



PATRIOT

TO A VAST AND GROWING AUDIENCE ON RADIO AND THE INTERNET, **ALEX JONES** IS A NUT OR A HERO WHO SPEAKS THE TRUTH TO POWER, OR CONCOCTS RIDICULOUS CONSPIRACIES IN ORDER TO MAKE THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AS CRAZY AS HE IS, OR WAKE THEM UP TO A CORPORATE GOVERNMENT IN WASHINGTON THAT HAS RUN AMOK. THE TIMES HAVE CREATED ALEX JONES, THIS NEXUS OF PATRIOTISM AND FEAR. HE IS A **PLAGUE ON OUR DISCOURSE, AND WE SHOULD ALL BE HORRIFIED.**

BY JOHN H. RICHARDSON

PHOTOGRAPHS BY BRENT HUMPHREYS

EVEN

now, Alex Jones can't relax. Two weeks after he enraged the entire country by naming the U.S. government as Suspect No. 1 in the bloody slaughter at the Boston Marathon, the radio host and avatar of modern American paranoia is on vacation with his family in Hot Springs, Arkansas. He goes to museums with his kids, takes in the Romanesque baths, laments the decay of the grand old hotels that drew high rollers like Al Capone and Franklin Delano Roosevelt, hikes up hillsides steamy with the mist from the natural hot springs that bubble right out of the rocks. But everywhere he looks there are fresh assaults on the American way of life, *on liberty itself*, and the raging radio voice that transforms him from a gentle family man into a ranting prophet keeps taking demonic possession of his soul. *I know they're going to try to use whatever crisis unfolds, all the different special interests, to sell thousands of robots at millions of dollars apiece in big cities and small towns. They're going to sell armored vehicles and surveillance and data mining. They're going to use it to try to take freedom and offer this lie that the government's there to protect you and CAN protect you, but A, it can't protect you, and B, it doesn't WANT to protect you. It's just a complete fraud! Look at Katrina! Look at Hurricane Sandy! FEMA put up signs saying, "Closed this week for bad weather!" IT'S ALL A JOKE!*

At a time when 44 percent of Republicans believe that "an armed revolution in order to protect liberties might be necessary" and 54 percent of all Americans think the federal government has too much power, when an entire class of freshman congressmen is throwing any monkey wrench it can find into the democratic process, this is the voice that made Jones famous and rich and astonishingly influential in the conservative movement. His suspicion of the Boston bombing was quickly echoed by New Hampshire state representative Stella Tremblay, who wondered if the man who lost both his legs wasn't faking it. His fears of the government buying up bullets got support from Lou Dobbs and Brian Kilmeade on Fox, leading to congressional hearings spearheaded by Republican congressmen Jason Chaffetz and Jim Jordan, and Fox regular Andrew Napolitano echoed his accusations of government involvement in 9/11. His theories about Benghazi were down-



JONES IN HIS AUSTIN RADIO STUDIO, FROM WHICH HE PROJECTS HIS VOICE TO AN AUDIENCE OF MILLIONS OVER MORE THAN A HUNDRED STATIONS. WITH HIS INFOWARS.COM AND PRISONPLANET.COM, JONES HAS A LARGER ONLINE AUDIENCE THAN RUSH LIMBAUGH AND GLENN BECK COMBINED.

right moderate compared with those of Congressman Darrell Issa, who accused the Obama administration of deliberately withholding military support during a terrorist attack. Ron and Rand Paul appear on his show, and Rand has accused Obama, in words that could have come out of Jones's mouth, of being part of the "anti-American globalist plot against our Constitution." The Drudge Report has linked to 244 of his stories in the last two years alone, he's friends with celebrities like Charlie Sheen and Jesse Ventura, his Web sites get up to a million visitors a day. Last year he earned nearly \$7 million, plowing all of it right back into his business.

All of this drives the Left into a fury. Here are typical comments from a liberal Web site:

Mr. Jones should be strapped to the floor of a padded cell and pumped full of Thorazine.

