth and started to say, "I'll give you \$15 for every bird you take off my hands," when he interrupted me.

"I'd like some, but money's kind of tight this time of year, gifts and all, you know," he said.

I panicked. I thought, "Oh! Oh! He's going to hold out for top dollar!" Somewhere in my frantically whirling brain it dawned on me at exactly the right moment he was wondering what he had to pay me. The right moment was when I was about cave in like a tunnel in a sand dune. I quickly thought, "Bud, you just saved me 15 bucks a bird by interrupting me!" I thought if I could just get him to pay me something per bird I could really increase my profit from 15 bucks to who knows where it might end. For a moment I was wishing I had more of them.

I knew this old horse trader who would put a harness on his mother and sell her for a plow puller if he thought he could pull it off. Everything he had was for sale yet he never seemed to have enough money to buy anything at the asking price and he could never afford to sell anything for less than his asking price unless he "took a likin'" to you. His taking a liking to you depended on what he thought he could get from you. As long as he made a profit, he liked you.

Anyway, he told this story about when he was a kid and some guy wanted to buy his pony real bad. He refused. His dad pointed to the wannabe buyer driving away and told him curtly, "That man is driving away with your money."

I'm a little old to be re-shaped by money but I thought, "Why take the chance?" That must have been what I thought because I heard someone who sounded a lot like me say, "Come get them and they are yours." I decided to take the 15 buck per "Buckwheat!" profit and not get greedy. We set the guinea gather for the next morning. I didn't want him sobering up and coming to his senses.

I probably would have dickered a little harder but I had a not so attached to guineas neighbor sitting on my shoulder screaming "PAY HIM WHATEVER HE WANTS!!!"

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## *Departure Day*

I jump out of bed, grab a gallon of primo millet, stored up for just a possibility, and head for the pen. I open my mouth to start yelling "CHICK!! CHICK!!! CHICK!!!" when it dawns on me something is very, very different. The morning is as still as a stopped clock. Horses are quietly dozing, leaves are motionless, why, you could have heard a pin drop if one fell. No sound of guineas, no sign of guineas, nowhere. For the first time in a couple of years I know what it is like to be guinea free. Not believing what I didn't see and didn't hear, I went looking. I looked the entire 40 acre farm over, no guineas. I look the neighbor's 40 acre farm over, no guineas. I look up and down the road, no guineas, but it wasn't a total loss because the new guinea lover drove up as I was standing there looking.

I at least had a victim if I found any guineas. It would have been much worse if I had found all the guineas in the world and no victim.

Even at that, I was pretty scared. The possibility existed that guinea nappers had took them all in the middle of the night. I grant you it was a slim, pretty much a totally non-existent chance but it was still a chance. If they hadn't taken them, I was afraid the new guinea guy would think I was playing a joke on him and leave. After all, he didn't have enough guinea experience to know the Guinea Guys Grueling Code Of Conduct (GGGCOC) strictly prohibits jokes on page 278, section 26, sub-section 3, paragraph 14, line 8. My fears are relieved when he says he's going to unload his guinea containers down by the coop castle and for me to call him when, and he did say, when, not if, they came back and he'll come back. I figure if he backs out and doesn't come back if they come back I'll at least score some guinea containers. I'm still refusing to let go of the guinea napper hope carrot and I'm sticking with "if."

At about 1:30 I'm forced to accept the guinea nappers are sneaking them back. I see a guinea group here, a guinea group there, everywhere a guinea group. I grab the millet jug and head for the coop castle exercise yard and start yelling "CHICK!! CHICK!!! CHICK!!!" at the top of lungs. I think it was the added touch of flailing arms that suckered a bunch of them into the enclosure. They concentrated on looking on the ground to see what I'd chucked and I concentrated on clanging the door shut as I hit the speed dial on my cell.

"Hullo??" a sleepy voice answered. "I'll be right there," the voice replied casually when I told him the guineas had landed and I'd managed to catch a bunch.

An hour and a half later a Baker's Dozen worth of guineas are heading to their new home.

The new guinea lover tells me he'll take all I want to give him. Such a novice! He tells me he wants to raise little guineas and sell 'em. He thinks I'm caressing my chin thoughtfully. Actually, I clamping my mouth shut hoping gales of guinea guffaws do not come spewing out.

He tells me to call him when I've rounded up another batch, gets in his truck and drives off.

Excuse me, but I gotta go see what I need to do to book the rest of them for their trip before their new host finds out what he has really stepped into.

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### ***Equal Time Interjection***

Another country heard from...

Hey, I LOVE my guineas and my chickens! BUT I didn't go out and buy 50 of them! I tend to have about 3-5 guineas and about 3 chickens. I never, ever have more...why? Because I am not fond of cleaning chicken s\*\*t and I don't like feeding a rat population). With chickens, it always surprises me that people go buy a few dozen chicks and think they can eat how many eggs in a day or that they think they can make a profit selling eggs (you know, enough profit to justify hunting rats and cleaning bird mess).

