

THE
BODY GAME

TRUE
SCANS

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FOREWORD

This is a story that was too revealing to break; a story where those in the know found it too provocative to let out.

Nobody thought it would become a problem -- a sensitive situation that most would have thought to be unimportant; but one, nevertheless capable of upsetting the whole “apple cart”.

This is a tale about a deserving people without a voice; a people accredited with some of the world's greatest discoveries and achievements; yet a diminished breed, now considered to be ignored and neglected -- the recalcitrant engineer!

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CHAPTER 1

INDOCTRINATION

He was a novice, a flyweight; more realistically he was a newcomer to the game. He was extremely well dressed. In fact, that first day he may have been wearing his very best suit. He stood out in the crowd as did the other novices -- almost as a raw recruit seeing his first assault. Little did he know that this was his first real combative action.

This new soldier, Eddie, was fighting for his survival but didn't know it. Even more importantly he was in enemy territory and didn't even know who the enemy was, and, for that matter, even that there was an enemy.

Eddie entered a processing area and was asked to fill out several forms. He had his picture taken and was treated like a V.I.P. All seemed safe enough. People he officially came into contact with treated him so nice he didn't even realize his actions and discussions were limited to certain preselected individuals. He was given a physical examination and passed with flying colors. Everything seemed to be proceeding so efficiently. Eddie thought that it was easier to enter this facility than to be drafted, and he may well have been correct. At that time little did he know that he was the most valuable thing of all -- a human resource.

This first day was memorable, perhaps even inspirational!

Eddie was directed to a large area where he was encouraged to associate with a group of male and female individuals. He noticed that these people also were very well dressed.

Thereafter a person asked for the attention of all new hires in the area. He had a great deal of brochures and made incredible attempts to circulate them waving his hands hysterically. There was one difference though -- this man's clothes weren't that nice; in fact they were downright shabby. The man was wearing a thin tie, a faded patterned sport jacket that had a foul odor to it, black conservative pants, a white shirt, funny looking socks, and black shoes. It was Eddie's first inkling that this man might be hiding a story, but he had no idea of what kind.

The next hour was spent covering the most amazing benefits under the sun. Emphasis continually was placed on retirement. Since the lecturer appeared to be in his late fifties, maybe this was the reason for it. Eddie was curious about this because the overwhelming majority of people in this room were young. There were two or three older men mixed into this young crowd, and they too, mysteriously enough, were dressed in fashion similar to the man propounding benefits.

Upon ending his presentation, the elderly man adjourned just as fast as he had started. Eddie exchanged names with a pretty woman he was standing next to. He then was herded out into another room where he stood at a window and stated his name.

Eddie was escorted through a large antechamber that led to a doorway exiting into a vaulted fenced area. He was amazed when for the first time he viewed the enchanting world awaiting him within company fences and gates. He witnessed a mirrored courtyard checkered by many people running to and fro. All of them were carrying paper in their hands. There existed a diverse multi-building complex amidst various water fountains and small motorized carts. All of a sudden Eddie realized that this company was a complete city unto itself!

Following a map that he received during his orientation, he proceeded to a stucco laboratory and asked for some directions. Thereafter he arrived at a small make-shift trailer and, proceeding through the door at its far end found himself on a large platform that was busy with several workers. He was directed up a stairway into a smoke filled area where a particularly large individual was pointed out.

Before he could utter a word, the voracious gentleman said, "You must be Eddie. We've been expecting you all morning. You are to work for a lead man by the name of Bill Smith. He is sitting right over there."

This man without introducing himself to Eddie had pointed to a short fellow sitting at the very back of a musty room. Eddie introduced himself and was shown his seat. He then received a work assignment that seemed substantially larger than anything he had encountered in college. It appeared that at the very moment he was poised to ask some questions, Bill indicated that he had to conduct some other business and vanished into the smoke.

Eddie felt numb all over. He couldn't quite understand why he had relocated in such a beautiful area of the country only to be given a work assignment in a hazy, poorly ventilated, and windowless place. He reassured himself that he was hired as an engineer. In fact his offer letter from the company contained the clause, "I wish to extend an official offer of employment to you as an Electrical Design Engineer....."

He breathed a small sigh of relief. It just occurred to him that he had proceeded from a magnificent parlor where he received his orientation to a dingy workstation and that these two places were part of the same company.

A man seated to Eddie's left said, "Hi, my name is Alfredo". He also politely asked whether Eddie felt that he resembled some famous actor from years past.

Eddie felt a shock wave go through his body, and turning saw an elderly man with wizened face and dark eyes shooting all over his personage. Regaining his composure he returned, "Hello my name is Eddie. How long have you been working here?"

Old Alfredo had a fixed rhetorical response, "I've been here for six years on this go-around. You see, I am a two-time loser. My first escapade with this company lasted ten years. I started my own business after that, failed miserably, and then returned here for my second stay."

After a while the people working in Eddie's area all seemed to disappear; not all at one time, mind you, but at strategically patterned intervals that seemed to blend into the work structure of the group. He checked his watch which read 11:45 A.M. At this point the whole floor was deserted.

He figured that it must be lunch time, and having nobody to talk to, pulled out all of the papers that he had received during orientation. One obscure piece of information was entitled, "Work Schedule". The document indicated that it was the responsibility of each supervisor to establish exact working hours. It also indicated that employees were permitted 45 minutes for lunch.

He figured that lunch at the company must be an extended period of time that probably was broken down into staggered departmental shifts. He looked further through the data, but couldn't find any other information on this subject.

He took out another form that showed locations of buildings within the company. Looking at the index he located the proper page for the cafeteria.

Figuring that the people in his group started vanishing about 11:30, Eddie estimated that if he returned to his desk no later than 12:15 everything should be in order. By this time fifteen minutes were left for lunch so he made the best of it.

It was easy to find the cafeteria. There was a great deal of hustle and bustle in the area. There were two lines for lunch: The first was for quick sandwiches, and the second for hot plates and salads. Thereafter the line seemed to converge into a third help yourself dessert area. Lastly, it terminated at a person ringing up a cash register.

Everything seemed to operate so efficiently. Naturally, Eddie found himself between the initial two lines trying to figure out where to go next. He noticed that one of the lines moved much faster than the other. Short of time he elected the faster line. As he waited his turn, he realized that no menus or price information were posted. This puzzled him.

Watching the person in front of him, he became aware that he was in a line that provided mostly sandwiches. He saw a meat cutter and, by the time his turn arrived, found himself ordering a pastrami on rye. The server politely said, "no pastrami" and so Eddie settled for an egg salad on white toast.

Moving along quickly and obtaining a drink, he made his way to the cash register line. He was given a fair price for his lunch and entered a large dining area.

He felt embarrassed because each table had perhaps seven or eight chairs under it. Most tables were greatly occupied by people. He located a table that was not taken and honored it as his own for the next few minutes.

The sandwich was very good and he finished it and his drink very quickly. His eyes kept darting about the huge cafeteria noticing the various people present.

Eddie saw the very woman that he was talking to during orientation. She was involved in a lively conversation at a table close by. He was troubled by this since he was all alone.

Looking at his watch, he read 12:32 P.M. Getting up he raced over to a conveyer belt located at the other side of the cafeteria. He managed his way out of the building while placing all of his utensils in the dirty silverware troughs and dumping his empty tray onto the conveyer belt.

Upon arriving at his desk he surveyed the area and still didn't notice the presence of about half of the group. Bill didn't appear to be around either which reassured him to some extent.

Since Eddie had time available he decided to try to disseminate what tasks he was supposed to accomplish. A pile of drawings lay on his desk that he began to review. His task was to upgrade certain equipment for new design improving performance in various areas that Bill had redlined.

He felt frustrated because everything in the drawings referred to other documents that he didn't have at his disposal.

He decided to develop a game plan for coping with the new problems that he was experiencing. No longer would Eddie bother anyone else in his group for directions fearing that other employees possibly might misinterpret these intentions as an insufficiency to complete his work properly. And obviously, this poor opinion easily could get back to Bill Smith through word of mouth.

Eddie preferred to befriend a person he could share confidences with that was outside of his group. Then he could engage in information exchanges without worrying about improper views reaching his immediate superior. He decided to resolve his problems totally on his own unless Bill specifically initiated direct involvement in his tasks.

He wondered where all the drawings were that he was looking for. Staring at a map, he located the library.

This company wasn't at all like school. Eddie told Alfredo that he was going to the library and would be back in a short time. Alfredo, who didn't respond, flashed him a look of indifference.

Arriving at the library he noticed many manuscripts were not accessible. On the other hand, it appeared that most books and publications were handy on shelves. He noticed a pile of empty forms that people were filling out like crazy. Upon completion these forms were given to a lady behind a desk.

Eddie took one of these forms and read it. It asked for Drawing Numbers, Quantities, etc. He then realized what was going on. Drawings were reprinted by a whole group of people who occupied the room adjoining the library. Originals were kept in files behind the librarian's desk and were not accessible to employees for fear that information could be altered without company authorization.

Eddie completed the form, gave it to the librarian, and eagerly introduced himself. The lady seemed quite flattered that he showed so much concern over this deliberate acquaintance. Smiling she asked if he were new at the company. Exuberantly Eddie chimed back that this was his first day working after being the recipient of a B.S.E.E. The lady appeared to be in her early forties and was charmed by this whole affair. Immediately Eddie felt a degree of confidence developing between this person and himself.

He said, "How long will it take until I receive a copy of the drawings listed on this form?"

The lady said that generally it takes one-half to one working day. The proper procedure was to return to the library at that time for pickup. Drawings will be available in folded piles lying on the corner desk of the library. Eddie's name will appear on the package belonging to him.

Upon returning to his workstation, he noticed Bill Smith's dark eyes pursuing him. Eddie figured that if Bill wanted something that he would come over to see him. It was disquieting to learn that he did not approach only to remain in his seat.

