


movie review

A chimp's life revisited

adapted from an article by Kenneth Turan, Los Angeles Times Film Critic

- 1 In late November 1973, a young woman from New York went to Oklahoma to adopt the newest and youngest member of her family. It wasn't a human baby she was bringing home to Manhattan, however, but rather a 2-week-old chimpanzee, destined to be part of an audacious project to see if a member of another species could be taught to communicate with humans. The unforeseen ways that notion played out over the next two dozen years is the subject of James Marsh's unsettling "Project Nim". What happened between that chimp and the humans with whom he spent his life in intimate contact turns out to be only half the story that Marsh has to tell.
- 2 Marsh is a superb interviewer, and the key participants in Nim's story are far enough removed in time to be candid about what happened but not so far away to have forgotten the details. 17 he has a weakness for occasional unsatisfactory dramatizations, Marsh also makes excellent use of the large amount of still and movie footage shot then that shows us exactly what Nim and his human hosts were up to.
- 3 It was Columbia University behavioral psychologist Herbert Terrace who came up with the idea of placing a chimp in a human family to see if it could be taught American Sign Language. Stephanie LaFarge, one of Terrace's former graduate students, was Nim's original surrogate mother. She had recently remarried, and her blended family of seven children lived in an apartment in New York that became Nim's new home. If you're thinking this was a group decision, you would be wrong. "There was no discussion, it just happened," remembers Jenny Lee, LaFarge's daughter. And her mother, who admits she "liked the freedom to defy expectations and authority," makes no bones about the fact that "my appetite and drive to have an intimate relationship with an animal was unstoppable."
- 4 Not surprisingly, this drive ran into some real-world problems. For one thing, LaFarge was not prepared for what she calls "the wild animal in Nim," and LaFarge's husband didn't expect the outright hostility from a chimp genetically inclined to 19 male authority figures.
- 5 All of this was intensified by growing conflicts between Terrace, who consistently comes off as cold and arrogant, and Earth mother-type LaFarge, who'd once been his lover. Unhappy with what he considered a lack of order, Terrace gave increasing organizational authority to a bright, highly motivated (and, not surprisingly, quite attractive) 18-year-old student named Laura-Ann

Petitto. The philosophical differences between her and LaFarge were so intense that the distaste each one feels for the other is undiminished to this day.

6 While even these few events are emotional enough to bring a scientific drama to a boil, more was in store for Nim, much more. There was significant turnover in caregivers, multiple changes of location, even radical alterations in Terrace's thinking about whether chimps could in fact be taught to learn language in any meaningful way. Trapped in a world he never made, a no-man's land between species, Nim did the best he could, and even doing that much turned out to be difficult.

7 Looking back on Nim now, LaFarge feels "we had done so much damage removing him from what his life should have been, it was wrong." Speaking even more strongly is Joyce Butler, one of his signing teachers. "We did a huge disservice to him and his soul, and shame on us," she says, just about in tears, and seeing this eye-opening film makes it impossible to argue the point. No wonder it won the best directing award for world documentary at Sundance.

Los Angeles Times, 2011

Tekst 7 A chimp's life revisited

- 1p 16 What is said about the documentary “Project Nim” in paragraph 1?
- A It is a factual report about the potential of chimpanzees to understand human language.
 - B It is an account of a disturbing experiment in which a chimpanzee was raised by humans.
 - C It is an accusation made against people wanting to adopt a chimpanzee baby.
 - D It is a romanticised tale about the bond between a chimpanzee and human foster parents.
- 1p 17 Which of the following fits the gap in paragraph 2?
- A Just as
 - B Now that
 - C Since
 - D Though
- 2p 18 Geef van elk van de volgende beweringen over Stephanie LaFarge aan of deze juist of onjuist is volgens alinea 3.
- 1 Ze bedacht het experiment met Nim als onderdeel van haar afstudeeronderzoek.
 - 2 Ze had de neiging om uit te proberen hoe ver ze kon gaan.
 - 3 Ze nam de beslissing om Nim in huis te nemen zonder overleg met haar huisgenoten.
 - 4 Ze was meer geïnteresseerd in haar wetenschappelijke carrière dan in het welzijn van Nim.
- Noteer het nummer van elke bewering gevolgd door “juist” of “onjuist”.
- 1p 19 Which of the following fits the gap in paragraph 4?
- A bond with
 - B challenge
 - C copy

- 1p 20 What is the main point made in paragraph 5?
- A Herbert Terrace's character made him an unsuitable and unsuccessful project leader.
 - B LaFarge refused to accept having the much younger Petitto as her supervisor.
 - C The experiment failed because the parties involved lacked research experience.
 - D The scientific experiment was characterized by intense personal disagreements.
- 1p 21 What becomes clear from paragraph 6?
- A Despite the rather unfavourable circumstances, Nim developed into a happy animal.
 - B If the participants had been in stable relationships the experiment could have worked.
 - C Nim's ordeal was worsened by the fact that research conditions varied continuously.
 - D Terrace's theories about how to communicate with chimpanzees were clearly faulty.

"No wonder it won the best directing award for world documentary at Sundance." (laatste zin)

- 1p 22 Is er een alinea die beschrijft wat deze documentaire zo goed maakt volgens Kenneth Turan?
Zo nee, antwoord "Nee". Zo ja, noteer het nummer van de alinea waarin dit gebeurt.

Bronvermelding

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