





THE
JERRY LEE WILSON
SOLOFLEX
An American Parable
STORY

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*Dedicated to
The Statute of Limitations*



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I

THE PHONE CALL

December 31, 1976



“Marilyn, where’s Jerry?”

“He’s flying a charter. Why?”

“I don’t think so. I just saw him on Walter Cronkite evening news. He’s been arrested for flying in the largest load of pot in history.”

“Oh my!”

By the time Marilyn’s mom called her with the “news” I was already in solitary confinement, in Ardmore, Oklahoma with a \$500,000 bail set. Next to my cell I could hear a Negro fellow in obvious agony. “Oh God, Oh God it hurts.” All night long he moaned and groaned. No sleep that night. Well, what was left of the night. I was locked up at 3 am after what had been three long days of work with little sleep; flying from the Arizona boneyard through Florida to the Guajira Desert in

Colombia, loading the plane, taking some pics, chatting with the Indians, then back to Ardmore hidden by my lead plane's transponder and on to the four waiting U-Haul trucks. That's a lot of flying in a slow airplane with no autopilot. I should have gone right to sleep but that screaming guy next to me just wouldn't let it happen.

I was arrested by Oklahoma State Trooper Roy Rogers on Gene Autry Road. I'd grown up watching the good guys on TV always win so felt a bit out of place. The cops said I had 17,000 lbs. of primo Colombian marijuana on the DC-4. Funny, when I weighed it during loading it weighed 21,000 lbs.

We were dubbed the "El Paso Ten" by the media. It was big news in Oklahoma and El Paso, of course. My lawyer was Lee Chagra, the legendary Las Vegas high-roller. I'd flown him in and out of Vegas and all over the country in our charter Learjets when I worked for Jet Avia. Lee was indeed a spectacular individual; compulsive gambler, ladies' man, sleight of hand artist, editor of the Law Review at the University of Texas Law School, president of the student body, leader of the first civil rights protest there, and now, the most successful criminal defense lawyer in Texas. He specialized in defending pot smugglers. I imagined he was a descendant of Kings. Lee had a photographic memory and charisma like no other. I loved the man. He was also one-third owner of the dope I'd flown in, having fronted \$50,000 of his father-in-law's money as well as tendered up a family member to wait in Colombia as a hostage in case they weren't paid. And now he was defending me in court. That too, was part reason for his equity in the deal; a

promise to represent me for free if the deal was busted. It was busted all right, big time. Lee's brother Jimmy owned the other two-thirds of the pot. He was nowhere to be found.

I'll make this story short. The first trial ended in a hung jury. I was accused of seducing one of the jurors (or was it the other way around), so the second jury was sequestered. It really pissed them off. They figured out the cops had stolen the dope anyway thanks to Lee's silver tongue, so they let us go. "EL PASO TEN INNOCENT" the Ardmore & Oke City papers pronounced. Big red headlines, like a war had been declared. We were hardly innocent and the jury knew it. They just figured what the cops had done was worse than bootlegging.

One quick aside before leaving this chapter: Agent Jimmy Birdsong, Chief of the Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, an agency his state senator daddy had instituted, was one of the main prosecution witnesses. He buttonholed me during a break in the second trial to show me a Polaroid snapshot of his new Piper Cherokee Six. "Look at this, Jerry" he said with a big grin, "flew my family out to Aspen this weekend, skied our asses off, flew back in time to come to work today. Couldn't have done it without you." I opined that it was good someone made something off this deal and was insincerely happy for him. Actually he was a great guy. I really liked him. He was just doing his job...and what generations of cops before him had done; so little difference between the chased and the chasers. I had more than one cop tell me "If my balls were a little bigger I'd be doing what you're doing." Oh yeah, the black man next to me that

first night – I asked the jailer what he was moaning about. He said he was walking him across the alley to be arraigned and he took off running – so he shot him! Blew a big hole through his thigh with his .357 magnum. I asked if he wasn't handcuffed behind his back so could have easily been caught. The jailer replied, "When you tell a nigger to stop, he's gotta stop." Apparently they doused his wound with iodine and just put him back in the cell. No idea whatever happened to the poor soul. The jailer wouldn't say.

Anyway, I was free to continue my wicked ways.



DC-4 Cockpit



RABBITS AND GRAMMA

Eula Mae was Gramma's name, my mom's mom. She was an Okie, claimed to be part Indian. She looked kinda Indian, acted like one too, always on the warpath. Her second husband Kelsey Cheatwood was an Okie too. I used to watch him hop around drunk on his one remaining leg playing the only song he knew on his fiddle. It seemed important to him for some reason not to rob bird's nests. I never robbed any bird's nest although my buddies and I shot anything that moved when we were out rabbit hunting. We shot anything that didn't move too. Growing up in cattle country, we were encouraged by adults to kill those darn rabbits. Seven jackrabbits eat as much as a cow, they said. I suppose they thought it was good training for when we became soldiers although the rabbits never shot back.

The fiercely independent ranchers around Roswell had lobbied congress for taxpayer money to pay bounties on anything they considered competition, eagles and coyotes mostly. My boss at Callen's Flying Service shot 110 eagles in one day from a Super Cub. It was dangerous work. The guy in the back seat had the shotgun but in the excitement of the chase, and since the prop was invisible while turning, many a propeller tip was shot off. That induces a violent vibration and rips the engine completely off the plane. It's a long way down in a flat spin, time enough to figure out one's mistake for sure. Many times the pilot was shot, sometimes the wing strut...oops, there goes the wing! It's easy to make mistakes in the excitement of the hunt. Anyway, after killing off the rabbit's natural predators the rabbits multiplied like, well, rabbits. In trying to dodge the eagle and coyote tax, the ranchers encountered a rabbit tax none could afford. Of course, they shouldn't have been letting cattle overgraze that land in the first place. It's ruined now.

Gramma's favorite TV shows were Oral Roberts and Texas Wrestling. She thought both were real. I was only six and knew better. Gramma hated men, especially any that married her daughter. Poor Harold Hise, my step-dad. As if he hadn't had enough trouble in life; starved off his homestead as a kid, rented out to a Mexican family for 50 cents a month, captured in the Philippines to spend three years as a POW – the last two as a coal miner just outside Nagasaki. He weighed 85 pounds when we nuked 'em. That didn't stop him from loving the military, or voting for George Wallace and Curtis LeMay.

Gramma died of angst. After mowing her lawn, Harold put her mower back into the garage he'd built for her in Albuquerque. She wanted it left out even if it was fixing to rain. Said she hated that little SOB and was just gonna lay down and die. It took nine months but, being determined, she persevered. I got to watch the whole thing, bedsores and all. How fucked up is that! Never mind.

Gramma wasn't all bad. When she wasn't beating my brother and me she gave us her sage advice. Respect your elders, she'd declare in no uncertain terms.



**Me, age 4,
respecting my elders**



JACK “TREETOP” STRAUSS



Jack was a bookie. He knew every big gambler in Houston, where ostensibly he was a travel agent. He filled Caesar’s 727 with free junkets, provided his passengers put up ten grand at Caesar’s Palace to gamble. Jack was also a great poker player, having won the world championship in Vegas a few years earlier. After losing all of his entry money the first day, he found a \$500 chip under the tablecloth and came back to win it all. The Houston Vice Squad had busted him for running an illegal gambling operation. Lee Chagra was his attorney.

Texas had numerous old Blue Laws on the books. I mean, you couldn’t buy an alarm clock on Sunday, couldn’t own gambling paraphernalia – cards or a pair of dice and sure couldn’t gamble with your friends. The laws were tossed in 1974. Now you could do anything but race horses for money or earn proceeds

from gaming. That was it. Jack, the police said, was earning proceeds from gaming. This was to be the first test case for the new laws. And I got to watch!

Jet Avia got the call for the Learjet charter and Lee asked for me to pilot it. Benny Binion and Amarillo Slim got on board in Vegas, then on to El Paso to pick up Lee and his brother and law partner Joe, then a quick stop in San Antonio for another character witness. I've forgotten the man's name but he was the current poker champion and on that month's cover of TWA's in-flight magazine, then on to Houston and the trial.

Breakfasting with Joe the morning of the first trial day, I showed Joe my weightlifting machine design and asked him for advice about patents and things. Joe had a Universal machine in his house! He had muscles like Mr. America so was really interested in my device. During the first morning break in the trial I was standing outside in the hall. Lee and Joe came running up to me, very excited about my invention. "Do you have any money to get this off the ground?" "No, of course not." "How about we put up all the money for half interest in the royalties – you do the work." "It's a deal," I said without having to ponder the offer. I was surprised they were thinking of this when they should have been thinking about the ongoing trial. The Chagras never ceased to surprise me for as long as I knew them.

The trial was great fun. Seems the vice cop who busted Jack had been in a fistfight with him earlier over some woman so had an axe to grind. But Jack had a serious problem. The professional dealers he'd brought in to the Ramada Inn for the

game were using crooked blackjack shoes to deal the cards. There was a tiny wire connected to a tiny mirror so the dealer could see the bottom card and deal underneath it. When the expert witness for the prosecution from Carson City was on the stand to explain how it worked Lee stepped between the jury and the prosecutors table, picked up the shoe and disabled it – right in front of the jury's eyes. As I said earlier, Lee was a skilled sleight of hand artist. The prosecutors shouted, "Don't touch that evidence!" Of course it was too late. Lee set it down immediately, apologized, rolled his eyes at the jurors and proceeded to make the expert from Carson City look like a total fool. All of Jack's character witnesses testified that Jack was too good a gambler to ever need to cheat, that it would ruin him forever to do anything like that, that they'd known him for years to be a truly honest man. The jury couldn't fail to be impressed. These were famous guys. And this was Texas.

The trial went on for three days. Every night Lee, the character witnesses and Jack would play poker all night long. One would have thought they'd be wanting to get some rest but obviously not. The man from San Antonio cleaned them out. He never loosened his tie, never unbuttoned his vest, got up often to wash his face and hands and never touched the fine whiskey the others were swilling. This guy didn't even appear to grow whiskers when he played. The others looked ragged as the night wore on.

The jury was out for seven minutes before setting Jack free. As we rode back to the hotel in the van with everyone laughing and celebrating, Benny calls out from the front seat to Jack

who was sitting in the back with me, “Jack, don’t ever ask me to perjure myself for you again. If you do, I’ll fucking kill you!” I thought Benny was kidding but I didn’t know the man. Jack turned pale and the van went totally silent – so maybe he wasn’t.



4

UNCLE DUDE

Mom’s maiden name was Speed, as in Joshua Speed, an uncle – and Abraham Lincoln’s best friend. When mom was three the entire Oklahoma Speed clan homesteaded some land on the Caprock, about 50 miles east of Roswell. There was nothing out there but jackrabbits and that’s what they mostly survived on. Once a month they’d hop on the wagon and trek all day to get to Roswell for flour, cloth, tools and staples then head home the next day.

After three years the land was theirs. One husband and wife stayed. Why, I’ll never know and you don’t want to know what happened to them. OK, I’ll tell you. The husband died of a heart attack. His wife, in her haste to get to the Caprock Post office to alert the authorities and knowing the feral cats would start gnawing on him, laid a door over his body.

He wasn't half the man he used to be when she returned a few hours later.

Mom and her parents moved back to Oklahoma City. The other relatives settled in at Roswell. Great Grampa Speed and one son, being conventional people, went to work for the railroad. The other son, Dude, took up a more colorful trade as a bootlegger and pimp. He was a real charmer. Everyone said so. Wish I'd have met him but he was shot dead long before I was born. Seems a "client" had fallen in love with one of his girls and blamed Dude for leading her astray. This may have been true but Dude reportedly treated all his girls with much respect and care. He even married one of them. Anyway, this kid confronts Dude in the Capital Café just across from the courthouse on Main Street. Dude invited him into the alley to settle it like men. He never made it through the door, his heart blown out with a shot through the back. The kid got two years. A crime of passion they said.

Dude was sorely missed after that. It was prohibition days and Dude had a car. He'd drive to Juarez to get the booze. Everyone from the judge to the dogcatcher got protection money or liquor to keep 'em quiet so the system worked exactly as it should have. When you operate in the Man's territory, you must pay the Man. Dude did. Never heard who took over his franchise.

Great Grandma Speed was embarrassed that her son had married a whore and wanted her out of town, now! She gave her a \$4,000 diamond ring to leave. What Grandma didn't

know was that she was already packed and ready to leave. See, there is some justice in this world.

There may not have been much above ground at the Caprock but with a name like that it's easy to figure out what was UNDER the ground. Oil. Lots of oil. The family collects royalties to this day.

I sure wish I'd have known Dude. I'm sure some great stories were lost with him.



Main Street, Roswell, NM, 1909



GO GET LEE



Lockheed Learstar

Lee Chagra had called from El Paso for another charter flight to Vegas. He asked for me to come get him. We landed in the middle of the afternoon but Lee wasn't there. He was almost always late so we just sat to wait. We'd never met his brother Jimmy. He showed up at the airport and said Lee was going to be hours so did Steve and I want to come over to his house to wait. We said sure, why not.

Jimmy was every bit as charismatic as Lee. We played pool, shot the breeze. Jimmy then surprised us with the news that he was a marijuana smuggler, had got a couple of boats through and was now looking for some pilots to fly for him. That sounded like a lot of fun to me. We didn't say much, both of us taken aback by the offer. Steve Howard went to the cops as soon as we got back to Vegas. I went to work for Jimmy.