Looking around him, Eddie realized that all of the employees seemed to be very busy -- all except the ones telling stories about very unrelated consequences.

Eddie really wondered what was going on. Some of the older people were standing around socializing as if they didn't have a care in the world. This activity seemed to function in perfect unison with the remainder of employees who seemed to be working with their heads down as if the whole world depended on the outcome. Being the novice that he was, Eddie wasn't familiar with the engineering jargon for this second category of workers who gave the appearance of "all asses and elbows".

He again looked back in the direction of his supervisor. Bill Smith did not provide a single clue he was aware this dual activity was in process. It was almost as if there were a certain group of prima donnas in the department who could do whatever they wished while

the majority of young and energetic workers had to bear the burden of carrying the extra load.

Bill's eyes seemed to single out Eddie in the crowd, even though other people appeared to be acting out of line. Eddie sensed a definite degree of stress in his face. For apparently no particular reason, his supervisor seemed to have "murder in his eyes".

At the end of an aisle an engineer was motioning for Eddie to come over to his desk. Upon arrival, he was told to report to the personnel office.

He told Alfredo where he was going and that he'd be back before quitting hour. Alfredo didn't answer, but this time presented an expression of disdain.

Walking over to the personnel office, Eddie marveled at all of the ongoing activities. Passing through a manufacturing area, he saw large baths to chemically coat finished equipment; he was enthralled with the machining, fabrication, assembly, and rework operations.

As he exited the manufacturing building he again noticed all of the people hurrying about. This excited him to no end.

Eddie definitely was thinking about the right things. He made Dean's List four years straight at a good engineering school back East. He had enough education to know that he didn't always have the right answers, but he did know where to go to find them.

The socioeconomic impact of this company upon the community undoubtedly was enormous. Eddie was standing on a huge precipice. The first layer in his bird's-eye view consisted of approximately 10,000 employees scurrying about the company doing a wide variety of assorted tasks. The whole operation had a magical cohesion to it where all of the independent activities appeared to come together forming final products.

This employee base, whose company lighting bill alone could have been in the area of about \$400,000 per month, was supported by a much larger family base, maybe three or four times that size. Each of these families in turn had their own large heating, entertainment, education, and food bills each month.

This whole enterprise indeed was a magnificent superstructure. As general layoffs would occur within a company of this size and bearing, huge reverberations could be felt throughout many of the cities' non-aerospace related businesses and service sectors. If a large proportion of people were to be laid off at any given period, and were not absorbed by other concerns located in the same general vicinity, implications could be far reaching affecting such business mainstays as real estate, restaurants, etc.

Eddie found Susie in the personnel area and supplied her with all the necessary forms she previously had itemized in his offer letter. He presented a copy of his birth certificate, and

of his Bachelor of Science Degree in Electrical Engineering. He was asked to sign many forms. Those papers relating to benefits that he couldn't make a decision upon were left in his hands for later resolution.

Eddie noticed that this young lady was rather bossy. She didn't appear to be very well educated, but had a knack for assuming complete authority in all areas. Since the entire discussion centered primarily on copying official documents and obtaining proper signatures, Eddie didn't show much concern.

Looking around, he noticed many similar conversations taking place in an area containing semiprivate offices. There were very few private offices, but these too seemed to be in constant use.

Susie was reviewing all of the forms to verify that proper signatures were affixed, that all documents were indeed valid, and that all papers were accounted for. During this period Eddie again was lost in deep thought. He wondered why most of the people visiting the semiprivate offices appeared to be young engineers, while older "management types" generally frequented the larger private offices. During a period of about twenty minutes, only one younger person was directed into a private office, and he was escorted by an older person who appeared to be his supervisor.

Eddie had just concluded his first encounter with a professional recruiter. His engineering vocabulary was not yet quite up to par. If it were, then he would have characterized this fine lady as nothing more than a common little "personnel puke". Certainly, this would have put things in much better perspective for him.

Eddie left the area only to be confronted by a largely disorganized, and impatient crowd of people being walked out of the company. Since he was returning to his workstation, he definitely was proceeding upstream to this flow. He arrived, only to learn that his work area was completely deserted. Checking his watch, it was only ten minutes after quitting time. Already he could see an occasional janitor moving about the more remote areas of the floor. Besides this, the only thing that remained was the smoke, and that actually didn't dissipate for quite some time to come.

Eddie decided to leave for home and caught the back end of the traffic. There were perhaps only four or five exit areas out of the parking lot, and these all were dead stopped because of no right-of-way given onto the outlet roadways. Eddie read in the papers that a large volume of accidents were reported in the vicinity. It was felt that introduction of stop lights would slow up the greater flow of traffic to an extent that even further frustration and delays could result. As such only one light was installed and three times the number of cars were trying to get out of this exit than any other.

This was a large inconvenience because not even a single policeman was on hand to manage the whole operation. Considering that he would have to experience this every

working day, Eddie anticipated it might be far smarter to leave work a few minutes early to preclude the problem.

Upon returning to his apartment, Eddie changed his clothes. Promptly he went out to the tennis court to discuss various issues with a few of his friends. He knew that he was a good judge of character, and it was easy to judge these tennis players since he could see how they played the game.

When Eddie mentioned the company where he had just been, his friends instead preferred to get on with the game. This bothered him a great deal. Finally one of the older players indicated the firm was nothing but a large amusement park and that Eddie shouldn't pay it a great deal of concern. And so he forgot about his problems and directed his mind to the tennis match that he was now obliged to play.

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CHAPTER 2

HEARTS

What is a phasmagorical voyage?
A trip through Elysian Fields;
An experience rocketing through
Time at almost the speed of light.

Perhaps it is traveling through virgin
Territory that belongs to the
Queen of Hearts!

Maybe it includes riding sidesaddle
On a horse through the valleys
Of Spain--

To each of us I am sure that it represents
Something quite different.

The sea rushed in announcing its cool breeze amidst the hot summer sun. Sometimes the effected coolness could be felt for as much as thirty miles inland. This was glorious compensation for the dry climate indigenous to that part of the country. Greater evidence was actual desert terrain situated further to the east over the mountains.

Eddie was dreaming about the Memorial Day holiday he had just experienced when suddenly he was awakened by Bill Smith. Bill announced that a design review was being planned and that he wanted Eddie to attend. He was made well aware of the areas that he was to be responsible for at the review. He was given two weeks to develop and finalize his design to the degree that it was to be discussed with many other topics at the review.

At this time Eddie thought it would be prudent to ask what kind of things he needed to know or bring along with him during this meeting. Realistically this was a very complex question; perhaps one of the most difficult to answer in this kind of a business. Eddie recognized that Bill knew absolutely nothing about what he was accomplishing. All he knew was that Eddie was involved in an initial task concerning equipment upgrade. Bill never had come around to get apprised on Eddie's progress during the six months that he now was working at the plant.

Bill explained that he would accompany Eddie to the review. He stated that oftentimes the intent of the review is to identify items that should be improved upon, changed, or corrected during a project's development. He also indicated that sometimes the review has

a secondary purpose of presenting information exchanges that might affect other projects, designs, or deliverable items. In this manner, new understandings also could be dispatched to modify other designs and to engender faster or more cost efficient development.

By this time Eddie had formed the opinion that Bill was a very knowledgeable man; however, for some reason, he really didn't take an active interest in what was happening. He never considered discrimination to be an issue because Bill appeared to exhibit this apathy towards everyone in his department equally.

He concluded that Bill wasn't interested in any of the specifics of his design. And so he decided not to inform Bill of his ideas until such very time when they were to be disclosed to the remainder of attendees at the design review.

Eddie used a technique that he had learned in school to assess all essential aspects of what he had developed thus far. He started by reviewing his notes regarding the upgrade task exactly as Bill had explained it to him. He had definite views by this time that the existing design had some weak spots where certain elements in it were at least twenty years out-of-date. Most aspects of the design were five years, or older. Few of the design areas employed relatively new technology; these portions of schematic easily were identified since the drawings usually were supplemented by Engineering Orders (E.O.'s) that "flagged" such areas and updated old technology to newer designs.

Eddie had drawn multi-colored lines on his schematics to indicate which areas pertained to the very old parts, the middle aged parts, and the newer parts. Unfortunately he didn't realize at the time the impact that changing these parts would have had upon other company support groups. He never heard the word "logistics" before. Even if he did, he would not have known how it impacted his design. He was not familiar with a series of other disciplines also, such as configuration management, value engineering, quality assurance, provisioning, and reliability. Naturally one only could suspect that his decisions would be limited by his lack of understanding in these areas; also that Bill Smith would provide support in those areas in which Eddie was not yet well versed. When the time came, though, Bill didn't pay any concern whatsoever.

During Eddie's review of the drawings, he assessed oldest technologies first. This took a great deal of research. Various components had mysterious part numbers associated with them that he had to decipher.

Drawing parts lists at the company showed two columns of numbers: The first being the part procurement specification numbers; the second, generic numbers. The problem was that in many instances part procurement specification numbers appeared in both columns. This threw Eddie off since he didn't recognize these kinds of electrical part numbers. He never suspected that these numbers identified other in-house company documents; and these in turn specified the generic part numbers that he was looking for.

About three months earlier Eddie asked Alfredo where documents were located that specified parts information. He figured this was a safe question since it appeared that he possessed prior knowledge of the company's operation by the way in which he phrased it.

Eddie was astounded by Alfredo's response. He was told that this information was available in the Parts Area, otherwise known as the Components Engineering Department. Afterwards he realized that he could have determined this without Alfredo's help merely by looking up department functions in the company phone book. After this, Eddie decided to ask Alfredo questions only as a last resort.