I guarantee he doesn't believe his own spiel. He's a con. What worries me is the number of rubes on the midway who buy what he sells.

TO MY SURPRISE, JONES OFTEN SOUNDS QUITE LIBERAL. THE OPPOSITION TO GAY MARRIAGE, FOR EXAMPLE, DISGUSTS HIM. "I'M SICK OF IT. ABSOLUTELY, PEOPLE SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET MARRIED."

Actually, I do think Jones is crazy. This has been going on for years before he got any kind of public attention.

It is all about website hits. Mr. Jones makes his money \$.01 at a time.

None of this is true. However extreme and paranoid and down-right cartoonish his unending stream of alarm can be, Jones believes every word he says and can prove it with a personal stash of food big enough to last three years. And if they bothered to look without prejudice, these righteous leftists would see that Jones covers issues like the drug war, the growing security state, and Monsanto's genetic modification of food exactly the way they do, just as many of his themes were echoed by the Occupy movement. Their personal attacks just evade the far more troubling question of why so many people on all sides of the political spectrum now believe such radical ideas—why the coal-mine canaries who scream about poison gas whenever hard times come have suddenly appeared everywhere, flocking left and right and straight into the halls of Congress. At a time when America seems to be minting a thousand new Alex Joneses every day, the bigger question is: What changed? Have these people gone crazy, or do they actually see something the rest of us don't? How do you *make* an Alex Jones?

In person, he is amiable and easygoing. Average in height, with a bulldog chest and rounded face that is slowly absorbing his fine-cut features, he seems eternally weary and beleaguered in a way that's almost old-fashioned, as if he's bearing a great burden for the sake of others. He has a bad limp that he attributes to his years as a street-fighting teenager. He will talk endlessly about his ideas but seems genuinely embarrassed by talking about himself. He addresses everyone as "brother." He's patient with his children and humane to his employees.

Today, in Hot Springs, he's visibly exhausted. Dressed in blue jeans and a western shirt with the pocket darned, he limps up and down the main drag and vents a bewildering variety of conspiracy theories about everything from the Kennedy assassination to the moon landings to Timothy McVeigh's Murrah Building bombing—he thinks they were all staged—with frequent asides about the trip he took with his kids this morning through the labyrinthine tunnels of a science-museum exhibit called "Underground Arkansas." "It was like some nightmare," he tells me, "and I'm not even claustrophobic." Then his radio voice begins to creep in. *By the fifteenth tube I climbed through with my kids, it was just exhausting—a torture device!*

To my surprise, Jones often sounds quite liberal. The opposition to gay marriage disgusts him, for example. "Quite frankly, I'm sick of it. Absolutely, people should be able to get married."

Same with abortion. "I get a woman's right, I get all those real arguments."

And the death penalty. "I believe in the death penalty, but it has to be abolished because you can't trust a corrupt government to implement it. Like Texas will put people on death row and

when it comes out they're innocent, they try to keep them there."

Even undocumented migrants. "They're here to give corporations *subsidized* low wages—because they can't live on the low wages they get, so they give them the welfare, and that's designed to give the big corporations an unfair trading advantage. They're using poverty as a tool of control."

Indeed, his suspicion of big business verges on Marxism. "The big corporations talk free market, but they're the ones that are actually pushing regulations to shut down competition—it's just such a screw job."

It comes as no surprise that he's a fan of the Wachowski brothers, the filmmakers who made *The Matrix* and *V for Vendetta*, tales of the relentless malcontents who squirm through the tunnels of our endlessly networked world.

"Those guys are patriots," he says. "And I admire that Wachowski brother who had a different identity and became—"

"Lana."

"That's what it's all about," he says. "How can you embrace one liberty and not embrace them all?"

These are the qualities that explain his popularity with young listeners who'd shoot holes in the radio at the braying sneers of Rush Limbaugh—like this young man coming down the sidewalk with a picture of a cat licking its balls on his T-shirt. At the sight of Jones, he stops in his tracks and breaks into a smile. "What are you doing in Hot Springs, man?"

Jones smiles back. "Hey, brother, how you doing?"