I thought it best not to tell Marilyn what I was embarking on. I knew what she'd think of it. I'd wondered how the Chagras got all those millions to gamble with at Caesar's Palace. I'd flown one trip I knew the Chagras had paid for that had me really baffled. Our sole passenger was a suspicious looking fellow, shirt unbuttoned to his waist, a coke spoon dangling from his big gold necklace. He wouldn't say where we were going, just back east, and that he'd tell us later. I said, "Kansas City is as far as the plane can go on one tank of fuel, how's that for a start?" After topping off at Kansas City he said Newark was our first stop. Two guys there brought out a steamship trunk to the plane; we loaded it on and were then directed to Pittsburgh. Two large suitcases were loaded there, then on to Minneapolis for more suitcases. By this time the large baggage area was full. Of what, I didn't know. I later learned from Jimmy that it was cash from one of his boat deals. Caesar's couldn't possibly count it all so divided it into denominations and just weighed it, then put it on their account.

Jimmy and Lee blew through seven million bucks that year at the casinos. Now Lee was into Caesar's for \$300,000 and to the Aladdin for \$400,000. Jimmy owed Caesar's \$300,000. Neither one could pay up so it was time to get back to work, hence my entry into the picture.

Jimmy had no idea how to fly across the border without being spotted. I didn't either. I figured just stay low. Radar was spotty along the Mexican border but I didn't know how spotty. Our first trip south was to Culiacan to meet the supplier.

We were in a Beech 18 that belonged to another airmail pilot buddy, Dick Joyce. No seats in back so Jimmy, Stan Oakies, Neil Nichols and his bodyguard sat on the floor. They had their meeting. The Mexicans told us they'd be waiting there for us to return for a load. Crossing the border on the return trip, I tuned in the Center frequency for the area west of El Paso. I heard a U. S. Customs plane being vectored to follow us. Oops. I immediately did a wingover and flew back directly towards the plane following us, dropping down out of radar range. I heard Center tell Customs they'd lost us on radar. I could see the rotating beacon on their plane, still heading west towards Tucson. We were getting low on fuel so landed at the Cochise County Airport in Willcox. Just as I was about to touch down Dick turns on the landing lights. "What the hell are you doing, Dick?" "Hey, I don't want my plane dinged." "I don't need these fucking lights to land, they're going to see us!" Well, they did see us. Dick and I were standing by a pay phone calling the gasman out when the Custom's Cessna 210 landed. Jimmy and the others took off walking. Dick and I were arrested and taken to the local pokey for questioning. There was nothing on the plane but they seized it until we paid a \$1,500 fine for an illegal border crossing. The cops claimed they could smell pot on the plane and figured we'd tossed it overboard. They let us go the next morning and we took a bus back to Vegas, waiting to hear from Jimmy and the boys. They'd walked 30 miles across a dry lakebed to get away; Jimmy wearing his Gucci shoes. But now it was time for the real thing, my first trip south with the goods. It didn't work out so well.

Dick's plane was in the hands of U.S. Customs so he rented a Cessna 310 and I looked around for the cheapest Beech 18 I could find. Watcha McCollum (yes, that was really his name) had one in Illinois for \$8,500, about all Jimmy Chagra could afford. It had no radios. It didn't even have a magnetic compass and the de-icing boots looked totally rotten. No big deal. I paid for it, took off and headed to Texas to meet up with Dick and get ready to go. He would lead me in and out in formation since I had no navigation equipment. His plane was a lot faster than mine. About an hour south of the border he fell asleep with the autopilot on and simply flew away from me. I had no radio to yell at him so now just had to find the airport in Culiacan by pilotage...and with no compass at that! I headed southwest with only the sun to guide me until hitting the Pacific Coast, recognized where I was then followed the coastline down to the strip, about 30 miles from Culiacan. I was an hour late and the strip was deserted. No Mexicans. No Dick Joyce. No gas to fly home. It was a long night. Thunderstorms pounded the area leaving it really muddy out there. The next morning, not wanting to be spotted by the federales, I started hiking to town. Crossing one field a big bull spotted me. I thought, oh my god, so this is how it's going to end but the bull ignored me. I stumbled into a small village and got a ride to the Culiacan airport, hopped on a Mexicana flight to Tucson and made my escape. Dick got his load through so it wasn't a total loss, just another adventure. Dick said he thought I'd gotten lost and had turned back so didn't wait for me. I flew the Cessna 310 on the next trip without a hitch. Gee, compasses are really useful and I loved

flying that plane. We were offloading in Ardmore at the American Flyers field ten miles north of town. It was deserted at night and disturbed no one.

Being ambitious, all of us wanted a bigger plane. Now we had some money to buy one. Dick found an old Lockheed Learstar. It could haul 6,000 pounds. Neither of us was type rated in it but it's just another airplane so no problem; they all fly the same. The plane leaped off the runway at Culiacan and Dick was playing hell with the pitch. He said, "Here, you try it." I don't know how he was controlling it, it was so aft in its center of gravity I'd push down and the plane would pitch up, pull up and the plane would pitch down but Dick was a marvelous stick and rudder man and was somehow flying it. I jumped in back and started stacking the dope as far forward in the cabin as I could. Soon Dick said, "There, that will do it." On we went.

A Learstar is a Lodestar, a WW II design that Bill Lear modified for corporate travel. A pretty girl came to his factory in Wichita to apply for a job as a receptionist. Bill spotted her and asked if she'd like to take a ride. Off they went. Bill put on the autopilot (he invented the auto-pilot) and climbed in back with the girl. She spurned his advances so he returned to the cockpit only to find the door had shut and locked behind him. The girl freaks out of course. Bill calmly gets his fire axe out and chops through the door. The girl declined to accept the job. Anyway, that's the story as I heard it. If it wasn't true it should have been.



6

LIONEL GOMEZ



Santa Marta Gold

Lionel was an entrepreneur of the first magnitude. He and both his wives lived in Santa Marta, Colombia. He was our supplier of fine Santa Marta Gold. Not sure how many employees he had but all wore big Rolex watches and packed heat. There was a lot of competition for the American connections. Marijuana was the national crop in those days, the mid '70s.

I enjoyed staying at his houses. The weather was perfect every day and the town was safe and peaceful. Well, until someone stole a connection, or tried to. Antonio, Lionel's brother and second in charge, had nine bullet scars in his torso. Really proud of them, he was. Loved to show them off.

Of course, life in the fast lane is typically short. Fast Eddy Mitchell, our hostage there, was sitting in a café with one of Lionel's men when a grenade is lobbed in. Fast Eddy got out

but Lionel's man didn't. At the funeral the next day, with all of Lionel's family and workers attending, another grenade is tossed. Lionel caught some shrapnel in a leg artery and that was the end of poor Lionel. No problem though, Antonio stepped right up to take charge and the family business was saved.

Sometimes planes crash there. Muddy strips, planes overloaded, etc. When one of ours did we ended up in the Santa Marta state pen until things could be worked out to free us. After a few days there we were flown to Bogota by the authorities. Seems the big boys wanted to meet us. They too, had long strips, army protection and millions of pounds of pot waiting to be delivered to Muskogee and beyond. We met lots of different "officials" who each offered the same thing; better protection mostly. No one there wanted to end the drug trade but all wanted to control it, hence the shoot 'em up culture. Funny, we give them four billion dollars to fight the drug trade and they just buy more guns and flamethrowers to kill each other. Ha.

We were soon returned to the Santa Marta prison and warm weather. Every Saturday the wives, girlfriends and prostitutes would pour in for conjugal visit day. No privacy of course but it was interesting. One prisoner there had killed someone in every prison he'd been in. They move you to another prison when you kill someone. He'd made the full round of them and was back where he'd started. I asked him "Why do you keep killing people?" He said quite matter of factly, "You can

let a guy steal your pants once but not twice." I'm happy to report that no one stole his pants while we were there.

We cooled our heels for a month until things blew over. We had great food brought in; avocados the size of cantaloupes! Our lawyer visited often, to see just how much money we were willing to pay to be released. He was going to have to split it with the judge so wanted to make sure he got all he could. Of course, he and the judge were looking over their shoulders. Lionel's gang was growing impatient. We got out for \$10,000, on credit no less. I was deported as an illegal alien two days before the second trial in Ardmore started. Cool.



OH MY GOD,
WE MAY AS WELL
HAVE KILLED
THE POPE'S MOM!

I told Christ Nicholas Karamanos, my boss at Jet Avia, not to promote that guy to Captain. He'd been a shitty co-pilot; way short of experience and not only that, he'd blank out when overloaded, simply not react. I thought he had a touch of narcolepsy. Chris wasn't a pilot and he wouldn't fire anybody. The co-pilot did start flying as Captain and had smacked Frank Sinatra's mom into a mountain at 400 mph. It was Jet Avia's first fatal accident. The same day another of our Learjets flying freight parts for Ford crashed in Detroit killing both pilots. It was a bad day all around. I was sitting in solitary confinement in Oklahoma that day, feeling a bit down even before that happened.

Flying jets out of Las Vegas was a real change from flying mail planes designed in the '30s. No more weekly moments of terror, only acceleration. The company had about seven

Learjets and a few British Hawkers. We stayed really busy. Interesting passengers too. The company was partly owned by the Central State Teamsters Pension Fund, so I read about some of my passengers monthly in the Reader's Digest. They may have been mafia connected but they were all real gentlemen, always magnanimous, solicitous, and careful to pay respect to everyone they met. Hey, when you can't resolve disputes in court, elaborate courtesy is the best defense. Poor Alan Dorfman, shot in a parking lot. I really liked him.

I liked most of the passengers, comedians excepted. Most of them were pricks. Not Bill Cosby, Totie Fields or Joan Rivers though. They were great. So was Phyllis Diller. I was really sorry my boss wouldn't let me accept her invitation to go home with her after flying her back to LAX. She was actually a very attractive woman in person. Neil Diamond was the biggest prick I flew. Or was it Buddy Hackett? Or Lucille Ball? Well, maybe it was Jerry Lewis. No, it was that liquor distributor who must have been the Al Green character in the Godfather. All of Elvis' people were great, especially the beautiful hookers we flew to his parties. Colonel Parker, Elvis' manager, was perhaps the strangest passenger we flew. He carried about 700 pounds of staple food with him everywhere he went, even on a quick jaunt down to Palm Springs for an afternoon of golf. He must have been expecting Armageddon any day.

Jack Nicholson was fun of course. I picked him up one cold morning in Van Nuys for a quick trip to Palm Springs. I lined up on the runway, turned around and asked, "Wanna see what this baby will do when you open 'er up?" I love his grin.

"Of course," he said. I throttled up to 101.5 percent, held the brakes until we started sliding then let off. It's like getting hit in the back by a semi. Rapid acceleration hardly describes it, airspeed alive at 80 knots, start rotating a half second later at 110, reach quickly for the gear and flap handles and pitch up 30 degrees to not exceed the flap and gear speeds. It always took my breath away when I did that. I can just imagine what the passengers felt. We did a dozen or so aileron rolls on the short flight. Jack was sold. He'd just won an Oscar for *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*. Said he was gonna buy one of these planes after his next Oscar. Chris Karamanos was right about killing the Pope's mom. Jet Avia went tits up quickly.



Learjet



BUFFALO BOB AND THE PREACHER



Beech 18

It became quite obvious after the Ardmore bust that what I needed to do was fly in smaller loads and carefully avoid giving the cops any probable cause. I was learning fast. Just look like you belonged there; Marilyn's advice. I began flying into big airports right in the middle of the day. Buffalo Bob was my wholesaler in Boston. We rented a big brown van like UPS has, Bob donned a suitable brown uniform and we just waltzed right out of Logan Field without a hitch. My plane only had a ton of pot this trip so it took only a couple of minutes to offload.

Bob's stash house was the basement of the rectory at the United Methodist Church in Brockton, Rocky Marciano's hometown. The minister was a charming tall, dark and handsome guy about my age, 30. He'd built a fake wall under the stairs, well sealed to keep the strong odor from escaping.

One day while Bob and I were taking inventory, the preacher says we'd have to leave soon as one of his flock was coming over to be consoled. Being the curious type, I asked him just how many in his flock required consolation on a regular basis. "Oh, about half of 'em," he said. "Their old men ain't worth a shit. Someone's gotta give them a little touching, a little of God's love." I said, "My word George, you get more pussy than I do. Wanna trade places?" "No deal Jerry, I wouldn't trade places with anyone in this world. I love my job and I can sell Mexican dirt weed to my old seminary buddies for top dollar. They're hardly in a position to negotiate. I'm gonna make out like a bandit with this primo Colombian weed." He dispensed the 1,100 pounds in his basement within two weeks. My kinda dealer.

Ever see three hundred thousand dollars in hundreds before? It makes a stack about three feet long. Not that it was all profit of course. Unlike cocaine, pot on this scale was wholesaled on credit and much of it went the way of sub-prime loans. Other expenses were high too; lost planes, legal bills, fast living. I always paid my taxes though. Declared every penny of profit. I didn't consider myself a criminal and if I wouldn't steal from one person why would I steal from 250 million?

I had separated myself from Jimmy Chagra after we got out of prison in Colombia. He always paid himself first. Worse than that, he flagrantly thumbed his nose at the authorities. It was like waving a red flag at a bull. He owed me plenty so I took his connections. He had no problem with that and wished me

well. That's the way it works. Things became much simpler after that. Good connections in Mexico and Colombia. Good connections in the U.S. Like any business, it's all about supplier and customers.

Hardly anyone smuggles pot any more. American home-growers simply out-competed the Latinos.