Having received directions over the phone, he was on his way to the Parts Area. No longer was Eddie in the habit of explaining his whereabouts to anyone. This was based upon other people in the group not making it public when they left the area. There was not even a sign out board for group employees. To Eddie it appeared to be a very haphazard way to run a company. Because it was extraordinarily large, one could be absent for great periods of time -- virtually forever. One could perhaps even leave the company without being noticed.

Once arriving at the Components Engineering Department, Eddie was directed by one of the many secretaries to a self asserting hybrid specialist .

Eddie now was independent enough to get around the company by himself. He understood the difference between secretaries, women engineers, and common personnel pukes; the "pukes" being the easiest to distinguish because of their extremely high visibility.

Secretaries seemed to congregate in groups and had a habit of doing a great amount of laughing. Woman engineers, on the other hand, oftentimes were quiet people. Just as in college, these women oftentimes were not attractive. However, because of their intimate working association with male engineers, they appeared to be the most socially prominent people in the company. Eddie also learned that generally it would not take long for them to become friendly with department managers. Engineering and aerospace companies always tried to recruit additional women in order to present a positive social image.

Eddie readily made friends with the hybrid specialist. He noticed that he was able to obtain more information from him during one discussion than from Bill Smith in six months. The only problem with talking to this person was that he was extremely busy. The phones in the Components Engineering Department continually were ringing off the hook. Calls were generated from a multiple of vendors that were trying to sell products to the company. Project people would ask for guidance on matters about contract compliance. Design engineers, such as Eddie, were overrunning the area with all kinds of questions.

Eddie didn't want to take up much of the man's time. He was directed to multitudinous volumes of in-house procurement drawings, specifications, and microfiche files.

The Components Engineering group was organized as follows: One engineer was responsible for integrated circuits; another had passive electrical parts; a third was a mechanical parts packaging expert; etc. These people were highly supportive.

Due to sheer volume of people at the company, employees in this area had absolutely no idea who Eddie was, or even to which department he belonged. Here Eddie felt free to ask questions at will since there was little chance that word of his apparent "information vacuum" would ever make it back to his supervisor.

Eddie's first "right from the heart" question was why people in the Components Group were so supportive, while other employees in the company appeared to be less concerned about his own welfare. The hybrid specialist didn't seem at all surprised by Eddie's interest. It was almost as if had heard these types of things being raised many times before.

The specialist merely stated that he worked for a support group. The components people were there to answer any and all questions that engineers might ask, and also to render any services requested which could expedite product delivery. Eddie was informed that many support groups existed at the plant.

Eddie discussed architectural issues with the hybrid gentleman giving procurement specification and generic part numbers for a recommended microprocessor peripheral. He asked if this was what the company preferred to use in present applications. Surprisingly, the expert just said that he didn't know. He further added he could not make part selection decisions for the company itself -- that was Eddie's task.

As such, the specialist only could state his own views. Eddie had to determine when they were adequate for intended design applications, or were compatible with what the company had expected under particular circumstances.

Eddie formulated the concept that each employee in the company had only part of the solution; to obtain a complete answer involved incorporating many ideas into one homogeneous company philosophy by means of project and design engineering integration. In the engineering community this is termed "design by committee".

Eddie felt somewhat frustrated because he learned that people were not in the habit of committing themselves to decisions in behalf of the company. Naturally employees wouldn't mind taking credit for providing proper solutions to problems. However, they appeared to be more afraid of receiving blame for any negative consequences resulting from faulty recommendations. Furthermore, he noticed that people seemed to clam up when certain questions associated with "gray areas" were posed.

Checking his watch, Eddie realized that the workday was concluding. Again it was time to go home and hazard the traffic. He clocked twenty-five minutes before finally making his left turn onto the roadway from a company exit. Even though he owned a relatively

new automobile that had great acceleration, he had to "floor it" in order to merge into the flow of traffic.

Looking through his rearview mirror he noticed a van approaching. In an instant Eddie literally could feel the driver's heart pounding right through the rear cabin of his automobile. Again using his rearview, he couldn't discern any space between his automobile and the van that pursued.

Eddie, being from the East Coast, calmly and coolly pulled out of the driving lane into the slower lane to his right. There were no vehicles in this lane to obstruct Eddie from completing his acceleration at a normal uninterrupted pace. Knowing this driving business, he let the van to his left pass him and didn't look over. In this way, Eddie didn't even acknowledge that he had seen it in the first place.

The van driver was enraged by all of this in addition to the fact that he had to slightly slow his vehicle when Eddie, without giving notice, pulled out of his driving lane. It was easily forgotten, however, since another vehicle now was inhibiting the van driver's progress; he had to confront this new situation, and no longer could give Eddie his undivided attention.

Back to the tennis court! Eddie started a limited discussion about employment. Again it was repelled with a standard disinterest to discuss the subject. One new term emerged, however, that Eddie hadn't heard before. He was told not to worry since all the firm stood for was one giant revolving door.

He slept well that evening as the result of indulging in a large amount of exercise and social activity. As his alarm clock rang the next morning he didn't want to go to work at all. He was permitted ten sick days per year and considered using his first one at that time. He shelved the idea for future reference and commenced upon his usual routine of preparing for work.

In transit, the traffic congestion problem of yesterday still was imprinted on Eddie's mind. To be quite frank, he couldn't quite comprehend why an engineering company with so much cumulative design capability didn't impose staggered work shifts to preclude a traffic bottle up during the same time everyday. He resolved that he would give up some of his invaluable tennis and social time to work overtime for a while. In this way he would overcome this traffic dilemma. One of the reasons for his coming out West was to get away from the traffic problems he had experienced on the East Coast.

Eddie incorporated a new habit into his daily routine worthy of mention. He didn't see much reason to involve himself with social activities taking place in the company cafeteria at lunch time. As such, he decided that he would take walks during lunch hour to learn exactly what else was going on around the plant.

He had been following this plan for about one month now. At one time he sited people who were traversing the plant's periphery getting supplemental exercise. He noticed that a

number of people were taking this walk. Everyone seemed to circle the company in the counter-clockwise direction for some reason or other that he just couldn't fathom.

Eddie broke off this routine after about one week. Afterwards he started taking walks inside the plant wandering through mazes of corridors he had never seen before. By this time he had a good idea of his own personal whereabouts and the plant's size. This he determined from studies he conducted walking the periphery of the plant; he also closely reviewed the map given him during his orientation.

During these internal trips, Eddie noticed wonderful new things. He scrutinized test equipment that he could not identify; he envisioned marvelously large undertakings affecting prototypes, mock-ups, and production assemblies.

Eddie observed that people never complained when he passed by. They were supportive, especially when asking questions about certain machines or processes. He realized that the greatest proportion of people in the test areas just sat at their workstations during lunch time due to the great distance they had to travel to the cafeteria. Others congregated at confectionery stands located at the ends of various hallways.

One day Eddie was traveling through a room that was entirely unoccupied. He felt a little funny being all alone in this area. Coming from beyond it he heard some loud laughing. In that the voices were not those of women secretaries, but of men, this was an unusual occurrence at the plant. Leaving Eddie with much conjecture, he had the distinct feeling that someone might be angry if he were to be noticed all alone in the area. So he was about to leave when two young people came out of the noisy area and passed right by him. They continued about their business as if they didn't even realize Eddie was in the room watching them. This was enough to heighten his curiosity enough to overcome his hesitancy, whereby he entered the room heading straight for the noise.

Eddie couldn't believe his eyes. Above all, why would such an enterprise take place in this plant? Well Eddie didn't realize it, but he had just experienced a phasmagorical voyage! Without any advanced notice, he awkwardly stumbled upon an unusual company card game. It was a fantastic affair literally brimming with human activity. Not only were players present, but also many spectators.

He wasn't afraid to mix right in with these people. Since they all possessed a keen interest in the events taking place, they completely ignored his presence. He assumed the only reason for this game must be for purposes of gambling. Looking at the table and not noticing any money or chips, he incorrectly suspected that they might pay each other privately after the game had concluded and the crowds left.

Immediately he got caught up in the game's intensity. This whole operation interested Eddie and he found himself returning during lunch period time and time again.

The same people usually played in the game. The number of players from day to day varied from four to six. Sometimes a player left the game and a spectator filled in; on rarer occasions, the seat remained unoccupied.

This whole situation jogged something in Eddie's mind, but he couldn't quite place it. He felt almost as if he had been there before, or knew the people; but he just couldn't make the connection.

A robust player at the game was drawing a great deal of attention. Eddie found him to be quite humorous. For some strange reason he always acted extremely apologetic. This man actually would apologize for playing certain cards. This Eddie found to be completely hilarious. What's more, when offering these apologies, the whole table of players and associated spectators had the habit of breaking out into an uproarious, resounding laughter. In fact everyone laughed except one card player who didn't appear to appreciate the whole proceeding. Interest focused upon this unhappy person who generally would groan or curse after the laughter culminated. Thereafter, a lower level of discussions and ensuing laughter would erupt.

It was easy to see that these players were great friends. Eddie felt that they must have gone back a long way together.

The spectators resembled "seconds" accompanying a pistol duel. Each one seemed to be magnetically attracted to one or more of the players in the game. Their loyalties weren't lasting, however, since the spectators oftentimes would sway with the ebbs and flows of the card game. Spectators seemed a little more fidgety than the players. They would attend the game and sometimes abruptly have to leave, whereas the players generally would stay throughout the entire lunch period. Eddie became so fascinated with this whole endeavor that he soon attended as the game's number one spectator.

There was another person at the game who had equal stature to the humorous man. He seemed to chair the action, but in a benevolent manner. All actions seemed to pass through his presence for consideration. During this process, the other players always acted very polite and never interrupted. It was a well known fact that this didn't reflect their true character either. Their real personalities surfaced only during other portions of the game. It was obvious to Eddie why this was so. The game took place at this man's work area. Anybody who didn't get along with him simply couldn't partake in the festivities.