After the usual small talk, the man in the cat shirt has an urgent question. "What do you think about Bitcoin, man?"

"I've said I'm all for diversity in currencies," Jones answers in his weary way, the world on his shoulders. "Private gold, silver, digital, paper, city currencies, county currencies, organizational currencies. I believe we need competition to the Federal Reserve." "Absolutely," the man says.

"The government is planning its own global SDR digital currency," Jones continues. "Unless they control Bitcoin, they're going to destroy it. And when it's destroyed, they'll say I supported it."

"They always do that," the man agrees.

In no hurry, Jones lingers, talking about Hot Springs. When he was a kid, his dad brought him here six or seven times. They would camp by the clearest deepwater lake in America and wind up the week at the best hotel in town. Now look at the place. Look at what globalism has done to America. Listen to that giant sucking sound.

"You should come to our new restaurant," the man says.

Hobbling on, Jones returns to his obsessions. He still insists that the Boston bombing was a "false flag" operation, but a false flag doesn't mean it's always the government at work, he says. It might be corporate interests, it could be other governments, it could even be actual terrorists who are purposely left alone so the government can take advantage of the public's fear to launch a war. There's a pattern to these things. If there's a bombing drill happening at the same time, if they quickly catch "suspects" who have connections to Western intelligence agencies, if the suspects were on terrorism lists but "slipped through" the government's nets, that bombing was 95 percent likely to have been staged. *This is the government that lied about WMD, this is the government that lied about Syria using chemical weapons, this is the government USING Al Qaeda to take over Libya and now Syria, that publicly brags "We need Al Qaeda."*

He's referring to a pre-9/11 paper from the neocon Project for the New American Century that said the public wouldn't accept higher levels of security "absent some catastrophic and catalyzing event—like a new Pearl Harbor," which of course is different from actually calling for a new Pearl Harbor. But in his fever-dream version of America, inference is evidence and everything bad is true.



■ HOW DO YOU MAKE AN ALEX JONES? CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: ON THE STEPS OF THE U. S. CAPITOL IN 1982, ON A FAMILY TRIP TO WASHINGTON, AGED EIGHT; SIXTH GRADE, ROCKWALL, TEXAS; DISNEY WORLD WITH HIS PARENTS AT TEN; AS A BABY WITH HIS PARENTS, WHITE ROCK LAKE, TEXAS.



He continues venting. *And yet they're going to sit there and hyperventilate and make this big production out of Boston and say "Oh my God, it's the Muslim extremists, we've got to give our rights up"—and then it turns out the older brother was sponsored into Georgia, he was allowed to travel back and forth under an assumed name. First the FBI said, "We never heard of him," then it turns out they did know him. These guys are classic intelligence cutouts, like Mohammed Atta of 9/11 fame, trained on a U.S. military base.*

On he goes, leaping from slippery rock to slippery rock—big banks laundering drug money, rigging the stock market with global interest-rate fixing and insider trading, the long history of neocon support for the Afghani mujahideen who became Al Qaeda. Every time, he weaves bits of truth into a blanket statement about the world. *The public is so naive, man.*

He winces. "My leg is just throbbing."

"You want to sit down?"

"No, I need to walk it off."

There is something oddly comforting about being with Jones. In a world where so many of us suffer from an "inability to constellate," the modern affliction where stars no longer arrange themselves into the outlines of gods, he has the reassuring authority of *Father Knows Best* updated for the apocalypse. But when he's talking in italics, it must be said, the dude is freakin' exhausting: the beige Volkswagen Ted Bundy drove, the name of the guy who bombed the Reichstag, the connections between Malthus and Margaret Sanger, on and on until you feel like you're being smothered with a pile of mimeographed pamphlets. Now it's a quote from former secretary of state Madeleine Albright. The way he puts it, she was asked on NBC or ABC if the death of five hundred thousand Iraqi children was a good price to pay for security in the Middle East, and she said yes.