STAGE 15



SMB Beech 18

Minneapolis Approach Control: “Stage 15, you’re cleared for the Runway 31 Right localizer approach. Be advised, we’re experiencing strong gust at the west end of the field. Weather is 300 and one.”

Stage 15: “Roger, Stage 15 is cleared for the Runway 31 Right localizer approach.”

I knew the pressure was dropping rapidly and that severe squall lines were close to the airport, moving in rapidly from the west. A localizer-only approach meant no electronic glide slope. Only my altimeter would keep me from flying into the ground if the pressure dropped too low. Runway 31 Left had a glide slope but was being used by TWA at the time. We had a mail schedule to keep so air traffic control was expediting me as usual. No problem, I surmised, I’ll just add 100 extra feet –

should be plenty. If I don't see the runway I'll make a missed approach. Pretty standard stuff.

What neither Minneapolis Approach nor I was aware of was that tornado touching down at the west end of the field. I heard TWA declare a missed approach a mile out and turn away. Not knowing why, I kept going. The Mississippi River valley cuts deeply south of the Minneapolis Airport. When I caught the rail lights, single strobes marking the end of the runway, I was looking UP through the trees at them yet indicating 400 feet above the runway on my altimeter. Holy shit, that's a pressure drop I'd never seen before! I pulled back hard, clipping the treetops lining the riverbank. The rain was so intense I could barely make out the runway but touched down in the center of it, right on target. Suddenly my plane was pushed left hard off the runway and clipped a runway marker. Full aileron and rudder inputs just couldn't handle the gust. The tornado narrowly missed me, passing quickly off the field to the northeast at 50 knots. I taxied to the Air Mail Facility to unload then took a look at my plane to see if anything was pranged. Indeed, my left prop had a big slice in it that looked like a ruffles potato chip. That was the end of my night. Damn. My job was to deliver the mail come sleet, snow, gloom of night or tornadoes.

I suppose I should have been kissing the ground but wasn't. My only thought was my completion record and the money to fix the prop. We mail pilots were a competitive bunch. "Hey, where were you last night, you big pussy!" It got lots of us

killed but who ever thinks it will happen to them? None of us, that's for sure.

I flew the night airmail for almost five years. It was certainly the most exciting job I ever had, the most rewarding too. Just me, Mother Nature and my Beech 18. Sure, I was scared shitless plenty of times, about twice a week, but courage isn't the lack of fear, it's the conquest of it. Or was I just stupid? Still wondering about that.





JOE'S SUPPER CLUB, NORTH PLATTE



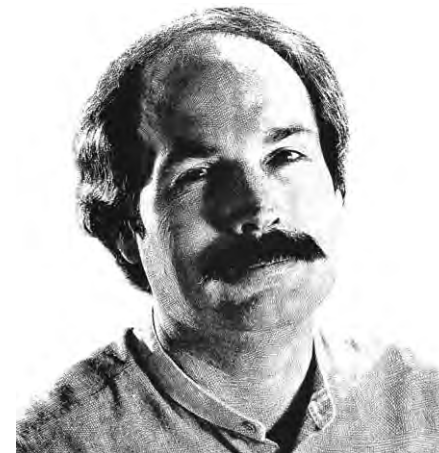
My first night airmail run was from Chadron, Nebraska to Alliance for a two hour layover, then on to North Platte for a six hour layover (9pm to 3am) then back to Alliance for another two hours, then finally home to Chadron; six nights a week. It was the first flying job I'd had that paid enough money to shuck the in-laws' subsidy. Nothing was going to let me not succeed.

Six hours in the middle of the night in North Platte left lots of time for reading. It didn't take too long to get through the books in the Chadron Public Library. Another pilot flew into North Platte from Valentine, up by the South Dakota border. He moved up there from North Platte after awhile so now there were two of us with six hours to burn. Having completed what the library had to offer and looking for anything to break the monotony, I followed his lead to a truck stop where we'd

idle away the hours watching the truckers argue and fist fight with the railroad men. North Platte has one of the biggest rail hump yards in the country and of course is a major interstate trucking route too. I'd read the railroader's periodicals, filled with crashed truck pics, touting how much safer rail was than trucking. Next to them on the shelves sat the trucker's periodicals, full of derailed train pics, every article stressing how much safer trucking was than trains. They were both telling the truth. Both were extremely hazardous jobs, with dads risking their lives day in and night out without complaint to feed their children. I was doing the same.

Anyway, on to Joe's Supper Club: Jon Kennedy, my new compadre piloto, suggested one night that we go out to Joe's to see if we couldn't get a job. It had to be better than hanging around those all-night truck stops. He got a job as a bartender, me as the bouncer at Joe's. I weighed two-forty then, courtesy of my wife's cooking, was six-two, and could look really mean when I wanted to...having been a First Sergeant at New Mexico Military Institute. We got five bucks each and a sandwich for our services. I'll have to admit; sometimes Joe's was scarier than flying the mail. Those Nebraska cowboys are nothing to mess with. Fortunately, I was blessed genetically with tact. I'd also taken lots of judo lessons on Okinawa as a kid so knew how to easily deflect a charging bull. I discovered I was a natural peacemaker. I could see a fight coming a mile off and always stopped it before blows or beer bottles started flying. The boss lady said there was a fight every night I wasn't there.

I was on the Chadron run for eight months before moving to an even shittier run in Sheldon, Iowa. I shot 125 ADF approaches that winter, many of them to below minimums. Landed several times in fog so thick I got lost on the taxiways. I got that mail through by God. It was great. I felt like a human being for the first time in my life – giving more than I was taking. I had a soul, finally. Well, at least some self-respect; same thing so far as I've ever been able to tell.



The Bouncer



11

BUSTED AGAIN



Bill and Marilyn

I took a break after flying the night airmail a couple of years to start my own airline. Roswell Airlines, one plane, one pilot, Marilyn working the ticket counter and helping tote bags. I knew how to fly but I had no idea how to run a business. The president of the First National Bank said he thought my idea was doomed to failure but he liked my enthusiasm and helped me get a SBA loan. I should have listened to him.

The FAA shut me down. Rumor was that I was doing aileron rolls with passengers on board. I was but only with those who wanted to. Anyway, I got busted from Captain (Airline Transport Pilot) to Private (Pilot). I never minded being busted down to private in the National Guard, was promoted to PFC on three occasions but this bust really hurt. I lost the business, which after nine months was really picking up. I couldn't imagine not flying for a living. In the meanwhile, I had to

work. Marilyn's dad, Bill Coffey, hired me to sell paper with him. I wasn't that enthusiastic but it turned out to be great experience. I learned a couple of things from the airline fiasco too. One was that FAA inspectors are Regulators, like Billy the Kid – judge, jury and executioner on the spot with no appeal. Two, I discovered I had a knack for advertising. Marilyn frequently got calls and would ask, "When do you want to schedule?" The voice on the other end would say, "Oh I wouldn't get on one of those little planes for anything. I just wanted to tell you how much I love your ads."

Bill Coffey was more than a paper salesman. He had over 300 accounts in Roswell and surrounding towns. He could remember and tell jokes non-stop all day long, always knew his audience, which jokes to tell. He was a jobber for 3M and numerous paper companies. There wasn't a store he couldn't sell something to. Plastic wrap to butcher shops. Candles, placemats and napkins to restaurants. Printed boxes and bags to department stores. If nothing else, he could always sell cases of toilet paper. Everyone uses that. At least I hope they do. He made a lot of money and really enjoyed his work. He also got more pussy than any white man I'd ever met. Well, maybe not that preacher in Brockton.

Marilyn's mom never threw anything away. Marilyn was going through her stuff after she died in '93. There was Bill's little black book. It was totally full of girl's first names with telephone prefixes from all over the state. Don't know how Ruth got hold of it but she kept it, maybe to beat him over the head with. She was a really nice lady, always ready to lend a helping

hand. She really had her hands full with Bill, divorced him two or three times but just couldn't stay away. Love is a funny thing.

Bill's still kicking, '91 now and totally lucid. He hasn't been in a fist fight since he was 75 and kicked a 21 year old's ass. Road rage incident. What a man!

The FAA gave me back my flying license after six months after making me retake the commercial written and flight test. I went back to work flying the mail, out of Dodge City this time. What a place, surrounded by cattle feed lots so stinky I could use them as letdown markers on instrument approaches. A lot of those that winter, the worst weather since keeping track of it in 1870.



T'WAS A FRIGHTFUL NIGHT

Sedalia Marshall Booneville Stage Lines had 28 Beechcraft Super 18s dedicated to night mail runs. None were instrumented the same. The one I'd been flying on my Oshkosh run was ready for a hundred hour inspection so I swapped out with the pilot heading south out of Des Moines towards Muskogee, our maintenance base. He said, "You'll never believe this but the radar actually works on this one. I hadn't seen that once in the three years since I'd started with SMB but was really glad to see it that night. Imbedded thunderstorms were everywhere.

The radar was a blessing on my next leg to Minneapolis, skirting around a dozen heavy build-ups, easy. It's impossible to know where the lightning is coming from when you're in the clouds, it could be right in your path or 40 miles behind you. No question though when you hit one. Big blue rings of static

electricity from the props. And the turbulence...my God. Help from ground radar was patchy depending on where the radar site was located but ATC helped us all they could. It was much appreciated. Next stop was Wausau, reporting thunderstorms in all quadrants. Hey, no problem. I have a RADAR!

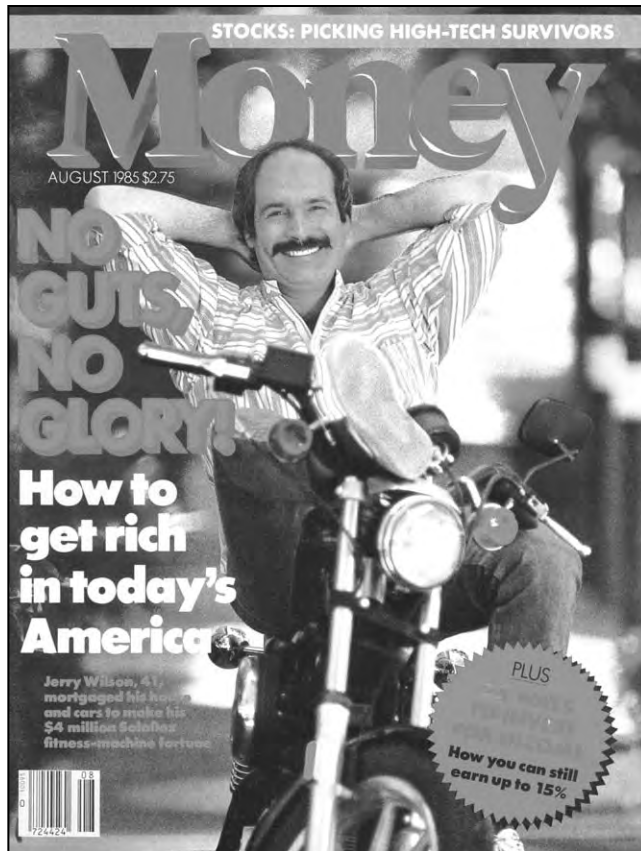
The radar stopped working shortly after departing Minneapolis airspace. Center had good coverage close in so steered me around two or three cells but were soon no help at all. It's against Federal Aviation Regulations to knowingly fly into a thunderstorm but we frequently flew into them accidentally. I would have turned back to Minneapolis but there were as many cells behind me now as in front so I did what one does in that situation; turn the cockpit lights up full blast and cinch down the seatbelt as tightly as possible. I punched through one cell, my legs quivering, scared shitless and started the instrument approach into Wausau, so glad to be there! I broke out of the clouds about a mile from the runway, was all set up to land when KABOOM! lightning hit my plane. I was blinded by the flash. I pitched up to go around, hoping I'd be able to see soon. It took about 15 seconds before I could. The plane was in a 60-degree bank by this time but was easy to recover. I circled and landed. Whew!

I delayed starting out to my next stop, Green Bay. The mail would just have to be late. The storms were dissipating and I was in no mood to tackle more of them. Green Bay was still reporting thunderstorms in all quadrants but they were moving east rapidly so figured they'd be gone or easy to dodge by the time I got there. I picked up my clearance and took off. The

Wausau VOR had also been hit by lightning so was out of service but I didn't need it; just head east until I could pick up Green Bay's. Low clouds had settled in everywhere but that was nothing new. I climbed out, got on top the clouds at 4,000 feet and called Chicago Center to report reaching altitude. No response. I continued on course. I tried calling Flight Service at Wasuau but nothing from them either. No problem, I'll pick up the VOR signal at Green Bay soon. Or so I thought. I was well within range to pick up the nav signal from Green Bay but it wasn't coming in. Oh shit. I was stuck on top a cloud layer all the way to the ground with no nav and no comm and not enough fuel on board to fly out of it. That's every pilot's nightmare. I could see the thunderstorm tops poking above the cloud layer over Green Bay so headed right for them. My autopilot had also quit working. I was hand flying and trying to look at my charts at the same time. I glanced up to see the plane had banked so just stomped the top rudder to straighten it up, my hands being full of charts. When I did, I heard the nav unit's Morse code ID and saw the VOR needle swing. Aha, the radios had half filled with water punching through all those thunderstorms and the yawing had let it make contact. I shot the approach into Green Bay by cross controlling intermittently to fix my position. That wasn't the worst night I had flying the mail but it was darn close.



MR. SOLOFLEX



Yeah, I'm the dirty rat who popularized TV infomercials. So sorry.