All of a sudden it became clear to Eddie exactly what this game reminded him of. This was more than a card game. What it closely resembled was a tea party! The chairperson for the game wielded a small ruler. He would use it in much the same way that a judge might employ his gavel to conduct business. Eddie was mesmerized by the whole event. He began to realize that he not only was on a phasmagorical voyage, but exactly why this was that kind of a trip.

Now, the objective of this game is relatively simple: Not to accrue points. In other words, the player with the lowest point score wins. The Queen of Spades has special significance. Whoever gets it becomes the recipient of thirteen points. This is bad because total points available in any one card hand is twenty-six. This means the "Lady", as she often is referred to, amounts to a total of half of the aggravation which can be levied during any one complete playing hand. It is only fitting that this card game be accorded its secondary name entitled,

"Screw Your Buddy".

The other thirteen points are in the form of "heart" cards appearing in the deck. This is the reason for the game's primary title, "Hearts".

The soundings of the spectators and players were the result of transactions involving the "Lady". Naturally since players didn't want to be the recipients of this unenviable card, they wanted to maintain good relationships with other players in the game. In this way it was hoped that no animosities or grudges would develop between players, thereby ensuring that people would have no adverse reasons for holding the "Lady" hoping to lay it off on would-be agitators. This explained why the humorous individual, Burgess, always was apologizing. This meant that he had just given the Queen of Spades to some other player and didn't want to antagonize him to the point that the recipient would go after him on the next go-around.

The intent of the game is to jointly go after the player with the lowest cumulative point score. However, as personal rivalries would develop, this always was not the case. The chairperson, Phil, exerted his influence in this area. He was responsible for deciding when the "true intent" of the game was being followed or violated. In other words, he provided the most important game function -- maintaining order!

Burgess and Phil were great friends. They also had their differences, of course, evidenced by the fact that they partook in this vicious little game against one another once per day.

This game was exhilarating to Eddie since it reminded him of rivalries he experienced in his tennis matches. He definitely could see himself becoming involved in the Hearts game because of his highly competitive spirit.

The other main player-protagonists in this festivity were Howard, George, and Harvey.

Howard, without a doubt, was most often the recipient of the "Lady". He further seemed to be the brunt of all resultant jokes that also went along with this distinction. He wasn't very happy about it either. His mental faculties always were very much on guard as a result. Underneath all this acting, Howard was a very sincere person. The game evidently was a major cause for undermining his nicer traits, replacing them with little but a rude and cynical shell.

Players tried their best to antagonize Howard. Due to his gentle nature, nothing much seemed to bother him. The only real challenge emerged when Howard would bear the brunt of a common "bend over" joke. This Howard couldn't seem to tolerate. Since the other players were aware of this, they would very articulately work this kind of reference into the everyday discussions that took place.

For example Phil once said to Burgess, "Did you fix the drain pipes in your kitchen last night?"

Burgess responded, "No, because I am too heavy to get under the sink. I had to call in a specialist who could easily bend over and look up at the same time in order to complete the job."

As expected, all eyes would turn in Howard's direction. As usual, he was playing his hand without paying any particular attention to petty conversations about the table. So, the game characteristically would just slow down thereby notifying Howard that many participants were focusing upon his unattractive form.

Then Howard stated, "What the hell are you all looking at now? Haven't you ever seen a man play cards before?"

Phil, presiding the game, butt in for clarification purposes, "Burgess was just talking about the man that was bending over at his house last night. I was just wondering who he was."

From this point on, the whole room was in heavy turmoil. Spectators were cracking up, and players were jockeying for vocal and card player supremacy.

Discussions of this nature continued throughout the lunch period. It was noticed that Burgess would exhibit particular interest in subject matter regarding Howard -- more so than any other player or spectator in the crowd. Exactly why this occurred, Eddie didn't quite understand. For example, Burgess was in the habit of periodically introducing terms such as "sweet", "belong", "yours", and "mine" and applying them to Howard in limited conversation. Burgess kept the discussions so vibrant that one could never ascertain just how much was conjecture, how much was real, and what everything was based upon in the first place.

Burgess also would jump in on the opportunity to reference a little brown area easily sited whenever the bend over issue arose.

Maybe this whole area of vocal exchange was the reason that Eddie soon focused upon another fact. He learned that Burgess had another peculiar fetish: He always would talk about young women whom he had encountered in the strangest of places. He never did explain what he was doing with these coeds since he was an older married man. Obviously, Burgess did not discuss his wife at the game.

George was the fourth permanent player in the group. He was coming very close to retirement age. He was an independent "cuss" to say the least. He stood up for himself at all times, and didn't care for anyone, even Phil, to defend him.

George acted as if he had come to the company directly from a farm in the Midwest. En route, he apparently forgot to attend school. This lack of education didn't appear to bother him either.

Well George had his curious ways, the company had its strange mode of operation, and the two weren't even remotely connected. George was at the plant long enough where this recognizable incompatibility was considered acceptable. He was allowed to perform his job without education "by the powers to be" since he was viewed as the "last of a dying breed".

This was similar in many respects to other older engineers working at the company who also never received a degree. The fact that these people had aspired to some of the higher positions of responsibility in the company was all the more reason why this lack of "pedigree" was an extremely private, and sensitive, issue.

Oftentimes older non-degreed employees were managers of degreed professionals. This was a difficult situation. The Personnel Department had strict hiring rules and regulations requiring the proper engineering and business credentials for all managers now being recruited at the company.

Non-degreed managers, likened to buffalo by many of the younger employees, very rarely were able to secure comparable positions outside of the firm. Degreed professionals also were in constant contention for these few jobs as they would become available in the engineering community.

Higher level managers understood that knowledgeable people inside the plant possessed degrees and continually sought their support to correct these apparent "special situations". This presented a real dilemma since these older people usually had some personal ties with higher level managers. The secret was to keep these "good old boys" on the payroll, but at a lower rate of pay. The engineering jargon for this is that the good old boys stayed on at the company because they became "locked-in". And in order to conceal this practice from some of the younger engineering troops, as review time came up once a year, the non-degreed good old boys received excellent praise for services rendered, but inadequate financial compensation. They also had enough experience not to argue this fact too vehemently with their superiors.

Naturally, George followed the habit of never telling anybody about his personal life. Of note also is that he rarely, if ever, participated in those kind of discussions that pertained to Howard in a "quasi-sexual" respect.

George always was late for work and didn't much care either. He wasn't the type of person that was what you might call "prompt" or "easily motivated". In addition to this "remarkable" work record, George took a lot of sick days -- much more than the prescribed limit. He smoked cigars as if they were "going out of style". Nobody at the game would dare say a word about the powerful odor they emanated. One easily could tell that this card playing area definitely was not a place for women to frequent during lunch time.

Last on the list of regular players was Harvey. He was the contracts genius about the firm. Eddie conceived of him as a lawyer, rather than an engineer. This applied only to his attitude, however. With respect to his attire, Harvey fell into the engineering end of things.

This man indeed was a very specially "cloned" individual. One might suspect that his mother wanted him to be a lawyer since childbirth, but that his dad probably owned a small engineering firm that he hoped his son would manage and operate as his successor. Eddie expected that there were very few people "cut from the same mold" as Harvey.

Harvey didn't adhere to the lunch hour time limits. In that he would be a very hard man to replace, it wasn't mandatory that he report back to his work area exactly on time. Harvey had the perfect temperament to go along with his job. He was a freelance type, not in the independent sense as George, mind you, but in the way he could hold his own in any and all conversations with a matter of sufficiency.

Why he was part of this syndication of company oddballs is a real good question. Perhaps it was because he appreciated people who showed their real personalities without fear of reprisal.

Eddie now understood that certain people were permitted to "bend the rules" to meet their own personal interests. The card game was just one example of this. It was a very loud and offensive activity that obviously was not in the company's best interests.

The history on the card game is that it was being played as far back as when the plant itself first came into existence. Since that time, Phil was manager of the group that occupied office space next to the card game area. Also, worthy of note, was that he began working at the plant the very first day that it opened.

Eddie now realized what tremendous authority Phil had with the organization. He was surprised how unassuming Phil really was in light of all of this. He surmised that Phil probably had the authority to resolve any dispute that might occur at the plant. What he didn't know was that Phil never would ask another person at the company for a personal favor -- it was just not his style. Not that his friendship with the other "higher ups" in the company wasn't that great, because it was; everybody loved Phil! But he only cared about his card game and didn't want to get embroiled in company politics.

In conclusion, what had developed was this: When Phil came to the plant, he took the large work area over for his own -- knowing full well that the storage area in the back was a perfectly concealed natural place to run a card game.

Other card games were taking place at the company. The difference was that these other games were operated under company conditions: There absolutely was no noise or improper language permitted. The other games always were limited to a few players so that major attention wouldn't be drawn to the area of cardplay. When these rules were not adhered to, the game mysteriously just ceased to exist.

Eddie wondered if anyone ever complained about Phil's game. He concluded that most probably did who knew of its existence. He wondered then, how it could be allowed to continue.

Like usual, Eddie was right on base. There were several complaints over the years concerning Phil's game. As a result, management adopted the position that this remote area was a locality that people did not have to frequent if they really didn't want to. They also regarded the area as secluded enough so that a card game didn't disturb people outside of the area.

These were the bounds that Phil had to conduct his game under: He wasn't allowed to tolerate any noise in excess of a bomb blast or a sonic boom.

Since Phil got to this area first and staked it out as his very own, he was permitted eminent domain over it for as long as he remained at the plant.

CHAPTER 3

ASSIMILATION

Eddie just had completed final preparations for the upcoming design review. It was Monday morning and he was functioning at a very slow pace. People talked to him about business matters, but, by his demeanor you could tell that Eddie definitely was in a fog.