"I'll have to check the quote," I say, mentioning the documentary where he claimed that Kissinger said Obama would create the New World Order, but what Kissinger actually said on-

screen was that Obama was so popular overseas, he'd reset our foreign policy.

"Henry Kissinger has *written papers* about what he means by a New World Order."

"But that's not what he said."

"He said Barack Obama will bring a New World Order."

"No, he didn't. He said Barack Obama would be good for our foreign policy because he's so popular. He didn't use the phrase 'New World Order.'"

"He did say New World Order."

"Even if he did, he didn't mean it the way you do. Why would he admit to some sort of tyrannical plot to conquer the world?"

They say it all the time, he insists. "They brag that Europe is run by private central-bank technocrats. They have written—no exaggeration—it's got to be five hundred articles in the last two or three years, in the *Financial Times* of London and everywhere else, describing the end of international sovereignty and these boards and combines running things. *This is not my opinion! Hundreds of books have been written by them!*

"But they don't say, 'We want to do this so we can dominate the world and have bigger mai tais or whatever it is they supposedly want.

"No, they say they're 'meeting in secret' and then it leaks to some of the British newspapers. Couple years ago, '*Richest People in the World Meet in Secret to Discuss Overpopulation at Rockefeller University in New York.*' And they SAY this! *It's like the world government's already there! They're just mopping up a few sectors! And then it's David Rockefeller there, as the grand architect of it all.*"

I can't help laughing. Not David Rockefeller, too.

He sighs. "Fine. None of it's going on. I apologize, none of it's real."

But when I check the Albright quote, it turns out she did say yes when asked if the death of five hundred thousand Iraqi children was worth it. She was sandbagged by a *60 Minutes* reporter and she was talking about Clinton's economic sanc-

tions, which were an effort to pressure Saddam Hussein and placate Republicans while avoiding a hot war—but either way, the children died.

Another fan comes up. “Hey Alex, how you doing?”

“Hey brother! How you doing?”

“Doin’ okay!”

“Well, good to meet you!” Jones says. Smiling, he points at the man’s T-shirt. “That’s a Target shirt. I’ve got that same shirt.”

The fan moves on, and Jones is already onto Sirhan Sirhan when another stranger says hello, handing over a business card. “We’re right next to the Subway,” he says. “And we have the best burgers in Arkansas.” They start talking about the Murrah Building bombing, which is when this particular stranger—who describes himself as having “liberal inclinations”—became a fan.

Another man stops. “What’s up, man?”

The first man says, “This is Alex Jones!”

The fancy people fly to Europe for their vacations now, leaving Hot Springs as tattered as so much of the heartland. But Alex Jones is here. His fans stand around starstruck—and grateful.

by the PR man for the John Birch Society, it claims that a conspiracy of international bankers financed the communist revolution in Russia as part of a long-term plan to control the world through big government, false flags, gun control, social-welfare programs, and central banking. The world was like one of those children’s paintings that seems like one thing to the zombified people who buy the official story, but reveals the hidden truth to those who look more closely. Published in 1972, the book sold five million copies.

For a fertile and suspicious imagination, *None Dare Call It Conspiracy* was rocket fuel, and it’s little surprise that Jones grew into a defiant and embattled teenager. Beset by “bullies with mustaches” but eternally unwilling to back down, Jones got into fight after fight and fought back with gusto. The way he tells the story, worried that he sounds “like I’m trying to say I was James Dean or something,” he put one bigger kid in a hospital with a cracked skull, nailed another guy in the trachea, and earned his limp when he drove the wrong girl home and five guys jumped up and down on his leg. “I was probably in the hospital five or six times,” he says.

The story only gets more Jones-esque from there, as our young

IN THE PAST THREE YEARS, HIS STAFF HAS GROWN FROM FIFTEEN TO FIFTY. “IT’S BIG, MAN,” HE SAYS. “I ALMOST DON’T WANT THEM TO KNOW, ‘CAUSE THEY WILL KILL MY ASS.”

As much as Jones likes to talk, the one thing he doesn’t like to talk about is his childhood. He squirms, he groans, he gets visibly embarrassed. But he’s too polite not to give it a shot.