It was an unstoppable idea though. It had to happen sooner or later. It happened after congress decriminalized program length commercials with the Cable TV Act of 1984. Before that, the only industry allowed to run that kind of programming was preachers selling tickets to heaven. They taught me how it's done. Finally, a lesson from them worth learning.

There were 8,000 cable systems in the nation when we started buying up the time spots. We bought from the 4,000 largest. Funny, not a single cable operator we contacted had anyone to take our money. Sure, they had the open channels, all the equipment they needed to run ads but none had ever tried to sell the space or even contemplated it. It was easy to explain

that if they didn't sell it to us they wouldn't get a penny after the time had passed. They jumped on it, with me naming the price.

We'd already completed a beautifully produced "every man's story" we had been mailing out on VHS, Beta or Beta II. Broadcasting it on cable channels really kicked sales into overdrive. All of our advertising before that had been in national magazines. It worked great at first. There was such a pent-up demand for a safe way to lift weights at home people bought them despite my sophomoric advertising, but like any slash and burn farmer, it depleted with time. Between 1978 and 1986 the cost of a full page in *Time* doubled, with 15 percent less circulation. By mid '86 we started losing money. What to do, what to do? Rotate the crops? Invent another product? Find some new farmland (media) to lease? Hey, that's it. I'd been flipping through channels for years on cable, a used ironing board for sale on one channel, blank fuzz on the next, a half-million dollar Super Bowl ad on the next. Geez, this remote had turned TV into a video magazine. There's no better time to troll for sales than when someone is looking to be engaged. Most ads interrupt. That was one reason magazines worked so well. I knew magazine advertising. I'd found my new farmland. The first seeds we threw out sprouted like Jack in the Beanstalks. And such a big field!

Sales went through the roof. Selling cost per unit dropped to almost nothing. We had automated the selling factory! Considering that more people are employed selling things than making things, that was a big deal. On sales of \$98 million in

1988 our net profit before taxes was \$54 million. Oh my God! In our biggest day of production we made 900 Soloflex machines. We bucked enough steel to build the Golden Gate Bridge and then some.

When I was flying charter Learjets out of Vegas, I'd often ask my passengers, "How does one get in the back seats of this thing?" It was a serious question. I always got the same answer, "Why Son, you have to manufacture. The manufacturer controls everything." It was great advice. Makes one wonder why congress would offer tax incentives to U.S. companies to ship manufacturing offshore.

"No pain, no gain."

To unlock your body's potential, we proudly offer Soloflex. Twenty-four traditional iron pumping exercises, each correct in form and balance. All on a simple machine that fits in a corner of your home. For a free Soloflex brochure, call anytime 1-800-453-9000.

BODY BY SOLOFLEX
SOLOFLEX, HILLSBORO, OREGON 97123

It is a symbol of heart, of courage. And to develop it properly, requires a good deal of both.

Just as essential is the right piece of equipment. Each exercise must be performed correctly. Correct in form. Correct in balance.

For if the two major muscle groups which comprise the human chest are to grow quickly, and with natural symmetry, there must be proper resistance throughout a natural range of motion.

Soloflex builds the chest. With the same efficiency and simplicity that it builds the rest of the body.

For a free brochure, call 1-800-453-9000. In Canada, 1-800-543-1005. VHS Video brochure also available upon request.



SOLOFLEX



THE CHEST.

From here, said the ancients, spring all human passions and mystical powers. Yet it is also a point of vulnerability. And how well the entire body functions, depends, in part, upon its relative strength and tone.

In the human abdomen, there are three major muscle groups. To reach them all and develop each in proper proportion, requires more than a single workout station.

Soloflex offers five. Which is why Soloflex builds the stomach. With the same efficiency and simplicity that it builds the rest of the body.

For a free brochure, call 1-800-453-9000. In Canada, 1-800-543-1005. VHS Video brochure also available upon request.




SOLOFLEX




THE STOMACH.



MAKING MUSCLES SOCIAALLY ACCEPTABLE



**BODY BY
SOLOFLEX®**



To unlock your body's potential we proudly offer the new **Soloflex Whole Body Vibration Platform**. With the Soloflex WBV Platform you can stretch, pump iron, or just stand and let the vibration do the work. The Soloflex WBV Platform will help you obtain greater results in much less time and it is so safe and easy.

**BODY BY
SOLOFLEX®**

Go to www.soloflex.com or call **1-800-547-8802** for a free brochure, to place an order, or to find out more information about Whole Body Vibration.

www.soloflex.com

I musta gone through a thousand pieces of paper trying to sketch out a design for a machine that would incorporate all the barbell and free body exercises I'd learned at New Mexico Military Institute ten years earlier. Having learned from my passengers that the path to the backseat of those jets I was flying was to manufacture, I now knew what I needed to manufacture that didn't exist – a safe way to lift weights at home. It popped into my head as I was taxiing out to the runway at LAX. I turned to Tony and said, "You know, if I could figure out a small machine so people could lift weights at home without getting maimed, I'll bet I could sell a million of them!" Tony Mendenhall retorts, "Good, I'll fly your jets when you do." Tony's an American Airlines Captain now but I'd have hired him if the airlines hadn't snapped him up. He was a great pilot.

It took nine months to find that geometry. It was like some outside force was compelling me to find it. It was just a geometry problem, like reducing a trigonometric identity. I knew the design had to do the exercises correctly and fit in a corner of a home but that wasn't much to start with. Marilyn insisted whatever I came up with must be attractive enough to bring into the house or it wouldn't sell. My math skills were appalling but my perseverance wasn't. I saw the whole thing working in my mind while I was at 50,000 feet over Colorado, mapping for the USGS in one of our Lear's. Maybe it was the high-pressure oxygen that cleared my head after nine months of compulsing on the problem. That was in 1975, just a few months before Molly was born. It took another four months of experimenting at Curtis Steel in Las Vegas to finally fix the points in space, find the right material, etc. Fortunately, Ed Kittrell across the street was a steel detailer and offered his knowledge to the project. Ed finished his architecture training and now owns the largest architecture firm in Las Vegas.

I went to Curtis Steel after returning to Vegas from my mapping duty with sketch in hand. Arthur Curtis, the owner, took an immediate interest in my idea. I noticed some iron dumbbells in his office. He offered to show me how to use the iron-worker and other metal working tools and gave me a space to see what I could put together. I couldn't weld so he helped me with that part. He never asked for or wanted anything for his aid, just pay for the materials I used. I didn't have any spare money so traded him a .22 pistol I owned for the steel. Soloflex would have never come to fruition without Mr. Curtis. He was a great man, so giving, so helpful.

Having finally fixed the design and finished one, I put an ad in the Vegas Nifty Nickel: multi-station barbell machine, cheap! Call xxxx. People began calling and coming over to my garage to see this thing. I'd set up the chinning station first. They'd say, "Damn, that's cool." Then on to the seated pulldown exercises, then the seated presses, then to the bench press, then drop the bench to the floor for the squats and standing exercises like barbell curls and tricep push-downs. Every exercise shown was followed with a "goddamn, this is amazing!" Every demonstration ended in a sale. I knew I had something. But I had no idea what to do next.

After coming up with no ideas on how to sell the machines in quantity, and having no money, I called Diversified Products over in Long Beach. The V.P. there invited me to bring the machine over and he'd take a look at it. He gave me three hours, told me exactly what it would cost to manufacture but said he didn't want to buy the rights from me. He said they'd once paid an inventor for a Universal type machine, set it up for the Sears buyers to look at but Sears didn't want it. They said clerks would never be able to demonstrate it and they thought weightlifting was kind of a low life thing to do anyway. I'd have sold the design for \$25,000. Glad he refused my offer. We sold almost a billion dollars worth of Soloflex machines ourselves later. I asked him if he had any suggestions how I might sell these if stores weren't the answer. He suggested I try mail-order.

The thing that keyed me on the right path was a third-page color ad in *Esquire* magazine for a pair of cowboy boots. I'd

have bought them in a second but there was no phone number, just the location of two stores, one in St. Louis and one in L.A. That lost the sale for me but it did make me wonder why they weren't using an 800 number and selling direct. I'd never seen anyone advertise an 800 number, formerly called a WATS line. I knew about them because my mother was the Wing Commander's secretary at Walker Air Force Base and had shown it to me. The Air Force used WATS to connect with each other; had built thousands of trunk lines into Omaha and Salt Lake but no one was using them to connect customers to manufacturers. Our first magazine ads rang the phone off the wall.

I realized pretty early on that muscles were not socially acceptable because of the way they'd always been represented in *Spider Man* or *Outdoor Life* ads, always some overdone goon crushing someone's bones for kicking sand in his face. Someway, I had to give social permission to pump up one's muscles or we'd never have big sales. The motorcycle sellers showed me how. Every American guy wanted a 100 mph racehorse between his legs but you couldn't date anyone's daughter if you rode one. Not until Honda, Kawasaki and Yamaha ad agencies gave them permission with Norman Rockwell type ads in legitimate media. That was exactly what I had to do. Displaying a beautifully proportioned naked male upper body in a national magazine had never been done before. Perfect! It worked like a charm.



LEE'S BEEN SHOT!

Lee Chagra had almost been shot a few years earlier – by his wife. Seems one of his girlfriends had called Joanne to describe in exquisite detail some very naughty things they'd done. Lee drove home from the office not knowing about the call. Joanne came running out the front door blasting away at him with her little silver-plated .25 automatic. She missed several times. Lee took off running around the house with Joanne in hot pursuit, firing when she saw him, Lee desperately trying to get around the next corner out of sight. Now he was hunkered down, peering around a corner thinking she'd doubled back around the other way. He couldn't hear her anymore. "You mother fucker!" There was Joanne not a foot behind him, the pistol pointed straight at Lee's forehead. Click. Click. She'd run out of bullets.

This time though, Lee HAD been shot. Everyone immediately suspected Maximum John. Lee had told me and everyone else he knew that if anything ever happened to him, look to Judge John Wood. He was called “Maximum” John because he always handed down maximum sentences to drug dealers. He was draconian. Once he gave a Mexican alien nine years for a tiny amount of heroin. Upon hearing his sentence, the defendant called him a *pendejo* (asshole). Maximum tacked on 35 years to serve for contempt. He really was a *pendejo*. John Wood was the chief judge of the west Texas federal court system. He and Lee had a long history, always with Lee coming out on top, if not at trial then on appeal. Lee knew the law a lot better than the judge. Lee thought John Wood was a madman. They’d get into screaming matches on the phone in the middle of the night. He’d already had Lee indicted once on a trumped-up charge that, while dismissed for lack of evidence, pretty much ruined Lee’s law practice. Lee sincerely believed that John Wood would have him assassinated. Lee’s brother Jimmy thought so too. Judge Wood had just indicted Jimmy on a RICO charge, continuing criminal enterprises, 30 years.

It wasn’t Judge Wood who ordered the hit on Lee; it was one of Lee’s uncles. Jimmy had recently gotten another shipload of pot through and Lee had several hundred thousand dollars in his office. The uncle had been providing Lee with hookers and cocaine so knew how to get to him. He hired two black soldiers from Ft. Bliss to go to his office to rob him. Lee carried a little .25 in his boot. Maybe he reached for it. I don’t know, but one of the robbers shot him in the chest with a .22. Someone came to the office shortly after to find Lee on the

floor still breathing but unconscious. He called for an ambulance and notified the police then called Joe. Soon Lee’s office was swarming with officers and agents. They immediately started emptying out Lee’s confidential files, thinking they’d discover a treasure cove of new customers. A hospital was right across the street from Lee’s office but the cops were too busy to bother with him. They let him lie there on the floor and bleed to death. Joe picked up the suitcase full of cash and just walked out right in front of them.

It was a hell of a funeral. A thousand people showed up to pay their respects. There was not a dry eye in the place. Lots of agents showed up too – with cameras in hand to ID them. Judge Wood had been assassinated too. Jimmy was the prime suspect.



I SHOT JFK TOO



Joe, Oscar Goodman and Jimmy

I don't know if Jimmy hired Charles Harrelson to kill Judge Wood. Harrelson had just been released from prison, again, and had met Jimmy in Vegas. All those years in prison had allowed Harrelson to sharpen his mechanic skills with cards. They said he was marvelous with them. He was a notorious scammer. Jimmy was out on bail, awaiting facing Maximum John on the RICO charge and telling everyone what a crooked bastard the judge was. He'd indicted Jimmy for allegedly over-flying Midland on one of his deals, so claimed jurisdiction. It was really reaching but the judge obviously didn't care. He was out to get the Chagras any way he could.

The judge was soon lying dead in the street outside his house, sniped by a well-placed high power rifle shot. No one, I mean no one had ever assassinated a federal judge in this country before. Hundreds of federal judges had been murdered in

Colombia. It wasn't something the government wanted to get started here. It set off the most expensive criminal investigation in history. I hadn't seen or talked to Jimmy in over a year so had nothing to tell the FBI when they came calling on me. Not that I would have told them anything anyway. Thousands of people had a good reason to kill the judge. Thousands were interrogated but Jimmy was for sure the prime suspect. Someone had to be convicted. It didn't really matter whom.

Harrelson told Jimmy in Vegas that he'd taken care of the judge for him and wanted \$250,000. Jimmy puked. The feds are still convinced Jimmy hired Harrelson for the hit. Maybe he did but I never thought so. I knew Jimmy really well. He was audacious but I couldn't believe he was a killer. He went on to trial on the RICO charge, with Judge Sessions presiding and was convicted. Judge Sessions went on soon to head the FBI. Then Jimmy went to trial for ordering the assassination of Judge Wood. Oscar Goodman represented him. He was found not guilty. Oscar Goodman later became the mayor in Las Vegas. Jimmy and Lee Chagra were legends there, much loved by many, by the casinos for sure. What we think of as "the Mafia" doesn't run Vegas anymore. Wall Street, the real Mafia, bought them out.

