



Kenny goads largest alligator to flex its jaws.

by Jack B. Kemmerer

WHEN, at the age of nine, Kenny Earnest wanted to be just like his dad, it was a normal desire held by most youngsters that age. Only Kenny's dad owned and operated an alligator farm in Los Angeles!

Today, at 17, there isn't much Kenny doesn't know about the alligator and its cousin, the crocodile. When Kenny crouches in front of an 8-foot 'gator, forcing it to open its mouth, spectators gasp. They know that if the reptile ever got hold of the boy with its jaws or hit him with its mighty tail, it would be the end of Kenny.

Unlike the spectators, however, Kenny knows he is safer here

than on a Los Angeles freeway—at least he knows pretty well what the 'gator is apt to do, which usually is nothing. For the alligator—like most other animals—fears man and will seldom fight unless cornered or goaded into it.

Kenny says the main thing is to watch the large tail and not make any quick movements. The reptile will automatically snap at any quick-moving object—a vague blur to its eyes—thinking it's something to eat.

Many of Kenny's 'gators have reached stardom in movies and television. Pontchartrain Billy, a 10-foot alligator, has been "killed" more than 50 times in pictures.

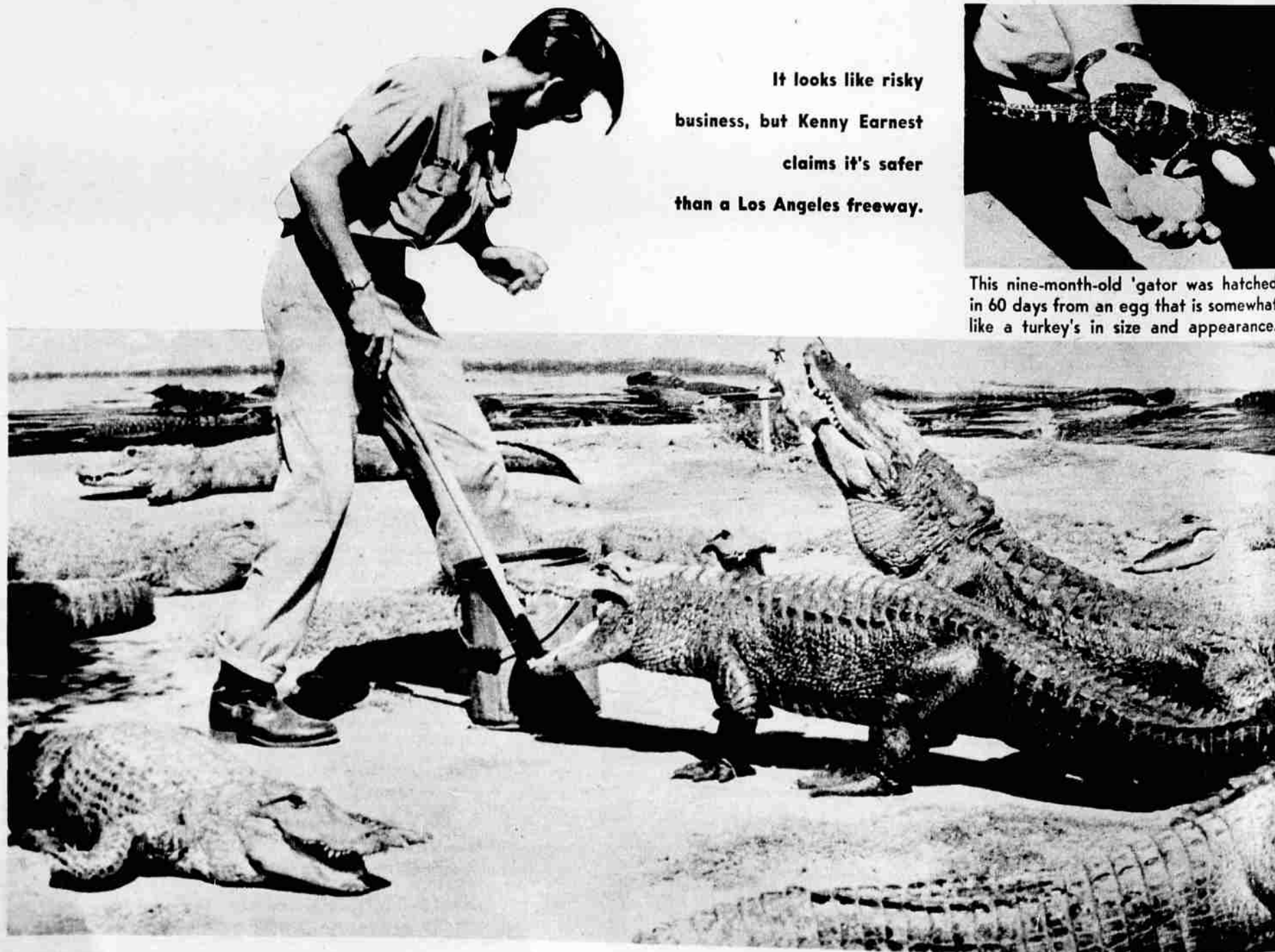
One thing amusing to Kenny is that movies often feature the hero wrestling with what they call a

crocodile, but you can be sure the hero actually is manhandling an alligator. Stunt men won't tackle a crocodile for one good reason: they probably wouldn't live to spend the money they earned!

The farm's largest alligator weighs 800 pounds and at 13 feet, 10 inches, is one of the largest in captivity. A crew of professional 'gator-hunters caught it so far back in the Louisiana swamps that, after lashing it to a plank, they carried it for five days before reaching a place where a wagon could get in!

Visitors are stunned by this mammoth reptile when it opens its huge mouth to roar a protest against captivity and to declare itself "king" of the 1,000 alligators on the farm.

TEEN-AGER TAMES ALLIGATORS



It looks like risky business, but Kenny Earnest claims it's safer than a Los Angeles freeway.



This nine-month-old 'gator was hatched in 60 days from an egg that is somewhat like a turkey's in size and appearance.

When feeding the alligators, Kenny has to be most careful, because they snap at moving things. In hot months they eat close to a ton of horse meat a week.