“My parents weren’t big TV watchers, and my mom and my dad liked reading history books. So I went to the library a lot, and I read a lot of history. And when you read history—”

He’s at his fan’s restaurant now, drinking a glass of homemade ginger ale while the owner watches. “Damn, it’s strong.”

“But good?”

Instead of answering, Jones asks how they make it. The man explains and Jones takes it in, a sounding board for humanity. But eventually he goes away and Jones must return to his uncomfortable task.

“So when you read history, the truth is condensed for you—the subterfuge, the manipulations, the setups.”

Already he’s back to his beloved themes. Days go by before he dribbles out the story, but one thing that comes through loud and clear is that Jones was primed for his worldview by virtue of place. Born into an old Texas family that fought in all the wars of independence and raised by a father who blended the long-haired antiwar government-hating sentiments of his college years in the 1960s with the more traditional government-hating sentiments of southern populism, Jones learned his hatred of the East Coast elites in his sandbox. The lessons his father passed on included, for example, a warning not to check the organ-donor box on his driver’s license or risk having his organs harvested. By fourteen, Jones was reading everything from science fiction to Hemingway to Graham Greene’s *The Quiet American*, the classic left-wing novel about a CIA agent who creates a puppet government in Vietnam by staging a terror attack. He loved Byron’s *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage*, the poem that introduced the Byronic hero (brilliant, alienated, irresistible to women) to the world. But his most influential read was *None Dare Call It Conspiracy*, a book he found on his father’s shelf when he was about twelve or thirteen. Written

hero says he discovered that the local DARE cops were actually dealing drugs on the side. “I would be at the pool, twelve years old, watching the guy sell drugs to some housewife, and I’d see some of the very same people coming to school and they’d have drug dogs and they’d say we may start drug-testing you, we’re gonna search the lockers.” Of course he couldn’t help shooting off his mouth—*You’re gonna sit here and lecture us when you’re a drug dealer?*—and of course the cops responded by arresting him over and over. “I would be at a bonfire and the cops would show up and be like, ‘All right, you’re publicly intoxicated,’ and I hadn’t even drank a beer yet. It was just boom, arrest me, arrest me.” Finally some good ol’ boy called his dad and told him, “Look, they’re gonna kill your son. You need to move outta town.”

It’s hard to say how much of this is true. Like the blues singer who went to the crossroads to trade his soul for guitar chops, Jones has the performer’s tendency to sincere exaggeration. But it’s certain that the Jones family moved to Austin, where the liberal culture meant fewer bullies and more art programs. Instead of fighting, Jones began to paint.

Before long, he was a hardcore Ron Paul libertarian with a zesty tang of the famous Austin weirdness, the final ingredient that makes Jones his unique crossover self, the Mao and Muhammad of the emerging political style called “fusion paranoia.” After a brief stint at Austin Community College, he dropped out and started thinking of ways to make an honest living. Artist? Park ranger? He always had a knack for imitating the voices on the TV—maybe he could do voice-overs? He began listening to talk-radio hosts like Rush Limbaugh, who were just beginning their spectacular rise to power.

Then he picked up a book by Carroll Quigley, a pivotal figure in the conspiracy world who was once professor to—insert theramin music here—Bill Clinton himself. He raced on to Heinz Höhne’s *The Order of the Death’s Head*, an exposé of the secret plots and subterfuge practiced by Hitler’s SS. That connected with the things he’d been learning about Defense Department black ops

like Operation Northwoods, a fiendish plan to justify an invasion of Cuba by sinking a boatload of Cuban refugees—and never mind that Northwoods was never put into action or that Quigley repudiated the theories attributed to him. The stars lined up and Jones had glimpsed the outlines of gods. Soon he felt an overwhelming urge to get on the radio and spread this hidden knowledge to the world.

Now it's time to go, but the restaurant owner refuses to give him a check.

"I'm going to pay you guys," Jones insists.

No way, the owner responds. "Believe it or not, you've done more for me than you could ever know."

