

TIGERS

By James Collins

This appeared to be a unique business opportunity. A zoo selling exotic animals had run into financial problems. A local broker who I dealt with on a rare regular basis brought this information to my attention. I had opportunity to buy three Siberian tiger cubs from an original brood of five cubs, one of which was an albino. Since I was in the exotic pet business this was a natural match. The zoo needed \$8000 and if I bought the three cubs, the two Siberians would make \$4000 through a sale to an old customer of mine who supplied wild animals to private zoos. The albino was a mixed blessing. A Chinese importer was purportedly offering \$10,000 for an albino tiger cub for delivery to the Orient. A small zoo in the Midwest would offer \$3000, while a traveling circus would offer \$5000. I had many opportunities to make a profit.

Legal entanglements control the sale of exotic pets and wild animals in a random manner in various states. Crossing state lines to sell these animals requires a lot of legal investment to prevent violating state and federal regulations. Various animal-rights groups monitor these activities and use the media to bring pressure on those transactions, which they did not approve. Therefore, the transactions, though legal, can bring many unforeseen costs after the fact.

I met with legal counsel and a public relations firm presenting the opportunities and analyzing the real costs and those associated with a media blitz. In the end, we decided that the sale to the Orient was by far the one with the greatest public relations risk. Asians use the organs and skin of rare animals as ingredients for ancient medicines. I could not see the liver, heart, teeth, skin and other elements of this beautiful albino tiger in small apothecary jars on the shelves in an ancient oriental herb store. We decided to take a lesser profit and sell the albino tiger to the traveling circus where thousands of children could get pleasure from watching such an unusual animal on tour.

All the sales went through as expected. The zoo got the money they needed. The small zoo in the Midwest got the two cubs that filled their need. Traveling circus got another attraction, which kept them in business, while I made a reasonable profit and slept well at night.

THE END