Charles Harrelson was arrested just east of El Paso on Hwy 10. His car had a flat and he was drunk, shooting the car like it was a horse with a broken leg. When the cops told him he was under arrest for the murder of Judge John Wood, he said, "Yeah, and I shot JFK too!" Nobody believed him but years later I saw a Jack Anderson special on TV. He showed a grainy

film of the three hobos in Gucci shoes being taken out of the railroad boxcar behind the grassy knoll. Jack Anderson identified the three as E. Howard Hunt, James Earl Ray and, you guess it, Charles Harrelson. The three were released.

The federal courthouse in San Antonio is now the John H. Wood Memorial Courthouse. If it had been up to me I'd have named it the Lee Abdul Chagra Memorial Courthouse. That would be justice.



Lee Chagra



MRS. C.A. CROOK



Dreamy Marilyn, how do you put up with him?

No kidding, that was her name. She was a palm reader, a psychic. She lived in Clovis, 110 miles northeast of Roswell. Marilyn, her mom and friends drove up to see her often. I thought it was silly but if they had fun, who cares. Mrs. Crook had businessmen fly in from New York and California to see her. Clovis ain't that easy to reach so they must have really wanted her advice. Hmmm?

She told Marilyn lots of things that came true later, that she had a young daughter and that her labor had to be induced. She did. Connie was about one at the time. She said Marilyn was pregnant now with a boy and his birth would have to be induced too. Marilyn had no idea she was pregnant. Stuart couldn't have been more than a zygote at the time. She said Marilyn would have another boy and or girl later – she couldn't determine for sure but that next time she would go into labor

by herself but something would go wrong and she'd need an emergency C-section. She did. Brian just didn't want to come out. And, she had another daughter too, Molly, also by C-section. Mrs. Crook saw me flying over vast oceans and lots of money involved. Right on with that too. No way she could have known I was a pilot. She told Marilyn's friend Sharon Weathers that her father-in-law was about to have a heart attack and that she'd be divorced within the year. Also true. Sharon cried all the way home.

Marilyn saw lots of different psychics over the years but none were so accurate as Mrs. C.A. Crook. All the psychics she consulted told her she was married to the luckiest man they'd ever encountered. Definitely right about that.

I'm still unconvinced anyone can see the future. Physicists today are leaning towards believing we make our own futures with our thoughts, that matter doesn't really exist and that nothing is real but our own expectations. Not sure I believe that either. Hell, I don't know what to believe when it comes to that subject but I find it compelling to contemplate anyway.

Humans are a superstitious lot. We used to go to a Chinese restaurant in Hillsboro. The owner, a Korean lady would often sit and chat with us. She really liked Marilyn's baubles and beads. She always rubbed Marilyn's hands, said it was good luck to rub a fat lady's hands. She told me to hold up my hand to show her. There was space for water to run through between my fingers. Then she told Marilyn to hold up hers... "See, she can hold on to money!" Marilyn had wondered why she always rubbed her hands...so funny.



MAKE A FORTUNE. LOSE A FAMILY.

Years ago a feature story appeared in *Parade* magazine titled "Why the Wealthy Hide." I was already wealthy by then so the warning came too late for me. I'd already had to deal with the hostility from my parents and siblings. The gist of the article was that family and old acquaintances often, usually, became bitter about great success from one of their own. Apparently they thought it made them look bad by comparison. The whole thing really floored me. Who'd a thunk it? I mean, who thinks about that in advance? Who ever really imagines they'll get rich in the first place? I sure as hell didn't. People interviewed for the article all had the same story; those they had thought would be the happiest for them were the most resentful.

It started making sense to me later. My brothers being asked, "So Jerry got all the brains in the family, eh?" I think my parent's angst came because I had changed classes. Now I was

one of those awful rich people the politicians curse, an embarrassment to them. “You’d have more if they didn’t have so much. They’re all crooks, or lucky. Tax the bastards.” Had I ended up in a lower class I’m sure I’d have caught hell for that too. Cain and Abel is the second lesson in the Bible but who ever thinks such a thing could happen to them?

I never felt the least embarrassment from having made a fortune. It gave me time to think, money to act on things I felt were important for the community and to build the most beautiful estate one could imagine. I never believed in life after death. It didn’t make any sense. Heaven and Hell are right here, right now. The trick so far as I could see was to avoid all the Hell one could and enjoy all the Heaven one could. I may be proved wrong but I could never believe in the God I heard about in Sunday School. That wasn’t God, that was US! And who would sacrifice his own son instead of himself when the priest and general call, “Give us your son to save us all!” No God I would worship.

I am a big fan of Jesus however. He had the courage to confront his day’s institutions even if it meant his death. Nothing’s changed since then. The moneychanger’s table needs to be kicked over again, the priest and the general still run the show, an eye for an eye still rules the world. And we call ourselves Christians. See, I told you this is Hell.



THE RUSSIANS ARE COMING

We had visitors at the Soloflex factory in '92, three Russians from Portland’s Sister City, Khabarovsk, just north of North Korea. It’s a lot like Portland there, mountains, trees, beautiful scenery but much, much colder of course. It was the mayor, vice mayor and the head of a giant industrial consortium. None had been to the U.S. before and my factory was their first stop. We’d been spending lots of money promoting the Peace Bridge to help end the Cold War. Lots too, on a statewide initiative to close the Trojan Nuclear Power plant which I suppose is why they came visiting us first.

Our visitors seemed a bit tentative at first, almost ready for a fight. “How do you make everyone work so fast?” “Do you provide homes for your workers?” They settled down after seeing the whole operation and seemed satisfied with my answers. “Yes, we provide homes for our workers, in a way.

We get them productive enough so we can pay them well to buy their own homes.”

We ended the visit around the conference table. I told the translator to tell these three guys in no uncertain terms that I worked five months every year and gave every penny I made to my generals to protect myself from THEM! I had no idea how they'd respond but my figures were right. In '92 our military was consuming 40 percent of America's total industrial output in dollar value produced. To my surprise the Russians tipped back in their chairs, guffawed, patted each other on the back and – jabber jabber back to the translator – “Jerry, they want me to tell you in no uncertain terms that they work eleven months every year and give every ruble they make to their generals to protect themselves from YOU! Their figures were correct too.

The Russians walked away from their fiscal nightmare. They cut military spending by 90 percent. I presumed the U.S. would too, freeing up our labor and credit to build and rebuild the real capital of America, our infrastructure. A trillion and a half dollars worth of repairs had been ready to bid out since Gary Hart ran for president. It didn't happen. We accelerated military spending even without an enemy to use as an excuse. I'm sure Ike is rolling over in his grave.

The Russians had to get on with their next factory tour so we offered to fly them there in our helicopter. When it got out of the Hillsboro control zone our pilot removed his headset. The Russians flipped out. “What are you doing? Do the police know where we are? Does the military know where we are?”

Our pilot Kent Fordyce, now a Southwest Captain, said, “Do you know where YOU are? I don't even have to tell my wife where I'm going. This is the United States of America.” “Oh my God, said the Russians, this IS a free country!”

Well, it used to be anyway.



MY FIRST TIME



No, not THAT first time, the first time I tried to run a factory. What an experience!

In the first year of Soloflex I fired everyone in the factory on three separate occasions. I knew their failure wasn't their fault, a failure of labor is always the failure of management but I had not a clue how to remedy the situation, the situation being that the factory floor was ruled by peer pressure, like a prison yard, with the meanest guy setting the pace. No working too fast allowed. My fourth crew wasn't doing any better until I blew the time clock off the wall with my shotgun. That was on a Monday.

Our first national circulation magazine ads were hitting and I needed twenty Soloflex machines a day. The crew of twelve was only producing eight, with many mistakes. I told them

I wanted twenty machines a day or I'd empty this place out again and get another crew. They knew I wasn't kidding. From now on, I informed them, you'll work on a quota and go home when you reach it. I divided the twelve into four work teams of three people each, each team responsible for making certain parts. I tried to divide the work as equally I could. They said, "Boss, we can't possibly make that many, we're already working as fast as we can." For all I knew, they were right. I'd given them no additional equipment or tools. I shrugged and walked away. "Well, figure it out," I said. "You have 'til Friday."

They reached twenty on Thursday, staying slightly late. By Tuesday the following week one of my teams was going home at 11 am! Sales were climbing rapidly and by the third week I needed thirty machines a day. I asked the crew if they wanted more help or would they prefer a 50 percent raise. They wanted to do the work themselves. "Oh yeah, one more thing," I said, "No one goes home until everyone goes home. You guys divide the work yourselves."

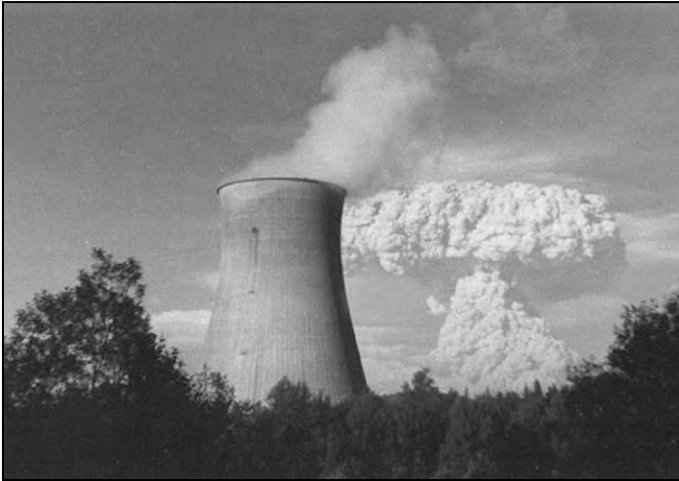
Here's the end of that story; the twelve guys who honestly believed they could produce only eight machines a day were producing forty-eight a day! They were more amazed at what they'd done than I was, which is saying a mouthful. And they were making more money than oil field workers. Mistakes dropped to nearly zero.

I learned later that this quota system had successfully been employed in the early part of our history in hemp factories. Those that employed a quota system produced four times the

output of those that worked by the hour and the workers were much happier and better paid. The collective genius of a team that really wants to get the job done is a sight to behold. All I had to do was create an environment that let them succeed.



TROJAN



Trojan with St. Helen's erupting

Marilyn and I had been supporting Lloyd Marbet's efforts to close the Trojan Nuclear Plant 35 miles upwind from Portland in the two prior elections. Lloyd, Greg Kafoury and Dan Meek had been running statewide voter initiatives to shut it down for safety reasons and having no luck at all. PGE would spend millions saying the plant was safe despite the fact they knew it wasn't. The entire nuclear industry would help fund the fight to keep it open. Lloyd didn't have a pot to piss in but each election he'd garner more votes. He was arrested more times than Martin Luther King. When the Dali Lama came to the U.S. he made a special trip to Portland to see Lloyd.

In '92 Marilyn and I ran our own initiative to close the plant. Lloyd had one on the ballot too. I figured PGE would rather not have two armies to contend with so we didn't join Lloyd's. Marilyn kept telling Lloyd he needed to put in his that the

stockholders should pay the decommissioning costs. PGE would beat voters over the head threatening the enormous costs the ratepayers would have to pay to decommission the plant if they voted to shut it down. Marilyn stuck that right up their ass with our ballot. She figured that since the stockholders had been guaranteed a great profit, they should be the ones to bear the great cost. And rightfully so.

We hired a press spokesman, Greg Tozian, to help. An activist friend, Thane Tienson recommended him to us. Greg was great, hair down to his ass but he'd go right in to a VFW hall, stare 'em down and convince them all we were right. Funny how many old farts judge a man by the length of his hair instead of the content of his character. Greg could sell anything. He was fearless. Lots of people came to our aid, our kids, their friends, all volunteering their time to circulate petitions, count the ballots; do anything. We were fighting an uphill battle for sure. The initiative angered many voters. Poor Tony Kilgore, Brian's buddy, was sucker punched to the ground as he circulated petitions. One guy, who spit on Connie as she was trying to gather signatures downstate, said he hoped the plant did blow up; kill all us fucking depraved city slickers. Millions poured in from the nuclear industry from out of state to buy TV time against the closure. Marilyn and I put out about a million and a half bucks to push ahead, sending a flyer and return postage paid signature form to every voting household in the state. Many came back with "Fuck You Assholes" written on them, usually in Crayola and usually misspelled. Gee, how hard is it to spell that?

My concern was less about the cracked steam tubes and waste and more about the fact that the pond, overloaded by double its capacity of spent fuel rods, was a terrorist's target deluxe and we were stirring up trouble all over the planet. A thin tin roof that could easily be breached to blow the water out would start a Zirconium fire that couldn't be put out and would release 1,100 Nagasaki bombs worth of Plutonium, Cesium, Nickel 95 (with a half-life of 95 thousand years!), and a whole bunch of other radioactive thingys. Had the plant melted down or the fuel pool been sabotaged, nothing within 500 miles of the plant would live, save the cockroaches. This was a gamble no one in his right mind would foist on the public, yet there it was.

We narrowly lost the election. Counting only the PGE ratepayers, we won those votes handily but the down state voters did us in. Funny, six days after the election PGE closed the plant for good, stating in order the six main points we'd been stressing throughout the election. They'd been bald face denying them up until then. Gee, had they actually read our material? The Salem Statesman Journal did a cartoon asking if PGE was lying then (or are they lying now?).