Jones seems almost embarrassed. "Oh, you're too nice, man."

But what he *would* like, the owner adds shyly, is a photo with the great Alex Jones. And he knows just where he wants to take the shot—in front of the giant poster of Willie Nelson in a gas mask.

That night, as we wait for his wife at the hotel bar, another fan approaches. He has a thick Arkansas accent and a story about a buddy who led an Army platoon in Iraq. "He said he almost got court-martialed for telling the guys, 'We're going door-to-door looking for guns, looking for bullets, fighting for stuff we would shoot some son of a bitch for doing back home.'"

So Alex has fans at Fort Hood?

"Oh yeah, they're all listeners."

By this time, Jones has filled in the story of his rise, how he

Gradually, as the Iraq war fell into blood, chaos, he rebuilt his audience. When YouTube debuted in 2005, unleashing him through the miracle of free bandwidth, his show began a steady expansion to its current 160 stations. His movies get ten million views in a single week, and his Web sites get as many as a million visitors a day. In the last three years, his staff has grown from fifteen people to fifty. "It's big, man," he says. "I almost don't want them to know, 'cause they will come kill my ass."

Finally his wife, Kelly, comes down, wearing cowboy boots with pink flowers and a ruffled shirt that blurs the distance between sexy and wholesome. She's the classic sweet southern wife you'd meet at a bake sale, kind of heavy on the makeup in the Texas style, warm and welcoming and often reaching out a hand to touch her husband's arm as she tries to explain him. But she's also a Jew who grew up in Europe with a diplomat for a father, speaks four languages, became a vegetarian at sixteen, and joined the animal-rights movement as a PETA activist. "I'm the lady who threw the raccoon at Anna Wintour," she says.

"She was on the cover of *USA Today* in Japan naked," Jones adds.

"I had a big banner."

"Alex told me you met on the set of a show," I say.

She smiles. "He pursued me with great fervor."

"That's not how he told the story."

"You came over and sat on my lap," Jones says.

"I don't know about that," she teases. "I remember standing at the bulletin board looking at stuff and he goes, 'Are you looking

"...THE STATE LOVES YOU AND THE STATE IS YOUR GOD, AND THE STATE IS GOING TO TAKE CARE OF YOU AND YOUR FAMILY FOREVER. WORSHIP THEM!" THEN, WITHOUT MISSING A BEAT, HE CUTS TO A COMMERCIAL.

came on the radio just after the FBI slaughtered American civilians at Ruby Ridge and Waco, powerful experiences of rupture for him and many thousands of other Americans. Then came April 19, 1995, a date imprinted on his brain: the Oklahoma City bombing. Refusing to believe a fellow patriot did it, he interviewed people who said they'd seen Timothy McVeigh planting explosives with a military escort and cops who mysteriously died after telling him the government did it. Just like the Reichstag! And there was a bombing drill that morning! When his radical views finally got him fired from the Austin station, he set up his own ISDN line at home and spent every penny he had getting his videos out.

The pivotal moment in his career was 9/11. Within days of the attacks, with a prescience born of his obsession with history's dark patterns, he was already warning that the attacks on the World Trade Center would be used to justify a war on Iraq. Just hours after the planes hit the buildings, while most of America was drying tears and putting out flags, he was saying it might have been a setup—and unlike most media figures who calculate exactly how much they can get away with, Jones was willing to risk everything for his beliefs. Within a week, he lost thirty stations. By two weeks he was down sixty. His producers begged him to back off, but he never let up, relentlessly attacking the Bush administration for many of the same reasons liberals did. "Bush ordered torture and then wrote a book bragging about it, and Governor Ridge said, 'Yeah, I was ordered to put out orange alerts every time we needed a political distraction'—I mean, Ari Fleischer *admitted* that they would issue fake terror alerts."

for a job in media?"

So what attracted her to him?

"I liked Alex 'cause he was so real, you know? He didn't play games. Like one day he called me kind of flirting—"

Jones squirms. "This is really weird."

