

■ ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS

Waterton Riding the Cayman



During his “first wandering” in South America, England’s Charles Waterton, Esq. (1782–1865), searched in 1812 for “ourali” (curare) as a potential aid in capturing animal specimens intact for taxidermy. Eight years later, during his “third wandering,” Waterton fished for a man-eating reptile with a wooden hook baited with rodent entrails as his South American guide, at day’s end, drummed a tortoise carapace “as the cayman’s dinner-bell.” Determined “not to carry back a mutilated specimen,” Waterton forsook bullets and arrows for a canoe mast, which the naturalist planned to “force ...down the cayman’s throat should he come open-mouthed.” The next morning, as six companions began reeling in the hooked reptile, Waterton faced the cayman’s “countenance of cruelty and malice” and “saw enough not to fall in love at first sight.” Leaping on the reptile’s back and twisting its forelegs back like a bridle, Waterton used skills acquired while hunting “with Lord Darlington’s fox-hounds” to ride the cayman inland before dispatching and dissecting it with a knife. Years later, the Waterton Family’s freed slave, John Edmonstone, would pass on the naturalist’s taxidermy techniques to a disenchanted Edinburgh medical student named Charles Darwin. (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc. This image appears in the *Anesthesiology Reflections* online collection available at www.anesthesiology.org.)

George S. Bause, M.D., M.P.H., Honorary Curator, ASA’s Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology, Park Ridge, Illinois, and Clinical Associate Professor, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio. UJYC@aol.com.