As lunch hour rolled around, he placed his physical frame into overdrive. Becoming ecstatic, he strided over to the card game to get a good spectator's spot. Eddie now was in the habit of occupying the space directly over Burgess' left shoulder. In his way he could learn the fundamentals of Hearts, follow the strategy Burgess used to "screw his buddies", and assess how he would interweave conversations and jokes into the framework of cardplay.

This particular lunch hour was destined to be memorable -- one that Eddie never would forget. He was asked to be a player for the first time! George was sick once too much recently and it seriously was affecting the stability of the game. Evidently, George now was demonstrating a disinterest with Hearts and this infuriated Phil. So as interim punishment to George, and an attempt to bolster game moral, Eddie was to fill his spot.

Eddie did a very smart thing -- he looked to Phil for an endorsement before entering the game. Phil recognized this as a fine gesture only to commemorate the moment by nodding his approval with a smile. If smiles could talk it would have said, "Watch out people, it looks as if we have a sly one here!"

Right from the start, Eddie played his cards "like a man possessed". Excepting Howard, all other regular players quickly became aware of this. Spectators were searching for indicators as to what impact Eddie's cardplay might have upon the game. Frantically they nervously rushed around the card table in order to see how everyone was coping with the added competition. The regulars definitely were very good at their game. Moreover, Eddie was one sharp engineer who remembered most of the cards put into play; coupled with the fact that he already had a good idea of how Burgess played his cards, he presented himself as a legitimate contender.

With new impetus, the game quieted down early on. Jokes dwindled to a passing fad. Howard seemed to be elated by this event. Players were forced to concentrate harder upon the game. Eddie felt excitement in the air; he sensed people scrutinizing his character based upon the very way he played his cards.

George was one excellent Hearts player in his time. Recently, however, his talents had deteriorated tremendously due to a combination of senility and apathy towards the game. When he did partake in the game, He simply failed to remember which cards were being played. Other people realized that the card game had become less challenging for quite some time now. Eddie's play revitalized things, introducing a new competitive atmosphere that rivaled the days of old. Players reacted as if this were a shot in the arm. To say the least, it was truly exhilarating.

Even though it was left unmentioned, general consensus was that it had become necessary to locate a replacement player for George. And so Eddie was being eyed for the job. It was evident that when George would find out about what was going on, things could get out of control.

Eddie's arrival at the game did reflect good timing. He also had received loyalty points from Phil for his continued prior attendance as a spectator. Yes it was true; the reason Eddie was receiving so much attention was that he was being groomed for the number one position as a starting Hearts player.

For Eddie, the design review was a joyous event which even exceeded expectations. The conference room was brimming with activity. Each and every person put on his very best face to impress other participants. There was a good blend of managers and engineers on hand.

Inside the conference room, a table encompassed almost the whole floor area. Only a small amount of space was available around the room periphery to allow for seating. It was very difficult for observers to pass behind seated participants. A much smarter approach might have been to obtain a smaller table for this area since nobody could reach its center anyway. The only way it might be reached would be to clip papers onto the end of a broomstick. The real reason for this overkill in table size was to project an image of authority for decision makers.

The review was presided over by the project manager. Sometimes the customer would attend these functions and assume direction. However, since this was not a critical design review, the customer was absent. This was because the firm had to agree on Eddie's design, as well as those of other engineers, before they could be presented to the customer.

Bill Smith entered the review about five minutes late. Nevertheless it was just thirty seconds before the meeting was called to order. He looked as if he were particularly busy and a little disturbed about something. He did show proper etiquette, however, because even he was required to make "points" with other people in attendance.

Inside, personel represented many company disciplines. Most vacant seats were being filled. Attendees were present from design, support, logistics, contracts, components, reliability, test, manufacturing, quality assurance, materials, stress, drafting, configuration management, provisioning, cost estimating, material control, purchasing, etc. Delegates

were present to replace managers who could not attend. The whole undertaking really "opened Eddie's eyes".

Company experts would be sent for as required. Sometimes questions would remain unresolved. In these instances, they would be "put on hold" while meeting attendees awaited the arrival of "cognizant" engineers who possessed adequate technical sufficiency to remedy associated problems. If any of these people couldn't be reached or participate, personnel of lesser knowledge always would be directed to take up the slack.

This reminded Eddie of a penitentiary system where inmates would be called upon to service the warden's smallest needs. Similarly, company personnel were sent for by a project manager who wasn't particularly interested in whether or not they cared to attend. Oftentimes these people were completely unprepared to answer questions that might arise. They definitely were at the mercy of the presiding project manager who could make them appear as if they didn't know what they were doing. One possible consequence was that they might receive blame for problems that they were not even associated with. This was a very chaotic situation.

Employees in attendance had various objectives. Younger, less experienced, individuals tended to vie for attention in order to impress older and more influential congregants. In direct contrast, more seasoned personnel generally withheld essential information unless it was specifically asked for.

Project managers were responsible for directing and controlling company projects. Group managers, on the other hand, were responsible for overseeing the technical operation of company functional groups such as electrical design engineering, mechanical design engineering, components engineering, thermodynamics, and purchasing.

A different project manager ran each review. Group managers attending these "happenings" were in the habit of acting subservient to the particular project manager who officiated.

Reviews usually occurred a few times per day. As such, group and project managers had sufficient opportunity to learn about each other's behavior patterns. Naturally, certain alliances and disassociations were promoted over a period of time.

It was an established practice not to ask cognizant project managers to participate in limited discussions with high ranking company officials. Sometimes project people weren't even notified when these kinds of impromptu events took place. Indeed, consequences sometimes could be rather startling, disturbing, or perhaps even catastrophic to the project managers, considering that they oftentimes appeared more visible within the company than group managers.

When two or more high ranking company officials found time to convene, they usually "downloaded" each other in areas of mutual interest. During this kind of discussion, it

became immediately evident to anyone who, by chance, might frequent the area not to interrupt under any circumstances.

In many respects, discussions resembled a herd of elephants meeting in the middle of an African lake; or perhaps a famous ballet where great dancers emerged on stage together for the first time. With a little bit of imagination, one could almost hear the horns blaring in the background announcing that the great informal extravaganza was about to begin. Everything seemed exactly in its place except maybe an ornamental backdrop displaying colorful trees, shrubs, or flowers.

Ranking company officials had more important obligations to worry about than characteristic design problems; as such they didn't exercise an active role in design, make-or-buy, cost, or delivery decisions. This was delegated to project and group managers. In other words, they more or less surrendered their right to become apprised of company developments as they might occur. This is known in the engineering world as the "Ostrich Approach".

What does an ostrich do when it becomes frustrated or has to make a decision? It "runs for the hills" looking for a hole and then politely sticks his head in the ground! Thereafter everything becomes serene and normal. Higher level officials at the plant also adopted a similar policy of looking the other way almost as if they were wearing blinders during times of dire emergency. The inverse of this is referred to as "heads-up".

This form of company arrangement benefited project managers to a certain extent since they weren't required to provide upper level managers with status on every potential problem that might come along. The tendency was to alert these officials only when problems developed beyond that point where they could have been resolved at the project level. This made sense to all concerned since project managers were accorded complete jurisdictional responsibility over project matters, thereby allowing higher up officials to concentrate on the important issues of the day -- whatever they might be. On the other hand, if project managers resolved anticipated problems satisfactorily, then it was assumed that the company was operating properly and little attention was paid to associated details.

By the time higher ups became aware of catastrophic events, generally there was little they could have done to rectify situations anyway. It was possible, however, for these dignitaries to ensure that these kinds of problems would not happen a second time. Generally, this was accomplished by the cognizant company official deciding whether to reprimand the guilty "culprit" in private, to recommission the offender, or even to "unload" the responsible party for reasons of fouling up company product or delivery.

In proportion to the degree of discord they were able to levy out upon the engineers, project managers sometimes were accorded certain titles corresponding to infamous characters in history.

Employees conducted behind the scene encounter groups to address outrageous project attitudes. Quoting one concerned employee who said, "That project manager was here for ten years and really bastardized the program. His 'reign of terror' ended when the vice president of operations found out that he had wasted an engineer after asking him to perform certain calculations to show that the final product would work correctly -- even though he knew it would fall apart before it reached the docks."

Company employees learned that this "flaming asshole" appreciated climbing the Alps during his vacations. His "fans" referred to him as Hannibal.

In return for assuring that completed designs met contract requirements at the lowest possible cost, project managers had full reign over all areas of design review activity. How high level company officials viewed these proceedings, the successes and failures, was an internal matter that was somewhat clouded. The end result, however, was obvious: Anytime a project manager was particularly unsuccessful, he was shuttled about into other pursuits.

The way in which speakers phrased their sentences at design reviews was of particular interest. Even though a fair amount of dissent permeated the ranks, discussions resembled more a convention for the "mutual admiration society", rather than a meeting where serious differences of opinions needed to be sorted out.

To Eddie, the meeting carried with it the flavor of a show. He actually had to apply great restraint, at times, to refrain from laughing. This was a healthy response because he as yet had not been hardened to a point where he mechanically accepted viewpoints without giving due consideration to associated consequences. As such, unlike many others in the conference room, he had a totally unbiased view of events. Truly, in Eddie's mind, the meeting seemed to be nothing but one large charade.

Very little was accomplished since attendees always resorted to discussing issues pertaining to company policy rather than design assessment. Again and again company policy was regurgitated and re-examined, always with the same exact outcome -- it never changed!

Project people, applying their own form of the Ostrich Approach, oftentimes preferred to remain uninvolved when technical expertise became vital to remedy company problems. In this way, if a solution failed, then project management always had someone to blame. For some strange reason, everyone attending these company functions warmly accepted the less efficient "design by committee" system.