"—and he goes, 'You know, I think about you all the time.' And he was just so sincere and so real—he was like, *aman*. There was nothing boyish about him, nothing youthful, really. He was himself completely."

I know exactly what she means. The enervating ambivalence of the soft modern man is absent in Jones. Then she fills in helpful details Jones left out. "His mother's family, the Ayres family, took care of William Travis's son when he went to fight the Alamo. He comes from rebels."

"More than that," Jones can't help adding. "I had family at San Jacinto, I had family at Gonzales, I had family at Washington-on-the-Brazos."

Then he stops himself again. "It's creepy to get this much attention. I'm like, how pathetic have we gotten that I'm some of the best resistance there is? 'Cause I don't have some high view of myself. It just shows how low the bar has gotten, how much of a coma America is in."

Kelly looks at him with an amused expression. "He's actually a pretty jolly person," she says.

By this time, Jones trusts me enough to let me meet his three kids—a media first. One day we climb the misty hillside above the bathhouses with his ten-year-old son, and Jones relaxes enough



■ A SENSE OF EMBATTLEMENT IS CENTRAL TO THE JONES WORLDVIEW AND HAS BEEN SINCE HE WAS A KID BEING BULLIED IN SCHOOL. AND SO AFTER 9/11, WHEN JONES IMMEDIATELY BLAMED THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT FOR THE ATTACKS AND PROMPTLY LOST 70 PERCENT OF HIS SPONSORS AND STATIONS, HE DIDN'T BACK DOWN AND INSTEAD BUILT A NEW AUDIENCE, WITH NEW SPONSORS AND NEW STATIONS.

do good in the world and to help others, and that we will all love each other and help be a light in the world. And please protect my children and my family and everyone we know, Amen.”

Without missing a beat, Jones goes back to Clinton killing Glass-Steagall and unleashing the banks. “That’s why you can’t trust this power structure.”

Obama’s been trying to pass regulations on Wall Street, I say, and the Republicans have fought it to the bitter end *after* the banks almost crashed the economy—and you’re disempowering Obama with your rhetoric.

“I get that the establishment right wing wants the wars, wants the torture,” Jones says. “I get all that. But they’ve so leveraged us into a Ponzi scheme, we can’t get out of it. The banks are ‘too big to fail.’ That’s what the bullets and all the preparation for martial law is, for when the whole thing goes under like Argentina.”

So instead of attacking Obama, I tell him, you should be saying, “Let’s get those regulations in.”

The kids sit politely through all this. But when the pizza comes, Rex pipes up.

“No country can claim that they created pizza.”

Really? Not the Italians?

“The Romans had something like bread, but France did a lot of the toppings.”

Sounding exactly like his father, Rex launches into a lecture that ranges from *Star Wars* to *The Hobbit* to something that stops sperm from swimming. “Edison invented

basically everything that’s useful,” he says.

Jones interrupts with an admonishment—sperm is not an appropriate subject for the dinner table, son.

“Sorry, sir,” Rex says, jumping on to Jules Verne and Charles Dickens until his father tells him to stop dominating the conversation—a phrase I hear him use at least three times over the next two days, always gently and leavened with a bit of loving praise. He wants Kelly to tell me a story about a time someone was listening in on her phone calls while her father was in the hospital, and after she hung up, the phone rang and a voice said, “I hope he dies.”

“I do kinda remember that,” Kelly says.

“You *kind of* remember it?”

“Yes, I remember it.”

Frustrated, Jones reminds her. “I’m at Bilderberg, five years ago. Your dad’s in the hospital. You called back crying and you go, ‘Oh my God, they’re listening!’ You don’t remember that?”

“Yeah, I remember that. I just don’t want to freak everybody out.” She gives a meaningful look in the direction of the kids.

to drop the lectures and laugh at the many conspiracy theories that center on him. “There are people that really believe that I am really Bill Hicks and staged my own death. And then there’s people that believe I’m part of a reptilian conspiracy by an ancient alien race called the Dracos—but now there’s a camp that I’m a *good* Draco, that’s why I fight the New World Order from an older star system. I’m twelve trillion years old, according to them.”

