

<http://chimpanzeeinformation.blogspot.com/2009/05/mikey-and-louie-chimp-story-on-kendall.html>

Chimpanzees, Louie and Mikey on Kendall Project, Judie Harrison

Case Study: The Story of Chimps Mikey and Louie

The following is the story of the Harrison's and their chimps, Mikey and Louie.

Judie Harrison grew up loving chimpanzees. Throughout her young life, she dreamed of having one of her own to care for and love like a human child. When the time came for Judie and her husband to bring home their baby chimp, she knew it would change their lives. She would never have guessed how drastically.

Mikey was only eight months old when he came home with the Harrison's. Although Judie had already raised three children and had learned about basic chimpanzee care on her own, she had never had any "hands on" experience raising a baby chimp. The breeder from which she purchased Mikey offered her no insight on how to care for him. Regardless, Judie bought a brand new crib and playpen, resigned from her job, and settled in to raise her new baby.

Judie soon realized that a baby chimp is entirely different from an infant human. Mikey was out of the crib and into everything almost immediately. Judie spent most of her time chasing him around the house, and keeping him out of her family's valuables. The playpen and crib were exchanged for a sturdy cage, and Mikey had to be kept on a waist collar and leash to be kept out of trouble.

It soon became apparent to the Harrison's that their companionship was not enough to keep the rambunctious Mikey entertained. The decision was made to bring home a companion for Mikey. The Harrison's placed a third mortgage on their house, went back to the breeder, and purchased 7 month old chimpanzee Louie.

In the years that followed, the Harrison's would realize that caring for Mikey and Louie would challenge them in ways they never dreamed. Their children became extremely resentful of the time Judie spent with Mikey and Louie, and all three would eventually stop speaking to their parents. The young chimps proved to be extremely strong from a young age, and inadvertently caused injury to their owners. Mikey and Louie had also been expensive to purchase and house. With only one source of income since Judie had quit her job, the Harrison's made the decision to hire Mikey and Louie out to production companies for use in media photographs and commercials.

Working with her chimps in the media was not at all what Judie expected. Income from this type of enterprise was low, and work on the set was often extremely stressful for Judie, the production staff, and most notably, Mikey and Louie. Some of the production companies expected more of

the chimps when on set than was agreed to before filming began. Mikey and Louie were often expected to hold still for photo shoots and repeat trained behaviors over and over again, tasks that are extremely difficult for young rambunctious chimps with short attention spans. The boys often became over-stimulated while on set and were potentially dangerous to crew members and their equipment. The work was taxing and stressful for all, but Judie continued to work with her chimps in the media for several years so that she could afford to stay home and care for them.

By the time Mikey was 7 years old and Louie was 5 years old, both boys were too strong and too potentially dangerous to be trusted around strangers on a set. The Harrison's had to retire both chimps from the entertainment industry, and decided to open a small zoo with several monkeys, reptiles and birds. They got another bank loan, built the chimps a larger enclosure where they could move freely, and started business.

All too quickly, the time it took to run the zoo became too costly to the Harrison's. Judie's husband lost his job because he spent too much time helping to run the family zoo. As a result, the Harrison's closed the zoo. Although Judie and her husband loved their chimps like their children, they realized that they could no longer support their chimps financially, and they could not give them what they needed socially. The Harrison's knew they were also going to get much bigger, stronger, and aggressive as they aged, and could potentially live another 50-60 years. Thus, they made the difficult decision to find Mikey and Louie a new home.

As part of their search, the Harrison's contacted members of Chimpanzee Species Survival Plan (SSP), a conservation and science program of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums that promotes the well being of captive chimpanzees through advancements in care, research, and education. With the help of the SSP, Judie and her husband were able to find a zoo that could house the chimps. In the fall of 2008, Mikey and Louie made the move from the Harrison's home to the Little Rock Zoo in Arkansas. It was very difficult for the Harrison's to give up their chimps, although they knew they were making the right decision. Mikey and Louie now have a chance to live in a naturalistic habitat with members of their own species. They have already been out on the spacious exhibit at the Little Rock Zoo, and keepers at the zoo are currently working towards integrating Mikey and Louie into their troop of chimps.

The Kendall Project would like to thank Judie Harrison for sharing her story with us, as we know making the decision to give up her boys was very difficult for her and her husband. [Click here to read Judie's story in her own words.](#)"