

I will *never* work for *him* again!

(This was written some twenty-five years ago now.)

I awoke with a start yesterday morning after having had an awful nightmare. The dream was that I was sitting in a Boeing manager's office with a friend. I could not identify the manager. It turns out that I was just 'helping out', i. e., retired and moonlighting in the dream. We talked about our project and how we should proceed and were ready to leave when the manager said, "It says here that you must wear your badge either on your lapel or on a chain or string around your neck."

Thinking it had been a memo he had received, I laughed and said, "Who sent that?"

He said, "No one. It's in the Boeing Employee guidelines."

I said, "So," or some such comment still laughing.

Very seriously he appended, "So fix it!"

I looked from him to the badge hanging on my shirt pocket and back and said, "The intention of the guideline is obvious: The badge should be visible to anyone from the front at about chest level. Mine is."

He repeated the guideline again for my benefit.

I remember the terror in my dream of wondering whether I could afford to quit. It was very traumatic; I needed to consult with Kay, but I also felt an urgency to act swiftly. I found myself in the personnel director's office asking whether I could, in fact, just turn in my badge and leave without notice since I had already retired. She said she didn't know and shortly had the manager and his boss both in her office with my manager's boss assuring me that there was no problem with how I chose to wear my badge and my manager still reciting guidelines. As they were going at it, I walked out with my badge still situated as the object of interest on the personnel director's desk and I was mad.

I awoke still enraged. I mean *really* mad. Kay sensed that I was upset about something and said, "What's wrong," to which I replied only, "That damned Boeing!"

She chuckled as she asked, "Do you think you may have worked there too long?"

"You better believe it!" I said, still mad, and I was not in too good a mood all day.

I sent a description of my dream out as an e-mail to my Promethean friends because Fred _____ (in Ontario) had posted a message about having had a dream about picking up a snake and remembering from the dream how bad it smelled, wondering whether anyone could recall having experienced a smell during a dream.

In response to my e-mail I received a reply from David S_____ (in England) saying that my dream was in fact very close to many realities in his life. In part he said: "I experienced a number of (real life) incidents like this with my manager..." to which I replied to the email list:

"Probably everyone who has worked for others for a living has experienced some ugly variant of this. My father was a very gentle, hardworking man who, although in construction work which tends to be quite seasonal, was virtually never out of work. I remember on one occasion, however, when he, having been insulted by a situation on his job, called the owner of the construction company who, although a friend of my father, had a son-in-law who had become superintendent and had insulted my father severely by placing someone whose carpentry my father did not respect in charge over him. It is one of my most vivid early memories. My father explained the situation to the owner and then added, 'I won't say that I will never work for you again, because no one

knows what eventualities lie ahead, but I don't *believe* I ever will.' Most would have said, 'I will *never* work for you again!' Period. But my father's statement worked for him although I felt strangely hurt that he would not have had the confidence to say "Never!" and let the ambiguous future take care of itself.



my dad on lunch break – probably just finished saying grace

“In my career there were too many occasions when I became so frustrated with a manager that I immediately found another assignment which was usually fairly easy for me at Boeing. On these occasions, I usually said to myself, "I will *never* work for him again!" But it turns out that one does *not* know what "eventualities lie ahead" and so I was repeatedly faced with decisions about whether I would eat my unspoken words in order to get a challenging technical assignment. And having one's family depend on one's income is a serious constraint on freedom.

Many of my previous bosses became high level managers, Vice Presidents and Presidents of various companies in the Boeing industrial complex so that eventually I came to think that if I did not work directly *for* one of those I had 'quit', that my integrity would remain intact. But I was never convinced by such arguments. The managers typically didn't even let on that I had been upset and seemed anxious enough to have me back anytime – I guess that's why they were managers.

“When I first hired into Boeing, I shared the ride with another new hire with a physics degree the same year as mine, Bill C____. We became quite close friends and shared the ride for a considerable time. Eventually we lost contact with each other in the folds of the drapery at Boeing with well over a hundred thousand employees in the Northwest alone at that time.

“I happened to encounter Bill sometime later and found out that he was no longer employed by Boeing. I asked him about his new job, and he said he really didn't have much in the way of a job – I think he drove truck for UPS at the time. I asked him why he had quit Boeing in that case. He replied that he had been irritated at his management for some time and had wondered whether he should quit. This had gone on for a while and in the muddle of thinking about it he realized that he would *never* have thought a second time about such a decision before he had come to work at Boeing and so he walked straight down to personnel and quit. He said it scared him that he had become that insensitized to his own feelings. He spent time working in warehouses, driving a UPS truck, and selling real estate; I don't know what ever happened to him. But he was a *real* person and one of the smartest I ever met at Boeing – very unlike many of the zombies that one encounters in the mega workplace – but he paid the going price for it.”

Further on in Dave's E-mail he had said, "The unnecessary exercise of power over others is one of the games people play to soothe their own inner hurts and frustrations – a way of proving to themselves that they have significance." That was a truth to which I rejoined:

“That is part of why I decided a long time ago that I would avoid newly assigned managers. A new manager must crack the toughest senior expert in his group as a show of power to everyone in the group before he can be comfortable with himself, and I became increasingly uncomfortable with that. The first time I ever witnessed this phenomenon was when a young upstart took over a group whose engineers occupied an adjoining cubicle. Glen Miller, an unlikely name for an engineer, held more patents than any engineer working for Boeing Space and Defense at the time – at least that was what I was told one time. So the new manager who had never accomplished anything but two-bit domination over others whose work he could not even comprehend put on a lengthy campaign of insults and humiliations of Glen at which Glen just smiled without comment.”

I never learned to do that.