The lack of strong project leadership didn't appear to be an important company issue either. If it were, it was discussed behind closed doors, only at very high levels. Back in these days assertive project management tactics prevailed in these meetings, replacing common sense practices with "I am in charge" ideologies.

Few managers possess an adequate amount of savvy to know about all of the technical factors associated with an engineering project. Today's systems are highly sophisticated; generally they represent the cumulative achievements of many engineering and support disciplines.

The successful project manager maintains his expertise in delegating authority. He understands salient underlying technical issues to a practiceable extent in order to effectively disseminate tasks to those employees within his jurisdiction. If this doesn't take place, a break down results where products are produced inefficiently, late, or exhibit poor design characteristics.

Another quality exhibited by today's successful project manager is the ability to integrate. This presents a great challenge since engineering managers often specialize in only one or two areas of expertise. Proper integration is based upon the premise that the project manager apply his innate ability to understand problems outside of his sphere of influence. This capability allows him to closely approximate ramifications of personal contributions upon various involvements that he has overall responsibility for.

As can be expected, most of these people now are operating as successful entrepreneurs in private industry. Few good ones always remain to assume the multitudinous project management jobs available in this kind of plant environment. It is no wonder then why this company unanimously opted for decision-by-committee procedures.

Back to the design review. The first gentleman who presented his design basics was an intermediate level engineer. This person by no means was a "greenhorn", like Eddie. He wasn't considered an accomplished engineer; but, on the other hand, he wasn't accompanied by his direct supervisor either. It was obvious that this man was expected to stand on his own two feet at the proceeding.

The engineering speaker exercised a polished approach. He voiced various details describing his technical design. He disclosed as little information as possible while concurrently "showcasing" many drawings. This was all very confusing to Eddie. When questions were asked, and they came "hot and heavy", the young engineer was "seasoned" enough not to answer immediately. He merely looked around the room searching for someone else to "field" them. The engineer made all attempts to wind up his presentation as soon as possible (ASAP).

One explanation for "showcasing" drawings, instead of spouting verbose technical descriptions, is that the drawings, carrying with them a vast amount of detailed information, made it very difficult for attendees to absorb all incorporated principles during a short presentation. This gave the design engineer a distinct advantage over most personnel asking questions. As such, the speaker was "put on the spot" fewer times using this approach as opposed to providing elaborate descriptive discourse. The intermediate

level engineer appreciated this fact, and so arranged his presentation to highlight incredibly complicated drawings.

Eddie took first hand notes on his predecessor's demeanor since he was next to be on the "chopping block". When his turn came, he already possessed a fair amount of confidence from those pointers he had just received. During this whole episode with the intermediate level speaker, Eddie was contemplating that Bill Smith might not support him one bit. He was very close to correct, but actually underestimated the situation. Little did he expect that Bill even would try to be his nemesis.

As his turn arrived, Eddie tried to imagine that the attendees were fellow classmates that he knew from college. He managed to look around the table as he made his presentation, laying out drawings and expressing little emotion.

Just as in the card game, he was greeted with a nerve racking quiet. Nevertheless he continued right along pretending that he didn't even realize management was scrutinizing him much more than the intermediate level engineer.

All of a sudden, just like a shot of lightening out of the sky, Bill Smith asked Eddie what in the world he was talking about. Eddie, under duress, remembered that the intermediate engineer took his time answering questions. Therefore, he patiently looked about the room hoping that someone else would "pick up the ball". The only difference was that nobody else did! Eddie really wondered about this. He also realized that he had his immediate supervisor "on hold" in front of a large audience. Eddie had to do some fast thinking and he did.

He estimated that Bill should know more about his assignments than anyone else in attendance. Therefore he should not be the person asking the questions. Immediately Eddie responded, "I am sorry if I am not making myself clear. This is my first occasion to present my design to an audience and I realize that I may not be doing it in a totally proper manner. Please let me know if there are any areas that I have left unclear so that I can further, or better explain them."

Eddie received no response. This supported the fact that he may not have been as unclear as Bill had led others to believe. Another thought crossed Eddie's mind -- maybe Bill wasn't even appreciated by these people.

The project manager interceded at this point since the incident obviously was taking up too much time. He stated that Eddie should get moving on with his presentation and try to wind it up within the next five minutes or so. Eddie noticed that Bill didn't seem to object to this one bit.

And so he disclosed his design approach. He identified critical areas in the schematics and recommended substitute parts to replace older technologies.

Again, not even a single question surfaced -- this time not even from Bill. Finally, one member of the crowd asked, "What is your strategy for supporting your recommended new parts?"

Eddie waited for help, but none came. So he prodded the attendees saying, "I am not sure, but possibly someone from Components Engineering or Logistics can shed some light on this."

Eyes started glancing around. It appeared that Eddie hit a nerve! He accidentally stumbled upon the "Hot Potato Game".

In-house the term for the speaker in a review was the person with the "hot potato". Naturally, each accomplished speaker didn't appreciate being the focal point of scrutiny at the firm. So his prime objective was to try and pass the highly visible and prestigious role of speaker to any other candidate who gratefully would accept the distinction. This was similar to a hot potato being passed about a group of people gathered in a circle. As soon as one recipient got it, he either would drop it and lose, or immediately pass it. As you can guess, nobody wanted it!

A couple of group managers, recognizing responsibility to defend their functional organizations, started talking at the same time. Eddie was beside himself because he was beginning to find the whole event quite appalling. Everyone was sitting back wondering what was going to happen next. Surprisingly, some people were watching Bill Smith to see if he was going to jump back into the "hot seat".

One older gentleman stated, "It would make good sense to stay with older parts for standardization reasons."

Eddie did not understand the full implications of this response. "However", the man continued, "three or four of the parts that Eddie identified for upgrade already have become obsolete. Project may decide to make a life-of-type buy pending reliability recommendations." Eddie had apprehensions that now the proceeding was starting to sound more like a courtroom lawsuit than an engineering design review.

Resounding from the rear of the assemblage, Reliability stated their decision to replace the old design with newer parts. This would require associated cost data for the two schemes. Purchasing and estimating now were drawn in to the picture. Other people were discussing issues publicly; thereafter, private conversations were launched all about the floor.

Since Eddie finally got rid of the hot potato, he took some time to glance over in the direction of Bill Smith. To his dismay, Bill was staring right back into his dark brown eyes. Even with all of this hubbub going on in the conference room, Bill regretfully appeared to be most concerned over Eddie's conduct. Now Eddie was absolutely positive that, for some reason or other, Bill was definitely against him.

The project manager brought order to the floor. Since little time was left, he assigned some action items. These were assignments that people did not want. If possible, attendees would become invisible during these periods in the meeting. It was the one time where managers received tasks. It wasn't all that bad since they didn't have to complete the tasks, but only reassign them to someone else in their respective groups. However, it was a burden for them since they were responsible for tracking task completion. As such, they were in the habit of writing down these action items as they were assigned.

This particular project manager was labeled as a "nit-picker". Just as Eddie hoped that he had gotten off easy, the gentleman again directed some questions his way. He asked if the design was compatible with various cost goals. Eddie was stunned; he didn't know quite how to answer the question. He hadn't proceeded far enough along with his design to understand the associated implications. Exasperated, he finally turned to Bill Smith and stated that he wasn't sure about this area and that maybe Bill could shed some light upon things.

Bill, brandishing a large smile on his face, stood up and looked in the project manager's direction. He quickly stated that Eddie had not taken the time to inform him of governing issues so that it was impossible at this point to provide proper cost guidance.

The project manager understood that a feud was broiling between an engineer and his supervisor. Almost without reaction, he and the broad majority of other conference personnel immediately turned towards Eddie for restitution of this dilemma.

Naturally the project manager didn't want to become caught up in any "unnecessary entanglements". He wasn't at all interested in supporting Eddie in this regard; surprisingly, he wasn't interested in establishing leadership at this juncture of the meeting either. All he wanted to do was stay completely out of this conflict until it got resolved.

Eddie realized that again he was on the hot seat. Efforts to involve his supervisor proved only to be an exercise in futility resulting in even greater "heat" being applied under him in front of many unknown people. He found it hard to accept that other attendees could absolve Bill from blame for Eddie's lack of progress to date. Totally frustrated, he looked for help from the audience, but none came. He began to understand that nobody in the firm wanted any part of this type of confrontation.

What happened was that Eddie had performed a great wrong at the plant. He gave the "hot potato" to his boss. Conference participants were so shocked by this line of action that they became speechless, withdrawing any and all verbal outbursts.

Eddie was new at this business and definitely was learning the hard way. This means that he was getting on-the-job experience. This applies to learning about mistakes made at the expense of the company. Even though the erring engineer doesn't yet have the experience to avoid such mistakes, this doesn't necessarily absolve him of responsibility for rendering

proper solutions. If the incidence of on-the-job experience is high, which means that an employee is learning at a fast rate, then he becomes eligible to lose his job.

The engineer may decide to ask his supervisor questions, rather than to risk making costly mistakes. This presents a different kind of problem because once the manager realizes that he has to instruct the engineer how to perform his job, he further may conclude that he shouldn't be paying him a salary for rendering this apparent lack of service. This is synonymous with a supervisor suffering from the complex that he has to do the employee's job in order to get it done correctly. This problem may be aggravated to even further proportion if the supervisor doesn't understand how to arrive at proper solutions either. If this is the case, he would be the last person to indicate that he also doesn't understand.

The engineer may be a party to a "no win" situation. In the case where he decides to inform his supervisor of his concerns, his "staying power" at the firm may be jeopardized even faster than if he were to follow the on-the-job experience policy described above. This is because the employee receives more incriminating visibility by asking his supervisor for help. Management finds out problems earlier, and the employee's job goes on the line sooner.