PGE had been saying that property values around the plant would nosedive if the jobs were lost there. Property values soared after it was shut down. Everyone, it seems, was breathing a sigh of relief. I know WE were. Best money we ever spent in our lives.



ED SMELOFF FROM SMUD



Hole in Davis Besse pressure lid

The most frequent question I got when arguing for our initiative to close the Trojan Nuclear plant was, “How are we going to replace that 1,000 Megawatts of power?”

I didn’t know. All I knew was that the plant was too risky to keep open. So, I set out to find some answers. I first sought out advice from the people who’d succeeded in closing Rancho Seco, the only nuclear plant that had been closed by a vote of the public. Ed Smeloff was the driving force behind that voter initiative. Rancho Seco was in Sacramento. It was a municipally owned plant so the election was local, not statewide like ours. Ed was a board member of SMUD, the Sacramento Municipal Utilities District.

Ed explained that after the closure Sacramento employed an energy conservation plan. Deciduous trees were planted

strategically around everyone's homes to provide shade in the summer and to let the sun shine through in the winter. Windows and doors were sealed, insulation added and refrigerators were replaced with energy efficient models. It didn't cost the homeowners anything to do this. Rates didn't increase and after nine months, when the refrigerators and other costs were paid off, rates dropped permanently. A large fuel efficient hi-bypass turbine engine running on natural gas was installed in the local Campbell soup factory that operated around the clock. The town got the electricity and Campbell used the heat for steam to power their factory. It was a win/win for everyone. Ed explained that conservation was the first and most important goal, the easiest, fastest and least expensive thing to do – simply stop wasting electricity. Ed came to Portland to help us educate the voters here. So did Ralph Nader.

Of course I hit the library too in my quest to find alternative energy ideas. I discovered a book, *The Phoenix Project*, by Harry Braun from Arizona. In it he described a couple of intriguing ideas. One was an invention of McDonnell Douglas the aerospace company for a solar reflector powering a sterling (external combustion) engine. Another idea was from Professor William Hieronymus, former Superintendent of Naval Shipbuilding under Admiral Rickover. This was the guy who built our nuclear powered navy and he was saying all nuclear power is “alchemy” and that all the money on earth couldn't make it safe. He'd spent the last 25 years designing offshore windmill systems. I contacted Harry and said, “Let's get some taped interviews with these guys.” Harry agreed, and did. What an eye-opener. Both of these ideas should have

been jumped on. There was just too much money and power from the nuclear industry strangling congress to let them even be considered.

Bill Hieronymus thought the U.S. Navy should be put in charge of building our hydrogen infrastructure. He said it's a socialist organization so could really get the job done, build and operate the giant off-shore windmills to produce hydrogen and oxygen, build the big tankers to retrieve both gasses. I knew that hydrogen was the cleanest energy source, leaving only clean water as a by-product, but was amazed to hear that oxygen pumped into landfills and toxic waste sites would degrade them almost overnight. Landfills are a big problem. The stuff simply doesn't degrade. A core was dug in one just outside Staten Island. A hot dog, still edible, was found wrapped in a newspaper from 1967. Yikes.

The engineers we interviewed at McDonnell Douglas said they'd been given the entire resources of the company to develop a solar power machine, a GenSet they called it. What they came up with was twice as efficient as anything to date. It alone could provide all the electricity, hydrogen and oxygen gas the country would need. And, they noted, if we'd build pipelines for the liquid hydrogen, electricity would flow through them with no resistance. About half the power generated is lost through resistance in copper wires. Our idle car factories are ideal for pumping them out. It's something we could do in a couple of years, easy. The engineers said it was rewarding to finally work on something that didn't kill people and hoped congress would fund it. No luck.

There were answers out there to the question “How are you going to replace nuclear power?” Good answers, and if not perfect they were certainly better than what we have now. It’s very discouraging to see the nuclear industry get billions in Obama’s stimulus package. Only a couple of years ago, the Davis Besse plant in Ohio had a corrosion hole in the pressure vessel lid the size of a pineapple! No one had any idea when the plants were built that radioactivity really speeds up corrosion. The lid on Davis Besse’s pressure reactor is 6.63 inches thick, made from extremely hard alloy steel. It has a 3/16 inch layer of stainless steel under it to resist corrosion. Stainless is not strong and it was bulging by the time the hole was spotted. A couple of engineers were convicted of trying to cover up the near holocaust and given a small fine and probation. All of these plants need to be closed now. Building more of them is just plain asking for disaster.



THREE AND A HALF YEARS IN HELL

Lots of feisty boys have been given the choice of jail or military school. There’s not much difference so far as I could tell; time standing still, the non-stop longing to escape. I did learn a couple of things. Walking tours at a fast clip in the hot sun with a 14 pound M-1 rifle was great for losing weight. And the semester of circuit training with barbells came in really handy when I set out to design the Soloflex machine. As for the rest, I could have learned more at the library.

Unleashing teenage boys on younger teenage boys who must obey did have some charm. Well, for the older ones anyway. First year cadets are so low they can sit on a cigarette paper and their feet won’t touch the ground. It was great fun tormenting them. It was said that a cadet returned a second year for revenge, the third because they were jaded. Some of the torture was physical but mostly it was psychological; fear.

Take the poor new cadet who was put inside a laundry bag then hauled up three floors, dragged to the window and thrown out! This was a great trick, as he was actually dragged from the second floor back down to the first; he just couldn't tell. The drop out the window was only about four feet. So funny. If you're a teenager.

It didn't take too long to realize I had no taste for blood. Or obedience to authority. I still owe NMMI 88 tours. It's on my transcript. Getting kicked out right before graduation for excessive demerits never really hindered me. I was the only one in my senior class to decline an officer's commission. Each of the others was interviewed by the real Army to see if they could pass muster. I was curious what each was asked, so asked them. They all got the same question, "Son, why do you want to be an officer in the United States Army?" Each answered the same, "Job security, Sir!" This must have been quite embarrassing to the questioner who had undoubtedly given the same answer himself when asked that question. He was ready for it though, "Son, I don't see anything secure about bullets flying over your head...ha ha." What a spin. Such bullshit.

The Army has its job security all right. We all work half the year to keep their golf courses trimmed, their country clubs all over the world spiffy, their toys the latest and greatest. Did you know the military has more golf courses than we civilians? They do. I was an Air Force brat. I've seen it, lived it and am still embarrassed by it.

One event at NMMI worth relating was a "sit-down strike" engineered by the Cadet Regimental Commander and his staff. The whole corps was quietly awaked around 2 am and herded into the auditorium to hear them out. It was staged beautifully, a single light shining down on the podium. It looked spiritual. Colonel Kelly went on for about an hour holding forth on pin pricks; first classmen tired of being treated like children, deserving of longer furloughs, higher allowances, etc. Then cardboard boxes were passed around for all to put their stripes in. Nobody would wear his rank. We'd mosey over to the mess hall instead of marching. This all sounded like great fun. Only one cadet protested. He never removed his lieutenant's button, never went along. Good thing he was a big football player or he'd have had his ass kicked for sure.

The strike lasted several weeks. The administration never acquiesced to the demands and eventually a group of cadet officers took over and the leaders were busted to private and put under house arrest for the rest of the year. Interesting, Lieutenant Ted Wright, the one cadet who had the courage to defy a mob later became the General Manager of the world's top hotel in Bangkok. I knew that boy was something special. Another like-minded officer, 24 year old B-52 Captain Hambarzumian, would end the Vietnam War by refusing to fly any more illegal bombing missions over Cambodia. He also refused to resign, forcing the military to court-marshal him. They didn't of course. They would have lost. End of story. End of that war, too. Interesting how the principled actions of one man so often change history.



Family just before joining Harold on Okinawa

MAY THE BEST SLAVES WIN

I know, you probably think slavery is something that ended long ago, old history. Not so. We are all born slaves in this world. To wit, who is supposed to provide for your food, clothing and shelter, some other guy? Not unless you use force or fraud to compel him. We haven't escaped slavery; Abraham Lincoln just changed the terms of it.

Today we're free agent slaves, free to rent our slavery, our labor, to the highest bidder, able to walk off any job without notice or repercussions. Theoretically, employers enjoy the same right, to rent slavery at what is perceived to deliver the best return. I'm no more obliged to rent labor from one person that I am from the next, no more so than I'm required to rent this apartment over that one. As an employer, a slavemaster, I'm obliged to MY master, my customers, to make the best deal

possible when renting slaves. If I don't, competition will drive me out of business.

Until the invention of money, forced slavery was a necessity in this world. None of us can survive decently without the help of others. Having no means to exchange labor voluntarily without a universally acceptable currency, we just owned each other, the owned being as needful of this exchange as the owners. Many of my former employees wanted me to just take care of them like a parent. Parents are slaves to their children. Coming naively into the workforce, the children expect it to continue. They've always been provided for. Why is it any different now? The rude awakening awaits them all.

Forced slavery still persists in dark corners though. Take the prison-industrial complex. With every prison sentence comes a bond, handed over by the courts to the Corrections Corporation of America. CCA is like the Federal Reserve, privately owned but granted a monopoly on the trade by congress. The value of each bond is dependant on the years of the sentence. The bonds are bundled up and auctioned off on Wall Street to the highest bidder, usually a bank that typically wins the bid at one-third the face value with a promise to pay the rest. The winning bidder pulls the new securities back in-house, factors them back to the original amount and typically dumps them in the money market funds. Hey, it's some of the strongest paper one could have, fully guaranteed and underwritten by the taxpayers. This is what "Get tough on crime" gets us.

The coastal Indians along the Oregon and Washington coasts owned slaves. Mostly the slaves came from around Newburg,

southwest of Portland. Living was easy there, really mild weather, plenty of berries, fish, game of all sorts. The Indians there didn't really need to band together to survive. Reportedly, they were a scruffy bunch, never bathing, no manners and no sense of community for sure. The independence they enjoyed also left them with no protection, easy prey for the tribes from Vancouver, Washington who would paddle up the Willamette River and shanghai them to trade along the coast. One Washington coast tribe made the most remarkable winter coats woven from white dog fur. No record of how many slaves it took to buy one.



A STOLEN IDENTITY



Stuart and me, newly minted Falcon 50 Captains.
Thanks Bowflex!

It is a bit grating when people say to me, “Hey, you’re the Bowflex guy aren’t you!” I’m used to it by now. I’ve been hearing it for years. It isn’t surprising since Bowflex uses our trade dress to sell their merchandise. A well-known brand is a powerful thing. When someone comes knocking on your door or TV to sell you something, a stranger standing there will most likely get the door slammed in his face. If you know them however, you’re much more likely to invite them in to hear them out.

By 1995 the cost of TV time had become cost prohibitive. Our first Superbowl ad in 1987 had cost a half-million. We paid over a million each for the two Superbowl spots we ran in 1995. We had depleted the soil, so to speak, and it’s hard to compete with a million Soloflex machines that never wear out. My only choice if I was to afford the higher media cost

was to re-design the machine out of thin wall metal and let the customer assemble it with sheet metal screws. And, have it made in China. Reducing the cost of goods and shipping weight would give us more money to spend on media to sell it. I'd rather quit business than do that.

Someone else did though. Bowflex. They copied everything we did in our ads, even using our famous model as their spokesman. The implied message was that here was the new and improved Soloflex machine. Not only was Bowflex using our trade dress and stolen trade secrets, they were telling customers who called that our machine was made in China and theirs was made in the U.S. The exact opposite was true. We sued.

Bowflex wasn't the first company to assume our trade dress to sell their products. In '92 NordicTrack had done the same thing, even going so far as to hire our writer, director, set designer, camera man, film editor, stylist and makeup person. In the discovery portion of that lawsuit we learned they had done an extensive poll to determine the Soloflex name-familiarity. It was 92 percent! Bill Clinton's name familiarity in 1992 was 92 percent and he'd just been elected President. Soloflex was a household word. After NordicTrack's insurance company heard the shocking depositions in that case they gladly gave us an \$18.5 million settlement. NordicTrack shortly went broke. It was a good company before it went public and decided to march into battle against us wearing our uniform. The brand is now owned by ICON Health & Fitness, a good company, family-operated. We let Bowflex off

the hook for \$8 million. I bought a Falcon 50 with the money. That's the jet I'd always wanted. It was everything I'd heard it was. Stuart, Kent and I headed off to Flight Safety to get our Type Ratings in it. So fun.

It baffled me why some companies would do such unprincipled things. Imitation, says Emerson, is suicide. It isn't always I guess. I had seen a very interesting film on PBS years ago down in the Bay Area. The film's producer was interviewing screenwriters, confronting them about their un-ending scripts of having a rich villain, always a crook, and asking them if they didn't think it was sending a bad message to the country. The screenwriters, reflecting on a question they'd never considered, all agreed that it did send a wrong message but every script needs a villain and this was an easy one to invent. After interviewing several of them the film switches to a California classroom, after school, with a dozen or so students hearing out an attorney who posed the question, "Your family owns an industrial company and you are filthy rich. However, if your company complies with the new environmental laws you'll lose it all. These poisons you're dumping kill people. Will you comply with the laws or keep dumping?" All the kids, without giving it a thought, said they'd keep dumping the pollutants. It was a lawyer asking the question so the cross examination began. "Would you dump the poison if it would kill your own family members?" "Oh no," they replied, "not if it would kill our own family or people we knew." Quick cut back to Norman Lear, the most successful screenwriter of the day. He'd just watched the high school kid's interview and he

looked like he'd been shot. "Oh my God," he said, "I'm just as guilty of writing these screenplays as these other writers are. I don't want to be around when these kids are running American industry."

