

Jerry Sherman

by Dorg

His name was Jerry Sherman. Tall and lanky with a slight southern accent, he was probably about 30 years old. I say probably because there was a lot about Jerry that we will never know.

What we do know is this: he had shoulder-length blond hair and wore ever-present -- inside and outside-- flashy silver sunglasses. He drove a brand new, stainless steel, gull-winged Delorean. He looked like he was born to wear leisure suits and his feet were always shoved inside sandals or, as we used to call them then, Jesus Boots, even during winter. With a gold chain dangling a peace symbol on the outside of his white turtle neck sweater, he was making a twisted little fashion statement I took to be, "I'm not sure what decade this is".

This was the early 80's and the Bee Gees had the number one hit on the charts. In the fall of 1981, Jerry showed up for the first time at radio station CJOR, which was located in the basement of the Grosvenor Hotel in downtown Vancouver. His affiliation with the Vancouver Canadians minor league baseball team, as their play-by-play broadcaster on CKO, gave him instant credibility. In fact, he did an outstanding job as the team's colour commentator. To add to his credibility, Jerry told us that he had worked with the major league Oakland A's. But even with all that career history, as far as I was concerned having a \$65,000 Delorean gave him enough credibility. The beautiful women who accompanied him only added to the suave, impressive image. He was an American who'd had success on both sides of the boarder, looked and talked like a winner and made you want to like him. And we did.

That was our mistake. You see, Jerry was a con man. I've met a lot of hucksters in my time but I have never --before or since-- come across anyone as smooth and slippery as Jerry Sherman. He was slick, a born Con.

Jerry came with credibility, the primary trait of a true con man. I mentioned the American career experience and at CJOR, Jerry had a weekend sports talk show. Even if you work in the business, if you hear something on the radio, you naturally figure it's true. If a guy has a show on the radio, you think he's for real. Besides, you even know where to find him every Sunday from 6 to 8 pm.

The second personality trait of a true con is his warm and friendly nature. The minute you met Jerry, you liked him and found him interesting and charming. He smiled and flashed peace signs and, shunning the usual "hello" or "how are you?," would always ask, "Having a good time?" He also told great stories about all kinds of important, famous people from his sports casting days in major league baseball. As a result, people liked Jerry and even looked up to him.

The final trait of a good con man is the ability to spot his marks. Jerry was looking for a certain type of person and he hand picked this na little club of investors with a great deal of care and attention. In fact, he was a very good judge of character. His investors (or, victims) not only parted easily with their money but they were also Jerry's ambassadors, adding to his credibility. The people he was ripping off were his biggest fans.

As it turned out, Jerry Sherman was the Pied Piper of extortion. Sadly, he almost led some people I knew to financial ruin. The fact that he had such a high profile makes this story even more bizarre. His marks had high profiles too, as many of them were on-air personalities at the radio station.

Here's how his deal worked. Aside from being Mr. Radio, Jerry owned several businesses on the side. But of course! We all knew he had to have other sources of income because we knew we couldn't even afford the gas for a Delorean on a radio wage. One of his businesses involved buying 18-wheel trucks in Mexico and then having them driven to Canada to be sold. He claimed that he couldn't keep up with the demand.

According to Jerry, every week dozens of his trucks crossed the border into Canada to be sold at a huge profit. Jerry said you could buy them cheaply in Mexico and then sell them for a huge profit up here. That seemed like a pretty logical, simple process for us simple-minded Canucks to understand.

But then, Jerry had a problem. The demand for these trucks was so great, he couldn't keep up with the financing. If only he had more money, he told wide-eyed, gullible us, he could buy more trucks and then make more profit on this big, money-making machine.

Here was his pitch. He explained that it took about one week to drive the trucks from Castello Del Marlona to Vancouver. That made perfect sense. If we gave Jerry some money to help finance a truck transfer, we would get a rate of return anywhere from 15-per-cent to 25-per-cent for the one week he used the money. That meant we would give Jerry \$1,000 Monday, August 1st to help him buy a truck and on Monday, August 8th Jerry would give us a cheque for as much as \$1250. He even provided investors with a contract. People started investing.

And none of the cheques bounced. They were all issued by the Royal Bank of Canada on his company account, Consolidated Transfer. When he told us that Consolidated Transfer was a legitimate company, with a board of directors and offices in Rochester, Michigan and Beaumont, Texas, we believed him. As long as everyone was making money we had no reason to doubt friendly Jerry. Man, were we stupid. But it got worse.

Naturally, as people realized these returns, they wanted to invest more and more. The astute investor that had just had a \$1,000 transaction pay off grandly in July and another \$1,000 transaction pay off spectacularly in September was more than happy to give Jerry \$5,000 in October. Furthermore, Jerry's elite club of three or four investors soon grew to more than 20. As this thing heated up, people started to make investments of \$10,000, \$20,000 and \$25,000. Some people were said to be making more off of their investments with Jerry than they were on their CJOR salaries. Forget stocks and bonds, Jerry had a

sure thing and you just couldn't lose. Every single investment paid off, with the stated return outlined in the contract. As far as the investors were concerned, a convoy of trucks just kept on wheeling north with the cash register ringing as the eighteen-wheelers crossed the border. Roll on!

This investment nirvana lasted for about nine months. People kept investing and reinvesting more and more money. Jerry must have been shifting all of the money back and forth and all around to other investors. Then, when Jerry figured he had the maximum amount of chumps investing the maximum amount of their cash, he simply split. He left town with everyone's money. In total, he had hundreds of thousands of dollars when he left Vancouver.

Slowly, the story unwound. There never were any trucks. His companies didn't exist. The whole investment scheme was make-believe.

By the way, I never invested money with Jerry. I remember getting a contract from him and reviewing it with my mother. I was 23 at the time and looked to her for financial advice. We were going to together invest \$2,000 with him to test the water but by the time we came up with the cash, Jerry had disappeared. I kept the cash but earned a more valuable life-long lesson: If something seems too good to be true, it probably is too good to be true.

A few months after Jerry disappeared, a group of the CJOR employees hired a private detective to find him, but nobody ever found this con man. Personally, I'm sure he was in the next town down the road, and then the next, always with a new name and encouraging all he met to "have a good time".