

Hold Gimp in your heart, Dr. Collins.

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I doubt you knew Gimp, Dr. Collins. You don't know how he lived, and you don't know how he died. Gimp was a chimpanzee who was forced to transfer from the MD Anderson Keeling Center to Chimp Haven, your designated sanctuary for retired research chimps. Everyone who truly cares about chimpanzees should know his story.

Gimp was born in the wild circa 1969. He was sent to a US government facility for biomedical studies related to *Trypanisoma spp.* infection in 1974. One of his legs was amputated soon after his arrival and he had a splenectomy at some point, as well. The medical records aren't really clear as to why. His role in invasive biomedical research ended when his government facility stopped working with chimpanzees in 1980, and Gimp was retired to the Chimpanzee Breeding and Rehabilitation Resource in Bastrop, Texas—later known as the Keeling Center and now officially coined the National Center for Chimpanzee Care (NCCC).

At the Keeling Center Gimp lived in a large social group initially, but fared better in smaller groups as he aged. His missing leg made him somewhat vulnerable among the other males, but he got along famously with the ladies! Pug was the dominant male in one of Gimp's groups and would often chase the other chimps and steal their food during the feeding of produce and other treats. Gimp loved "his girls" and if Pug made one scream by stealing her food, Gimp would run over to embrace and comfort her, letting her know that he was still her friend. His girls could depend on him to keep their babies safe from harm, as well. When the older kids in the group got too rough with new infants, Gimp tickled and distracted them, so submissive moms wouldn't have to challenge kids from more dominant females and risk an aggressive

backlash. He may have been the submissive male in the group, but he always seemed to know how to keep the peace. Gimp was a gentle and kind chimpanzee.

Gimp was also very playful and loved to hang out with the kids, who followed him around imitating his "crutch walk". Gimp would wrestle them down, lean over their little bellies with his adorable play face, and tickle them relentlessly. When they moved away to catch their breath, he'd grab their feet and pull them back for more. They'd laugh so hard that the rest of the kids would rush over and pile on top of him for their turn in the fun! Gimp was a joyful and fun-loving chimpanzee.

Gimp loved his human family members too. He laughed loudly when his caregivers tickled him, and he enjoyed training and learning new behaviors. He was smart and would do anything asked of him. Gimp seemed to trust people to make the right decisions for him. And they did—until December 9, 2014. On that day, Gimp was sedated and loaded onto a truck headed for Chimp Haven. Everyone and everything he had known for nearly 35 years was about to be taken from him. He was upset when he woke up in his travel crate and cried out in distress. His trainer, Erica, ran to him on the truck and held his hand until he calmed down. She told him that "everything would be ok." They had played together for 15 years. They were very close. They never saw each other again.

Gimp arrived at Chimp Haven about 6 hours later, a place he had never seen before, with people and animals he had never met. Virtually everything in his world changed in a matter of hours, and Gimp was an old man at 45 years of age. I don't think there can be any doubt about how stressful this was for him, though I feel certain that his new family did everything they could to try and make him comfortable. But chimps need to be with other chimps, and that meant that



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Gimp would have to make new friends. Establishing a group of compatible chimpanzees takes time and experience. The staff introduced Gimp slowly to his new friends, and on May 26, 2016, he had only two left to meet, both females. Gimp always had a soft spot for females, but these girls turned on him, prompting nearly all of the others in the group to do the same. Sweet, vulnerable Gimp, the peacemaker, was attacked savagely by an angry mob of chimpanzees that didn't want him there. My God, how his life had changed! The staff managed to rescue Gimp and treat his injuries. When they checked on him in the morning, he hobbled over to greet them—and then he died.

"Poor little Gimp, who wouldn't hurt a soul. How could this happen to him?" Erica bawled when she told me this. She continued, "All I can think about is Gimp lying there after his beating wondering why we sent him away. I can't get that image out of my head." Neither can I. Can you, Dr. Collins? Please clarify for us what Chimp Haven had to offer Gimp that he didn't already have at the NCCC—because what he lost is disturbingly clear.

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