

life manager at Seminole Native Village, a tourist spot with daily gator shows in Hollywood, Fla. "With the birth of the Internet, people don't need to come to a park and pay an entrance fee when they can go online and see 30 alligator-wrestling shows today."

Long before the shows, Seminoles hunted alligators for food.

"We had to live off whatever Mother Nature provided us in the Everglades," said Max Osceola, a Seminole tribal councilman. "We'd eat the tail, the meaty part. ... Later on, when the alligator skin had a value, we would hunt and skin the gators and bring the skin to trading posts and trade for things we couldn't grow."

By the end of World War

At 54, Fontaine, who is part Abenaki Indian, figures he's getting too old to be sticking his head inside an alligator's jaws. His life insurance policy already was canceled.

Fontaine has 19 bite scars, and his left pinkie is permanently bent. He lost part of his chin to a bite when a child threw a rock during a show and spooked a gator. He has been heckled and spit upon by animal-rights activists.

So why does he do it?

"It's an adrenaline rush. That's why I like it. ... Make one mistake, and they'll get you. Get distracted, or put your hand up, they're going to know. You're tired and not feeling strong, they'll know. They're stronger than you are. If you mess up, you're gonna get bit."