They are running American industry today. See where it's gotten us. I've not been too kind in my reminiscences about New Mexico Military Institute but they did hammer home a very important point; an officer does not lie, cheat, steal or plagiarize. Or tolerate anyone who does. What good is fame and fortune if it comes at the price of your own self-respect?



26

ANGEL ON MY WING

Dodge City was reporting 100 foot cloud ceiling and a half-mile visibility when I started my first instrument approach that night. The minimums for the VOR approach at Dodge City are 300 feet and one mile visibility. I caught a glimpse of the runway lights directly below me as I passed over the field at 300 feet so I tried again. As I started the inbound leg on my second try, Flight Service at Dodge said the visibility had dropped to zero. I descended this time to 100 feet above the runway. Again, I caught only a brief glimpse of the lights as I flew over. I called Wichita Center to report missing the approach but by this time I'd picked up so much ice on my plane's antennas it was blocking the radios. I could hear but I couldn't transmit. The alternate airport filed on my canned flight plan was Liberal, Kansas. I didn't want to go to Liberal. The winds aloft were blowing 60 knots or better right on

my nose. Had I been able to talk to Center I'd have asked for a clearance back to Wichita but the ice was preventing me from taking that option so off I head to Liberal.

Air Traffic Controllers are a thoughtful bunch. They know what can go wrong aloft and will always do what they can to help. They always seemed to worry more about our lives than we did. They were tracking me on radar, knew my alternate and asked me to squawk "Ident" on my transponder if I could hear them. I did and could but what they were telling me wasn't good. There was no spread on the temperature and dew point at Liberal. That meant fog. Liberal was reporting one mile visibility as I started out and I could only hope it would hold until I got there – which was taking forever with the strong headwinds. It didn't hold. A few miles east of Liberal, Wichita Center advised me that visibility had dropped to zero.

The closest next field was Dalhart, Texas, straight on the course I was flying. The wind had picked up and was right on my nose at 75 mph. I didn't know if I had enough fuel to reach it and the temperature and dew point there were also indicating it would fog over as Liberal had. It was a long trip to Dalhart. Wichita Center handed me off to Albuquerque Center. The Albuquerque sector controller knew the trouble I was in. I could tell by his voice. About twenty miles out he informs me the visibility at Dalhart had dropped to zero and that he'd called Flight Service at Dalhart telling them to turn the runway lights up full blast. He'd concluded, as had I, that I had no choice but to try to land.

I had made several landings in zero visibility before. Fog is typically only a few hundred feet thick so at night the runway lights make a glow up through the fog. I saw the glow of the runway at Dalhart, configured my plane for landing and made my letdown. Just keep the wings level, landing lights off, watch your airspeed and descend. I made it. I wasn't familiar with the field so it took awhile to find the taxiway to the terminal. All fuel tanks were indicating empty. The plane holds 318 gallons. When I topped off the next morning before heading home to Dodge City, they put in 315 gallons. A Beech 18 burns 50 gallons per hour. I had three minutes of fuel left. I walked over to a motel close by and went to sleep. Or did I die and go to heaven?

I'd wondered often what Heaven would be like if it actually existed. What would you ask from St. Peter? Wouldn't you just want to be returned to everything and everybody you knew and loved, and have things better? I had often thought there was no possible way I could have survived what I had been doing. I was probably no better a pilot than those who had already been killed. Our losses flying the mail were the same as pilots flying combat in Vietnam and I'd been doing it six nights a week for years. It just didn't calculate but hey, if I can't really die, why not go ahead and push the envelope further. Who knows what might happen? An adventure if nothing else. Boy, did I get that right!



TOM TRAIL



SMB Turbine 18

Tom was an entertaining fellow. I was his replacement pilot on the Chadron mail run. Marilyn and I rented a trailer and parked it between the hangar and the airport manager's trailer figuring it was less likely to blow over in the wind that seldom blew less than 50 knots there. Lyle Kime, the airport manager and his wife Barbara were fun neighbors. That was fortunate because town was five miles east of the airport so they were the only neighbors. Lyle had some fun stories about Tom. For some reason Tom always had trouble starting the engines on the Piper Aztecs we flew on that run. Lyle watched him start out one late afternoon, taxiing to the runway on the one engine he could start. That second one just wouldn't light off for him. Lyle was amazed as he watched Tom start his takeoff with only one engine running. Tom knew if he could get the propeller windmilling in the air it would start easy. It was the stupidest

idea I'd ever heard. Lyle thought so too. He said Tom's plane did manage to limp off the ground after using the entire runway but couldn't get more than a couple of feet in the air. The plane disappeared from Lyle's sight into a wide depression about four miles across. When he caught sight of the plane again, four miles away, it was still only a few feet off the ground. Suddenly though, he heard the second engine kick in and off Tom flew.

Our company check-pilot told me some stories about Tom too. Said he couldn't fly on instruments at all without the autopilot, had tried to shoot an ILS approach backwards on his six month check-ride. SMB was having a hard time finding a pilot to fly that run. Most had quit after one night so I guess that explains why they kept Tom on for as long as they did. Tom had crashed lots of planes. He'd even crashed an Aircoupe. Grandma could have flown an Aircoupe. Tom moved over to the Valentine run to North Platte. After he buzzed the town's main street below the building heights one morning, SMB finally fired him. Valentine had only one-story buildings on Main Street so he was really flying low. Jon Kennedy took over the run. Jon was cartoon pilot handsome and a great guy. We'd take off in formation heading home from North Platte and dogfight, using the nose landing light as our toy gun. I sure learned it was impossible to shake someone once they're on your tail. They can always turn inside you. Whichever one of us got behind would win.

Chadron was a nice little town, great people, but had only one movie theatre that played three or four documentaries over

and over. They did have a drive-in theatre, open only in the three summer months. The drive-in played only one movie, the Love Bug, but they played it twice – a double feature! Ha. The town had lots of Indians nearby. Barbara had more than one drunk Indian knock on her trailer door wanting in, for what she didn't know. They never seemed to know either. They never hurt anyone except themselves. When their cars died they took it literally; just left them beside the road and got another one. My lieutenant in the National Guard was the Indian Agent at the Pine Ridge Reservation. He told me they had the hardest time trying to get the Indians to quit roasting their dogs alive over a spit. That was the preferred method of cooking dog and they simply would not stop doing it that way regardless of the fines or jail time imposed when caught.

My National Guard unit was based in Alliance, sixty miles south of Chadron. They were a gung-ho outfit. It was an artillery unit, with 120-millimeter cannons mounted on tank bodies. It was kinda fun when we actually got to shoot them. I was flying six nights a week so I hardly got any sleep on those drill weekends. I'd almost always fall asleep driving back from Alliance to Chadron Sunday nights. And I'd usually fall asleep flying the run that night too. Several months before summer camp the unit started doubling up on drills to be better prepared. It was a nightmare. I missed a couple of drills so they sent me a letter saying I was excused from all further duty pending my induction into the active service. I couldn't believe it. Actually, I didn't believe it. The Vietnam War was raging and the services had more AWOL soldiers than they knew what to do with already. They sure as hell

didn't want any National Guard fuck-ups too. After nine months of wondering if I was right, I got a letter telling me they had reconsidered and that I had 45 days to find another unit to join. 44 days later I started looking for one. I was flying the Oshkosh run by this time. I found a helicopter unit with an opening in West Bend, fifty miles south. Now I was an official helicopter mechanic. I wouldn't make a pimple on a real mechanic's ass but it hardly mattered. They had the sense to never let me turn a wrench. I got promoted again to PFC, one stripe. What a soldier.

That was the year of Kent State. I remember walking in to the Air Mail Facility at Des Moines that night, asking the ten pilots sitting around the table what they thought of it. They all said that more students should have been shot. I was the odd man out again. I felt ashamed at what the Guardsmen had done. I thought it was truly a cowardly act. Maybe the other pilots were just in a sour mood that night. The postal workers were only ten feet away sorting through a huge pile of charred mail from one of our planes that had crashed and burned the night before, killing the pilot. On that point the other pilots and I were in total agreement – better him than us. A few months later Barbara called Marilyn from Chadron to tell her that Lyle had been killed in a plane crash. All the Kime men died flying. His brother had been killed two years earlier in a helicopter that just came apart in the air. Lyle's dad had killed himself doing loops in a Super Cub. He did them from ground level, bouncing his wheels off the ground at the bottom of each loop. He'd done it perfectly hundreds of times except for the last one.



THE GYRODYNE Y-RON NAVY ROTORCYCLE

I had always wanted to fly something where I could sit out in the open with no visible means of support. I imagined it would be like one of those flying dreams but more vivid. I read an article in an experimental aircraft magazine written by the top German Ace of WWII. This guy had over 250 kills and had flown just about every kind of airplane made, including an F-104, but he had just flown a Breezy for the first time and was doing a pilot report on it. A Breezy is a homebuilt plane, licensed in the experimental category, just an open frame with the wings and engine behind the pilot out of view. From the pilot's seat it's just like sitting on a chair that flies, nothing to restrict one's vision at all. The Ace wrote that ten feet felt like a hundred, a hundred felt like a thousand and a thousand felt like ten thousand! He loved it. Said it was the finest plane he'd ever flown. It really made me want to try it.

I don't remember where I first saw a picture of the Navy Rotorcycle but it was love at first sight. I bugged the factory on Long Island to sell me one but they kept refusing. They said nobody there could get one airworthy and even if they could they didn't want the liability. I kept nagging them. Nagging is really underrated. It makes everything happen in this world. Eventually, after three years, they said there was a fellow in Los Angeles who had got one flying and gave me his name, Avo Kalaydjian. I called Avo, went to see him and talked him into selling me a couple of them. He had just bought all the Gyrodyne inventory and intellectual rights. Avo was a mechanical genius. He'd been raised in Cairo, his Armenian family having escaped the Turkish genocide to settle there. At 15 he had been the general manager of a municipal power station in Cairo. Avo came to the U.S. at 17 and made his fortune. He quickly put two Rotorcycles together for me, new Porche racing engines, everything brought to zero time tolerances. I couldn't wait to fly them.

Nothing I'd ever flown gave me the thrill of this thing. I kept one at home on my farm in Oregon, the other at our winter place in Palm Springs. Both were great places to fly. Oregon is so pretty and green. Palm Springs is so ugly and brown but south of there by the Salton Sea are beautiful date groves and flower farms. The flower farms were giant squares of every color imaginable, the flowers being grown to add fragrances to soaps and lotions. Hovering low over them in the Rotorcycle was as close to heaven as one could get; multiple eyegasms for sure and the fragrance was overwhelming.

It was fun too to fly among the flocks of Pelicans, chase coyotes and packs of wild dogs and to zip around the Chocolate Mountains. One winter there, Bell Helicopters was flight-testing a new machine, the Bell 427, a twin-engine beauty. All four of the test pilots had been eyeballing my contraption. They would come over to inspect it, saying how fun it looked. I invited them each to take it for a spin. I didn't have to ask twice. Each came back from his flight with a giant grin, each saying, "That's the most fun I've EVER had flying anything!" They weren't telling me anything I didn't know. They let me fly the 427 too. If you ever have three million bucks burning a hole in your pocket you should get a 427. It's amazing.

Gyrodyne only sold nine Rotorcycles to the Navy. Mostly they sold remote controlled drones based on the same co-axial design. That was in the days before telemetry, digital autopilots and GPS. Crashes were frequent. The Fleet Admiral called the Gyrodyne factory to complain. Gyrodyne told him they'd sold six to the Japs and they hadn't crashed any so it must be his fault. The Admiral got so mad he had every one of the drones thrown overboard...ha. None of the nine piloted Rotorcycles ever crashed. The navy flew them from 1960 thru 1969, logging about 500 hours on each of them. The engines only lasted 35 hours between overhauls. They'd just toss the run-out engines overboard and put on brand new ones. Not having the budget of the U.S. Navy, I gave mine back to Avo after both engines failed in flight, right at the 35 hour limit. My sons and I got a couple of hundred sorties out of them. It was worth every penny but we were really disappointed to see them go. Marilyn wasn't.

Nowadays I fly a Mosquito Ultralight helicopter. Same open seating as the Rotorcycle. Sure wish the weather would warm up.



WEAPONS TESTING



Navy Rotorcycle

U.S. Representative Denny Smith, R-OR, had a reputation for holding the Pentagon's feet to the fire. It was a reputation he'd fostered on his district with no semblance of truth to it. He gave the Pentagon any and everything they asked for. The longer Marilyn watched this charade, the madder she got.

We'd been producing lots of infomercials for Soloflex and knew how to make the best use of cable TV buys. She produced a film, "Don't vote for Denny Smith" and looped it non-stop in his district on open channels from 5pm until 8am every day. Denny was ahead of the democrat challenger, Mike Kopetski, 65 to 35 in the polls. After two weeks of running her film they were in a dead heat. It was an independent expenditure. Kopetski had no idea we were going to do it and we sure didn't need his permission.

Denny immediately put out press releases saying the people behind the film were those rascals wanting to legalize drugs and that I was a marketing genius and it just wasn't fair. All we did was illustrate his actual voting record in a way that couldn't be misunderstood. The film, the whole idea, was Marilyn's but I always got the credit or blame for anything we did. In one scene illustrating the military's share of the budget, I played the general sitting around a table carving up the American apple pie: A tiny slice for the elderly, played by Marilyn's mom, a tiny slice for the overtaxed middle class family, played by Kim Anderson, who worked for us, and her husband and child and another tiny slice for the poor, played by Ed Gowans, our photographer's assistant. When it was time to take my slice, two thirds of the pie, I grinned behind my mirrored glasses and blew cigar smoke on everyone. Ha.