Conversely, if he decides to apply the on-the-job experience philosophy, his secrets may remain hidden for longer periods of time. Naturally, by making poorer decisions, the cost of mistakes to the firm may spiral. Some talented engineers show an ability to "dodge" their mistakes in such a way that they don't come back to haunt them. Since Eddie's company was sufficiently large, this practice seemed plausible considering the myriads of ways in which problems that a person didn't want to be associated with could be "unloaded". The sum total of inefficiency sustained by a company subject to this kind of fraud could be exorbitant resulting in lost contracts, supplier liability problems, etc.

To combat this kind of a threat, group managers at the company were in the habit of maintaining informal files on employees. Material placed inside them consisted of any minor infractions that might occur.

Were a company dignitary to become enraged at any one of the engineers and approach his group manager with the sordid details, the manager always would have "ammunition" to use against him in order to side with the inflamed magistrate.

If the engineer's record were devoid of mistakes, this could become an embarrassment for his supervisor because he would have nothing to "pin" on the worker. This could result in the supervisor later on having to chastise the individual for behaving like a know it all. The manager then would have to exercise his leverage in order to obtain future slanted statements against the efficient worker. With this new line of incriminating information, even the "perfect" employee's record could become tarnished. This illustrates how too much on-the-job experience can work against an employee.

The standoff between Eddie and his boss lasted for about three minutes before it was interrupted. This was plenty of time for all conference participants to understand exactly what had transpired.

A gentleman located in the far recesses of the room stood up. He explained that maybe the design didn't progress quite as far along as people had hoped. He also recommended that maybe a team comprised of project management, group management, purchasing, and design engineering representatives be selected to take a better look at exactly what had been accomplished to date.

By this time, even Eddie got up the courage to look in the new speaker's direction. Assured by his words because some of them even seemed to make good sense, he was curious who this company problem solver might be.

He looked over with raised eyebrows into the far reaches of the conference room. Low and behold, behind another employee Eddie saw Burgess "taking up his case". Eddie was elated by this and made the mistake of releasing a slight smile. Bill picked up on the message, suspecting that some sort of conspiracy might be taking place. Bill carefully considered this situation in order to determine if he had to "refigure" his position.

In any event, this thought was interrupted by the project manager motioning to carry Burgess' recommendation. It was a good idea to have these people look over what Eddie had accomplished. Burgess had put things in proper perspective for everyone. Without blaming anybody, he put the onus of design and cost resolution on a group of people -- something company personnel easily could relate to. Burgess also achieved the initial victory of bypassing Eddie's direct supervisor, while at the same time giving Eddie the critical support considered necessary to properly perform his tasks.

As the meeting broke up, the room fell into instant turmoil. People were rolling over one another in an effort to enhance relationships with group and project managers. Eddie didn't want to have anymore to do with this proceeding and immediately left. To his astonishment, an arm went around his shoulder.

Eddie was shaken by the words, " You did all right, buddy!"

He turned around, only to see Burgess' smiling face. Eddie said, "You saved my hide in there".

Burgess returned, "Well you're a member of the club now and we people have to stick together."

Eddie asked Burgess if either of them were going to get in trouble with Bill Smith over what had happened. He informed Eddie that Bill definitely was after him and that he should proceed carefully from here on in.

Burgess explained that it appeared Eddie had "burned his bridges" with Bill. He further alluded that once an employee perpetrates certain "unforgivable" acts against his immediate supervisor, it has the same effect as crossing a bridge and burning it down from the other side. In this manner no return becomes possible. Such is the case with incidents that place employees in direct conflict with their supervisors. If this kind of act is committed one time, it could be very difficult to get back in the good graces of one's supervisor. If it happens a second, or third time, it could result in the employee being "walked out of the company".

Of even greater significance, it may be arranged that the dismissed individual also loses his eligibility to return to the company for future work. Even under completely different conditions, such as working for another supervisor, or in a different department, the terminated individual still may be refused renewed employment for as long as the original supervisor stays at the firm. This is known in the engineering world as "veto" power by a supervisor.

This could have a snowball effect upon the employee. Sometimes, through very mysterious channels, a situation develops that is referred to as being "blackballed" in the engineering community. During an engineer's attempts to obtain a position in a new company, phone calls sometimes take place between the company that is solicited and the company which terminated the employee. This consists of private phone discussions sometimes involving prior managers without either the knowledge or consent of the employee. This is not an act that the companies publicly endorse, or even admit to. It can be very damaging to the person who is the subject of the phone conversation. As word gets out, the engineer becomes subject to "having to leave town", change his occupation, etc. It becomes very hard for this individual to determine what had transpired since he is the last person that anyone would tell.

Eddie walked right along with Burgess as they left the building. He just couldn't leave him at this time. After all, Burgess was the only person in the company who showed concern, and wasn't afraid to discuss Eddie's personal involvements.

Eddie had so many questions that he didn't know which ones to ask first. He also was under the opinion that if he asked an improper question, his only line of influence might vanish just as fast as it had materialized. He decided to lighten up on the conversation and stepped away from the moment's intensity; this showed Eddie's maturity. Continuing, he stated, "What functional group in the company do you manage?"

Burgess laughed at this, emanating, "I don't manage any group at all. Don't mistake me for one of those managers just because I also was required to attend the meeting. I was a delegate for Maintainability Engineering. You see, I am what one calls a human behavior engineer. I am the person who ensures that pilots will have a pleasurable voyage. This involves responsibilities such as approving dial locations aboard aircraft, etc. Naturally, since I am the only person providing this kind of service to the firm, I am my own one man show!

"Since it was necessary that I belong to a functional group for control and budgeting reasons, I was placed under the auspices of Maintainability Engineering as a closest fit to what I do".

Eddie immediately responded, "Where is your office?"

The answer came just as fast, "We are there, come and see."

The friends made a sharp right turn. Where else would Burgess have an office but behind a curtain. Even Eddie didn't want to touch this subject with a ten foot pole. So he left this new area of interest unexplored.

Eddie remembered some vital information he learned during previous card games. He would do anything now to keep his channel of communication open with Burgess. He figured the best way to do it was to present topics of interest to him.

Without hesitation, Eddie took a big chance eliciting, "I am living over at a singles condominium right now. I haven't been over there for very long. I've looked around, and there is a distinct majority of ladies residing there. With your behavioral background, you might be able to give me some strong pointers in the area."

Burgess responded, "You have just identified my area of greatest expertise."

It was funny because Burgess couldn't conceal his perversity at this point. Almost crying out, as a dog salivating, he said, "What ages are they?"

Eddie responded, "All ages."

Burgess indicated that he was interested only in younger girls. After much prodding, he further added between fourteen and nineteen years of age.

Eddie didn't dare question the marital arrangement Burgess had at this time. He figured that he could keep secrets about it as well as the next person. When Burgess decided to divulge all of the gory details, Eddie would be willing to listen.

The next day at the Hearts game, George was back. Phil was having a semi-heated conversation with him just prior to the game's start. Everyone was listening.

Phil had the audacity to tell him that Eddie now was to replace him during his absences, and that the game was coming along extremely well. At this point, the cardplay was beginning. Except for Howard, all players were ignoring cardplay strategy to learn about the outcome this little pow-wow.

Eddie was in his most usual place -- behind Burgess' left shoulder. Even though he wasn't allowed to play this day, he now was well accepted by the group. This was evidenced by little signs taking place here and there. For example, Burgess sometimes would look at Eddie for a response when touching certain cards in his hand. Phil observed this but let it go, bearing in mind that there was no place for Eddie to play. However, everyone also understood that Eddie was not permitted to look upon any other player's hand when this occurred.

George, definitely losing his cool fired back, "I am still the best card player of the lot. Anyone who doesn't want me to play anymore, just come right out and say it!"

Phil accepted his challenge, diplomatically of course intimating, "We're not saying that we don't want you. We need someone that is going to support the game, though. Eddie was kind enough to fill in and we all appreciate that."

Evidently, George was being "placed on notice". Phil also acknowledged Eddie as a regular player now. He already had made the decision that the level of Eddie's cardplay was sufficient to qualify him as a full time player. If George wanted "out", Phil now was ready to oblige him.

George just bit on his cigar to mull over the situation. Naturally all eyes were focused in his direction. Even George recognized that this was a poor time to confront Phil.

George just ended the discussion saying that perhaps he was absent a little too much these last few weeks. He stretched back in his chair trying to impress people that now he was very interested in which playing cards he had just received. It was evident that George feebly was trying to change the subject.

Eddie fell into deep reverie. He felt as if he landed in a lifeboat that already had been filled to capacity; that he managed to find space aboard, straining for every inch of room. He realized that the destiny of the occupants matched his destiny. Even though he reflected that the lifeboat was marooned on the water, Eddie at least was among people of similar resolve, and at least had space reserved for him aboard. He now was a member of the club!

CHAPTER 4

COERCION

How narrow is the space of sanity?

Is it the area bordered
By one's own mind?

In real terms it is sufficiently small,
Limited to the dimensions of one's uppermost anatomy;
From the standpoint of the imaginary --
Literally unbounded!

The purpose of this investigation:
To determine if this space can be altered;
Ah yes, suppressed to best
Serve the purpose of others!

Over the years, many of us have found ourselves to be overly exposed to certain emotions such as sex, love, fear, and rage. Generally we can remember these preoccupations as having been aroused by falling deeper and deeper into delicate interactions. As anxiety levels suddenly intensified, all that remained was to resist with a fortitude that hopefully was sufficient to overcome one's own susceptibilities. Those lacking the faculty or resourcefulness to endure such human assaults ran the risk of suffering prolonged, naturally induced mental anguish.

Effectual psychological affliction may not be quite as dramatic or damaging as physical deteriorations evidenced during lengthy drug abuse. Adequate evidence of its pervasiveness, however, exists. Wide spread cliches in the English language have endured over the years which characterize the successes certain individuals have had in exerting their will upon others.