There is no question in my mind that guineas eat ticks and other bugs/larvae as do chickens. Guineaas are better insectivores than chickens, in my opinion but both work hard at it (grin). We have no ticks on our main farm area -none. We started with them but now they are gone. When we had a farm in Maryland, same thing happened. But the ticks don't get eaten and gone in a season! It takes at least a couple of years for the population to dwindle. Owning Guineaas for insect control is a long term proposition.

The trick to guineas is never, ever raise them near your house and always feed as well as raise them near or in the barn or where you want them to roost. Then, if you have dogs, like me -they really won't come over to where you live very often. They tend to roost near where they were raised. Hint: don't raise them in the house and raise them in a place where you don't mind them hanging out when they are adults.

Yeh, guineas make some noise. But I guess I am used to it (again, not too many birds is key). Actually, my guineas do get used to us -but they are silly birds and love to talk to each other. The fewer you have, the less noise they make as a unit.

Around here, foxes like to eat our poultry -so we have to lock the chickens up at night. The guineas roost near where they were raised, in the rafters of the barn. So they stay safe also at night. The guineas don't populate well because as soon as the eggs hatch, they are game for the foxes. Poultry pop corn. Then the foxes eat the mamas -as they try to protect their babies. I could do all sorts of stuff and spend hundreds eradicating the foxes BUT instead, I go buy a few more guineas every other year at between \$5-\$10 bucks each. I try not to make my life too complex.

Now...here is my question. I have two main insect issues here. 1) gnats (and I have horses with severe allergies to them) and 2) the big (2 inch) black and slightly smaller (1 inch) green horseflies. The big black ones

are the worst. What unique control methods (other than spraying poison on my horses -which I do) work? Anyone know of any biologics (like fly predators or Entomopathogenic nematodes) coming on the market for gnats or horseflies?

To conclude, if you want to try guineas -know that there are some of us who do enjoy them, believe they do help with tick control and find their antics amusing but like all animals, they have their good points and their bad. For me, I don't get too many at once and I don't raise them near our house. Those simple steps helps control the mess, pests (rats) and noise.

Did you happen to notice how after telling me she only had a wimpy three - five guinea, 3 chicken flock she's questioning how to get rid of bugs?

The only answer is more guineas, less chickens.

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### ***And Then There Were Three***

I think I've said earlier I have had phenomenal good fortune all my life. Time after time I have survived near death experiences. Time after time I have been in exactly right the place and had everything go exactly right and come out ahead when I shouldn't have. But, that's another shameful book and I don't think I want to go there.

I was beginning to think the guineas escapade was going to be the one time I missed the fortunate stair step and ended up face down in guinea goop when I got the call, "Do you have any guineas?"

The voice was very heavily accented and it was difficult to understand most of what they were saying. It was like the story I heard about a realtor who couldn't hear "No!" if it was screamed in her ear but she could hear "Yes!" whispered a block away. I didn't understand hardly anything but I heard, "Do you have any guineas?" as clearly as a softly plucked E eight octaves above middle C. My reply was "YES!!! HOW MANY YOU WANT??"

At first I couldn't be sure he said, "I take all." But I wasn't about to question him (or her) and give her (or him) a chance to say something different. My reply was "DO YOU HAVE A GPS??" We hammered out the details and set the departure time.

It took a few days to get the guineas all packed for their trip. I lured a few guineas off the millet wagon and trapped them in the coop exercise yard. I staggered them into the coop and closed it off. They started yelling and other guinea protesters gathered around and over the next few days a few at time found millet music more soothing than rehab refrain until all the guineas on the place were ensnared.

The guinea questers were a lot easier to understand in person and since I had netting experience all they

had to do was watch the door of the exercise yard while I netted and handed them out. She worked the door, he worked storing the guineas. I don't know how many times I said, "Make sure you keep that door closed when I'm not handing them out!" In fact I had just handed her a guinea and had turned around after reminding her once more about watching the door to get another guinea when I heard, "Oh! Oh!" My head whipped around in time to see the exercise door laying on the ground and three guineas making a break before I managed to block the opening.

I put my hands in my pockets to keep from strangling something.  
Turns out it's two hens and one cock.

I don't believe they have left the farm since the depopulation. I see them all the time. They are wise birds. They give me wide berth.

Numbers in the Bible have significance. The number 5 is always connected in some way with God's grace. The number 2 is always connected in some way with testimony or witness. The number 3 is always connected in some way with total fellowship.

Two hens, one cock, three birds, a total fellowship of guinea determination.

Strangely, they have stopped cackling. They have actually learned how to sing, "Winter's almost gone, summer's comin' on."

Summer is guinea hatching season...

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### ***Thank You!!!***

Thank you for choosing this ebook. I hope you have gotten some benefit from it. If not, it's all the guineas' fault!

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Or you can visit my website [MarvWalker.com](http://MarvWalker.com) or [VideoBookStore.com](http://VideoBookStore.com)

Should you wish to contact me for any reason you can email me at [Marv@MarvWalker.com](mailto:Marv@MarvWalker.com)

Thanks again,

Marv Walker  
Ph. 706 468-6990

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