Denny complained but had to admit that we had not misrepresented his voting record so there was nothing he could do but be embarrassed. I got a call later from the Pentagon. The guy said they loved our film. I said "Hey, we were just weapon's testing. And why would it make you happy, Denny gave you guys everything you ever asked for?" He replied, "We don't need him. He was always making us look bad with his "watch-dog" crap. We're glad to see him go."

Denny had almost screwed himself earlier. A cohort of his was pitching some new RPG on a street corner in D.C. to an unidentified person and it accidentally fired, the grenade hitting a gas pump across the street and burning a woman badly. The guy took off running but was caught later.

Nothing ever came of it but a small story in the Oregonian, soon forgotten. Only one in fifty incumbents loses an election, I suppose under the notion that "He may be an idiot but he's OUR idiot." Denny won the election despite our film by a few hundred votes but it made the DNC take notice of Kopetski. They funded his next try and he won handily.

Denny Smith wasn't our congressman, Les AuCoin was, but as Marilyn pointed out to a TV interviewer asking her why she did it, she replied, "They're ALL our congressmen. If you'd done your job, I wouldn't have had to do it for you." I was really proud of her.



BACK TO SCHOOL



Exercise and Eat Right™
I own the trademark on it.
Good advice. Me at 64.

Lunch with the University of Oregon MBA faculty was always fun. I was lecturing there as an “Executive in Residence.” I really enjoyed sharing my experiences with the students but especially with the faculty.

At one lunch I drew out two organizational charts, one of the Holy Roman Empire and one of the American Church of State. They were identical except near the bottom. In the Holy Roman Empire the parish priest was a federal judge. He didn’t handle criminal cases; only civil cases but his decisions were law. One could appeal his decision of course, to the Archbishop, to the Bishop, to the Cardinal or on to the College of Cardinals if the case was deemed that important. We have our corresponding courts in this country. The point I was trying to make with the faculty is that in the Holy Roman system from whence we

came, it only took one lawyer to resolve a dispute. Now it takes three!

A King's job is to invent the law, judge the law and enforce the law. We're told it is an improvement to trifurcate these three roles, to separate these powers as a check on each. I beg to differ. The first law of organization is that when there is more than one person responsible – nobody is. We complain when the Executive enforces a bad law. He says, "I don't make the law, I just enforce it. If you don't like it, go have your Legislator change it." The Legislator says, "Gee, with 435 lawyers we're bound to make some mistakes, go talk to the Judge." The Judge glares at you like the fool you are and says, "The best way to get a bad law off the books is to strictly enforce it. That's what I'm doing so go back to your Legislator before I find you in contempt!" This runaround leaves everyone wondering just who to shoot.

I don't know if they still do it but for years Parade Magazine published a poll of the top twenty professions/trades in their order of trustworthiness and respect. Architects usually headed the list but always at the bottom in slots 18, 19 and 20 were Lawyer, Politician and Used Car Salesman. Lawyers and Politicians are the Priests in our Church of State. If that's what we think of them do we really have any faith in our Church?

Just under the Priest in our Church of State are the Monks and Nuns who teach the catechism. The Dean remarked that nobody had ever called him a Monk before and what did I mean by Church of State. I reminded him of the flowing purple and red ecclesiastical robes and hats the faculty wears

at graduation and of the military always being represented on stage and of the prayers always offered and even the graduates in their priestly robes. What's not to understand?

I stopped being invited after that. That was OK. I had made my point. The great enlightenment writer Denis Diderot made this point too when he said, "I'll be happy when I see the last General strangled with the guts of the last Priest." Amen to that, brother.



THE AMERICAN WAY



Wilson Family totem pole

Do I feel any embarrassment at having been a pot smuggler? No more than I'm embarrassed that the United States got its start smuggling tobacco, a actual drug. Nor am I embarrassed that this country came to dominate world shipping by flaunting the safety rules of the sea to get products to market a half-cent cheaper than the competition. Hey, it's the American way. Besides, I saw the good being done for the Colombians from the pin money of Gringo pot smokers. I saw sidewalks and roads and bridges and schools being built from this trade. I was OK with what I was doing. No one was harmed by it. I loved the Colombians. I loved the Mexicans. They're Americans too; deserving of everything life has to offer.

I was fortunate to have had all those hours reading everything in the seditious Chadron Public Library. One should never lie to children. I learned the real history of our empire and I

loved it. It was exciting; greatly inspiring to an ambitious youth like myself. I'd also built up lots of resentment towards our government, a mafia to be reckoned with for sure. Protection is their racket. They've really got it locked in. That's why we hire tough guys to run things. Our wanna-be union bosses scare us every election with threats like, "Your neighbors are not to be trusted! Crime is on the increase! The kids are running wild in the streets! The foreign devils are out to get us – we need tougher laws, more prisons, a BIGGER army!" Preying on human frailty and prejudice, on everyone's desire to be better than someone else, the pitch works every time. It worked for Nixon just like it worked for Hitler. Never, ever, trust anyone who has a strong desire to punish.

It doesn't occur to us that our public servants have become our masters. From our own weakness we've given our servants the power to dictate our lives in detail, confiscate our property and put us in prison. Eighty percent of us are so afraid we want to give our servants the power to execute us! Now, who's really the servant and who's really the master? We need to buck up, muster our courage and stop falling for this bullshit. Most of your neighbors will risk their lives to help you. Crime has always been the same. We have no natural enemies but could fend them off easily if one popped up.

It was quite satisfying demonstrating that we have no real air defense despite what the government wanted us to believe. Not that we need any air defense. Nor do we need to devote half our labor, credit and material resources to our night watchman's department. Why didn't the Japanese invade our

shores after Pearl Harbor? We had no army to fight them off. It was because they knew we were all armed and they'd be slaughtered if they tried. We need a professional army to defend ourselves like we need a hole in the head. Don't you realize what a danger a professional army is to a democracy? Read Alexis deTocqueville's *Democracy in America* and you will.

Gee, I didn't mean to get off on this subject. I wanted to keep this book light and airy. I'll delete this chapter. Nah, I'll leave it in.



A D D E N D U M

AMERICA, INC.

[FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES, MAR. 3, 1992]

(Extension of Remarks March 31, 1992)

CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, [Page: E890]

HON. LES AUCOIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 1992

MR. AUCOIN. Mr. Speaker, a constituent of mine, Jerry Wilson of Hillsboro, OR, recently published a cogent and compelling essay in the New York Times. "America, Inc." provides a blueprint that Members of Congress would do well to consider as we work on legislation to get the economy moving again.

Jerry Wilson has a keen sense of what this country needs. America doesn't need more defense spending, more tanks or more high-tech weapons systems. What America needs is investment in infrastructure – in roads, in developing new sources of energy and in enhancing the environment. And most of all, this country needs to make a substantial investment in human capital.

I commend this essay to my colleagues.

(Edited for brevity)

Our state is not answering the right questions. Does it really matter how we re-divide the profits of America by tinkering with the tax code when there are no profits to divide? And how does our fashioning laws that require us to imprison the highest percentage of any population in the world serve the country? Such topics agitate society without adding to its resources. Had I spent my time as president of Soloflex, Inc. trying to answer these kinds of questions there would be no Soloflex, Inc. As the president of my company the question I must ask, and answer, is, “What are we going to build?” And then get to it!

If the real business of America is business, which it is, then shouldn't we concentrate first on conducting good public business? We are the most successful business in the history of nations. We should pursue that grand tradition with all the vigor and genius our parents displayed when they built it.

Unfortunately, America was sidetracked from its business goal of using labor to improve our lives by creating new wealth. World War II diverted American labor away from capital building and into building war expenses. The war ended 47 years ago but war expense spending didn't. It just keeps growing and growing. America's military now consumes 40 percent of our total industrial output! That means four of every ten workers in factory America works for or in the night watchman's department, almost doubling the cost of everything else we

produce. How can we possibly compete with industrial nations that have a sane ratio of workers guarding their factory? Obviously, we can't until we redirect that 40 percent of our labor resource back into building productive, wealth producing assets. To make that transition we need only identify what it is we need to build, those projects that make the best use of our labor, credit and material resources; those things that actually back up our paper money instead of inflate it. It used to be against the law to put our credit into expenses unless congress had declared a war. Changing the law to declare a tank as suddenly a capital item when it is actually an expense item does not make a tank capital. A rose by any other name is still a rose. Capital is defined in standard accounting practices as something that can be employed to save more than it cost to build. How, I ask, can a tank or a bomb be used to increase productivity?

Voters become confused when the word “public” is mentioned. Why wouldn't they since our public servants do not present us with an annual report in acceptable standard accounting practices. Our public wealth comprises 89 percent of our total wealth. Only 11 percent of wealth in America is owned privately. Had we acted on the recommendation of the American Society of Certified Public Accountants and demanded standard accounting practices from our government we would not be in this mess. You would get an annual report every year showing your share of America, Inc., this joint stock, for-profit corporation. When was the last time you got a dividend? I can tell you when you got a set of phony books.

The Department of Commerce estimates the total net worth of America this year at \$62 Trillion. Subtract the \$6.82 Trillion in private wealth and the \$4 Trillion national debt and your share of America, Inc. is worth around \$200,000. You can tell those foreign devils when they come begging to go inherit their own fortune!

So, just where did this fortune of ours come from? We had nothing to start with, only labor, credit and material. Well, that's all it takes. America, a corporation, has the same "Corporate Resolution to Borrow" as all privately owned corporations. We can gamble our equity by betting on our labor with new credit, also known as paper money. Of course, most of it isn't paper at all, just an accounting notation but it works. If labor builds capital worth the amount of credit issued there should be no debt, only new wealth created by our labor and material. Abraham Lincoln said that labor is prior to capital, that capital would not exist if labor had not first existed and that labor deserves the first consideration. He's just talking about jobs. Not make-work jobs, not jobs making expense items. He meant jobs building real capital; roads, bridges, ports, energy systems, water systems – those things we all employ to increase our productivity to raise our standard of living.

There is, in fact, no end to the capital projects we could be productively employed doing. Right now there is \$1.5 Trillion in repairs to the existing infrastructure ready to bid out. Forty percent of our 550,000 bridges need repair. Twenty percent of them have been declared by the Corp of Engineers as obsolete

and dangerous. Just bidding these identified repairs out to private companies would end unemployment overnight. Nothing is stopping us. Well, congress is but who are they but our servants. We only need direct them to get off their ass and do it. What else do we need? An interstate water system. High speed rail. Renewable energy systems. Environmental clean up. Reforestation. Well, it never ends, does it? We can always make our land more valuable, our cities more livable, our infrastructure more productive for commerce and industry. That presumes of course, that we will act in our own best interest, that we will mobilize our courage and exercise the powers that make us masters of our own fate. We need goals larger than ourselves to pull us back together and give us back our pride. And leave the world a better place than we found it.

JERRY L. WILSON

Shareholder, America, Inc.



SECOND THOUGHTS

INVENTING
THE FUTURE



We all love our country. We all fear our government. What we fear, we hate. The only institution we do trust is the military but we should remember that every soldier raises his right arm and swears an oath to kill anyone they're pointed at, foreign or domestic. Don't think for a second they won't shoot you if ordered to do so. Congress is disgraced, having sold us out to the highest bidder. Lawyers, the rulers of society by default, are generally held in contempt until you need one. Few but the wealthy ever do. Rich people are not trusted, nor are the poor. The middle class thinks itself the only repository of virtue but virtue is hardly determined by income. The simple fact is, we're all criminals. It's our government's fault but as the man said, every nation has the government it deserves.

Every taxpayer knows much of the money they hand over goes to making nuclear bombs and other heinous killing devices.

By our own criminal code, that makes every taxpayer a co-conspirator to commit mass murder. If you even talked about building a bomb yourself you'd get 15 years. If you actually built one with the intent to use it you'd never get out of prison. So how is it any less a crime if we build them to murder non-tribal members? We're told in Sunday school not to kill but will be put in prison and called cowards if we don't kill when drafted. Only the courageous few who can defy a mob will refuse.

I know the world is a semi-dangerous place. Foreign and domestic devils do exist but just how big a threat are they really? How likely are they to ever touch your life unless you poke a stick at 'em? Not much. Certainly not the threat those who sell you protection say they are. Of course, those who sell you protection exaggerate. That's how they make their living. Don't buy it. Those very people and institutions running the protection racket are the ones most likely to get you killed. They've already enslaved us by their demagoguery.

So what should a state do? And what shouldn't a state do? None in history have been without glaring defects. All have been oppressive to some or most of their citizens. None have lasted long. All have been corrupt. Ever since reading Emerson I've given much thought to inventing a state that might function properly, a system that can't be corrupted by personality. I'm an inventor. That's what I do. I can't think of anything the world needs more.

I've not finished with it yet and I have no idea if it would sell but I'll give you some hints of the direction I'm heading.

Unlike any state before, it will not be founded on force but on the notion of love and mutual respect. It would offer honest banking. Free dispute resolution. Honest accounting of our mutually owned assets. Dividends when the company makes a profit. Honest work for everyone who wants it but a living wage to all. It would not tax. This state would have no power to punish. Sound impossible? Well, I may discover in the end that it is but I don't think so.

Stay tuned.



Find Waldo!