Every minute, he keeps an eye on his son. “Rex, tie your shoes, honey—stop and tie your shoes.”

At the top of the hill, you can see seventy miles in any direction. It’s lovely and peaceful. Then we hike back down, talking of Armageddon.

“Rex, tie your shoes,” Jones says again.

At the bottom, Rex says, “Thank you for letting me go on the hike, Father.”

Another day, Jones invites me along on a family dinner. The meal begins with grace, his voice softer than I’ve ever heard it. “Our Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of consciousness and we hope that you will help us to have discernment to

Alex Jones

Jones catches on. “Actually none of that’s true. I was just joking, kids.”

But his five-year-old daughter says, “That wasn’t very scary.”

And Rex says, “Pop, I’ve heard you tell that story a million billion times.”

Soon the pizza is gone and it’s time to go. “Thank you for dinner, Daddy,” Rex says.

Walking out, watching Jones keep his hawk eye on the derelict walking toward us on the sidewalk, I realize that the reassuring authority that makes Jones seem so manly to his wife must be an even greater comfort to his kids. In this lunatic world so full of danger, a passionate and concerned father is here to explain everything. That’s when it strikes me: *This* is how you make an Alex Jones.

On my last day, I watch Jones do his show from the Al Capone Suite of the Arlington Hotel. A headline from Florida gets him started: **FLORIDIANS ENCOURAGED TO REPORT NEIGHBORS WHO HATE THE GOVERNMENT.**

As he gets going, seated in a desk chair before his computer, he starts to rub his hands on his thighs in the automatic way of a dog pacing the limits of his chain, a circular motion endlessly repeated. *Nazis and citizens reporting neighbors, that’s the worship of the state. All of it is for the children. Injecting black men with syphilis and watching them*

die over fifty years was for the children. The UN injecting millions of people in Africa and Latin America and Asia with tetanus shots that make them have abortions at the beginning of the second trimester and miscarriages and also tend to kill the women—it’s a gift of the state. It’s the loving sacrament of everything good, and the state loves you and the state is your god, and the state is going to take care of you and your family forever. Worship them!

Without missing a beat, he cuts to a commercial. “We’ll be right back! Stay with us, you slave individuals!”

During the breaks he’s completely normal, going over technical problems with his crew like any professional. So how much of this is a performance?

None of it, he insists. “When I’m tired, I tend to rant.”

But doesn’t his audience expect it?

“I’ll be honest, it’s a crutch. And it’s a crutch that worked. It’s kind of like when I was going through that Arkansas underground exhibit, and it went on and on and by the tenth tube I went through, barely big enough for a person, I almost pissed, like why isn’t there a sign saying that bigger guys shouldn’t go in this?”

He doesn’t want this embattled feeling, he says. He doesn’t want the media attention either. But he wants to beat them at their own game and it becomes “a defiance thing,” like when he was a teenager. He just

can't stop fighting.

On his next segment, inspiration strikes him. Telling the story of his trip through the tunnels of "Underground Arkansas," he puts his finger on the reason it disturbed him so much. "I came out sweating and had this revelation—this is what I feel like in the New World Order! People want to know what powers the show, that's it! You're *crawling through the darkness and by the tenth tunnel I'm thinking about CIA torture camps and cages smaller than bodies!*"

Two hours later, he sits back and sighs. "I'm really relaxed from those baths, man. My larger intellect is not operating at full capacity. All there is is the primitive brain."

Pouring out in a fever, I say.

"Did you like the tunnels?"

Yes, definitely. It was beautiful the way he brought it all around, mixing the personal and the political and constellating the universe just like art or poetry or a movie by the Wachowski brothers. This is what he does best, when he pulls it off. He gathers up pieces of the broken world and glues them back together with some wild exaggeration that reveals the hidden patterns.

But alas, this just leaves him with another, harder question—the question that finally connects him to all the rest of us. "Having this job and always having to read about all this stuff, you just get sick of it—it's kind of like, more tunnels? When do these damn things end? Am I going the right way?" ❧