Well known are the old adages, "It's bigger than the both of us", and "they were playing with his mind". These typify the helplessness, or inability, of individuals to think rationally, ultimately only to dismally fail to cope with this mutual kind of involvement. They also symbolize the very shallowness of human frailties where in many cases people do succumb to such seductive forces.

You might say that as victims people become attuned to a certain "mind set". Hooked individuals may show signs of clouded or obscured reasoning. This can be construed as

losing their very objectivity. Indeed, very great changes may take place to those vulnerable people who are compelled to ride the crests of personal emotions!

Another type of mind set exists which may be brought about by the whims of others. More dramatic in effect than its temporal counterparts described above, history nevertheless shows good accounts of its practice. With the exception of those disparaging effects brought about by the introduction of a chemical stimulus or physical torture, this known process is believed capable of reducing man to his greatest degree of irrationality.

There is an old expression which hasn't seen much service in recent years. When it is used, it generally applies to shady dealings associated with countries at war with one another. More specifically it describes procedures administered when it becomes necessary to exact information from individuals without gaining their full and rational consent.

Yes, the term "brainwashing" definitely does have negative connotations. I think most would agree, however, that its impact upon man can be overbearing due to its inherent capability for transmitting long lasting, or even permanent impairments.

Of interest here are those specific mind sets which have been caused by the surreptitious actions of others. Bearing in mind (to excuse the pun) that these kinds of mind sets generally qualify as the undocumented types, it becomes necessary to surface how some people acting in the capacity of authority apply a form of discreet coercion upon others for purposes of bending their will. The process is carried out covertly because the hidden agendas of these people might be viewed as improper motives for the intimidations which follow.

Eddie was slumbering at home one weekend only to awaken violently because he had experienced a bad dream. Thinking back, he connected it to incidents that previously had taken place at the plant. This seemed strange because he had remembered suffering through another painful experience about a month earlier. Oddly enough, it also centered upon work related matter.

Eddie never had become subject to a problem like this before. He always had slept soundly and was an emotionally stable person. The only reason his concern really lingered this time was that he noticed his fingers were perspiring. Getting up, he turned on the light and groped about to read the bedroom thermometer. It glowed a cool 71 degrees Fahrenheit. Eddie surmised that something was interrupting his normal metabolism causing it to be thrown out of kilter.

Sitting on the living room couch, he decided to think things over. He attempted to identify people whom were knowledgeable in areas concerning psychological trauma. He had studied related courses in school and so had some familiarity with the basic principles. Eddie concluded there was no one who actually was an authority that he personally knew.

Thereafter consulting one of his college text books, he proceeded to administer himself a personal psychological test. Eddie focused upon the term "psychotic", but decided this was a little too strong a word to characterize his anticipated complex. Looking elsewhere, he noticed the word "aberration" and adopted this as a more appropriate term to start with.

Eddie reassured himself that he was thinking logically and estimated that he was seeing the real world as it actually existed. He also sensed that recently some outside force now was responsible for causing him to compromise his convictions.

He focused upon each of the various activities which he was engaging in. One by one he eliminated possible causes which could account for his own abnormal behavior patterns. There was only one plausible answer at this time -- he believed something at his work place was causing him distress.

Being particularly depressed and afraid, Eddie was determined to resolve this problem. Oddly enough, one fact kept recurring: he was frustrated over his relationship with Bill Smith.

Given the company's sheer size he now was under the belief that it was very difficult, if not impossible, to accomplish various things. Like most raw recruits, he elected to place his trust in management. He viewed Bill Smith as a necessary savior to his predicaments. Naturally, Bill didn't see things quite this way. Eddie, noticing little progress being made, was becoming a cynic, adopting views of resentment toward Bill along with the rest of management.

Reasonably objective in his pursuits, Eddie deliberated over his sensed difficulty by reprimanding himself for not giving other people in management a fair chance.

Taking a closer look at his direct involvements at the plant, Eddie ruled out the possibility that money could be a chief cause of his aggravation.

He postulated that his predicament might be based upon his fragile line of communication with management. In the aerospace industry management generally categorizes this type of irregularity as a "communication problem".

In order to "clear his mind", Eddie decided to try to better understand his perceived fixation. He preferred not to jump completely blind into a foray that he little understood.

He racked his brain to identify a company employee whom he could contact, ask very sensitive questions of, and maintain confidences in. He resolved not to break under the yoke of his sensed frustrations. In this way he hoped to develop a plan of action for discovering what was at the root of his nightmares.

Eddie attended a conservative college. Conversely, his brother went to a highly liberal engineering school from which he graduated with honors.

Over the years the brothers had lengthy discussions about conservatism and liberalism advocating which ideologies were superior for certain circumstances. To a great extent one could argue that Eddie performed admirably when applying himself in these areas.

During college Eddie followed supreme court rulings. He was current with numerous details such as which cases had outcomes that leaned just a little further toward the right due to various influences from conservative chief justices.

Eddie knew what he observed at the company approximated conservatism much closer than it did liberalism. Employees were paid a salary to perform professional services. Each engineer was given limited responsibility along with an individual work assignment. Collectively it was assumed that this approach was sufficient to complete all company related engineering tasks successfully. Tasks were assigned in a very clear cut manner; completed, they approximated to the best extent possible what was "asked" for. Management had their ways about making all employees well aware of this.

When anything is "assumed" in the engineering world, it leaves room for a great deal of things to go wrong. As such, after assessing the letters in this colloquialism, it's humorously regarded to mean making an "ass" out of "u" and "me".

The very manner in which each engineer executed assigned tasks appeared to be liberal in nature. Generally, group supervisors didn't exert much influence in directing, or for that matter, even monitoring the way in which employees performed them. Nor were they in the habit of receiving feedback on a continuous basis from engineers. This occurred only at predetermined periods such as during design reviews.

This left one critical area unexplored: lower level management didn't ask whether engineers felt they were performing the proper tasks. Higher level management didn't show much concern over this either because they felt it was not their direct responsibility. This was a very important point because the engineers were the only people associated with detailed technical problems on a day to day basis. Without any "constructive criticism", or upward feedback, the greater efficiency of the entire operation possibly could become subject to compromise.

For example, consider the hobnobbing project engineers working at Eddie's company. These people exhibited behavior patterns characterized best as conservative type attitudes used in conjunction with a mild application of the "ostrich approach". The engineers employed this as a ruse, or a front, when they thought it better not to indulge in certain conversations.

As such, they appeared to exhibit an innate ability for dodging certain questions they considered were not in their own best interests to answer. The conservative aspect of their pretense allowed them to "cop an attitude" which they could hide behind when they didn't choose to embrace certain topics of discussion. A typical conservative, closed-minded

response would be something on the general order of, "This is the way we've done it for years and we're not going to change it in midstream now!"

These engineers made a concerted effort to steer away from "loaded questions" that ultimately could prove detrimental to their own personal welfare. This minimized the possibility that management could be alerted that their employees possibly should be looking at larger issues than originally anticipated. Naturally, it was against the policy of these engineers to open up Pandora's Box.

Apparently what was behind this whole act or facade was evident enough -- downright fear! People in this company simply would turn mute when asked questions pertaining to certain areas of engineering. The reason for these nonverbalizations was outright concern for the company's "omnipresent eye". This could be considered as synonymous with the term comradeship formerly used by the Ruskies.

The reality of the free speech doctrine as it applied to this firm was that an engineer was free to say anything he wanted. However, if it were the wrong thing, he might get a chance to say it only once.

Achievement of long-term goals oftentimes were circumvented by a somewhat contented, pacified, and sometimes unmotivated management. One prevailing pretense was that some of the managers appeared to be appeased, or willing to settle for mere resolution of far less important short-term issues. In reality, they were aware of the larger problems, but were afraid to reveal them to other company officials. This mental fixation is termed the "quick-fix syndrome".

Some unspoken force now was steering Eddie's behavioral patterns, and he wasn't imagining this! What he was experiencing was not an isolated occurrence either. It was similar to what most other greenhorns right out of engineering school also were going through. In effect, along with a whole generation of people, Eddie was being "molded" to best serve the interests of the company.

How this was taking place was a very complicated issue. Why it occurred was to protect incompetent company managers from becoming exposed to the threat of having to answer potentially embarrassing questions; questions that carried with them a latency for indicating whether these managers really were performing their jobs in a satisfactory manner to best serve the interests of the company.

The majority of the company's supervisors continually were in the habit of fighting an uphill battle to stay current. Unbeknownst to most of the engineers, many of them would creep into the office on weekends or stay late at night in order to "catch up" on their work. This term implied that they were given more work than they could complete. This was only partly the case where it also was true that their technical skills had deteriorated with respect to the mounting years spent away from college. The engineers constantly were introducing new techniques that in many circumstances their bosses needed to become

familiar with. Engineers probably applied techniques properly, but they may have been the wrong measures warranted for the particular engineering applications needed. As such, a manager might not become alerted that a work assignment was incorrectly completed until only after it was too late; then it might have to be redone. And so managers spent much of their time trying to come to terms with new technological algorithms which engineers would employ at the work office.

Further, there was a big rumor going about the plant which supposedly had some merit to it. This was spread by some of the older engineers who over the years, either were overlooked for promotion and possibly harbored some biases against management, or refused to join them when an offer of promotion came their way. This perception held that some of the current managers were promoted out of the engineering ranks because they were known to make too many impacting technical mistakes as engineers.

Once promoted to the ranks of managers, the inept elevated engineers would be moved to positions of authority where it was believed they could cause little damage. This was true for the more mundane engineering functions which were easily observed in and about the company. However, over a period of time, mounting improprieties began to have a profound damaging effect upon the harder to quantify overall company performance indicators. Since higher level managers were one more step removed from the technical realms of reality, another large period of time had to elapse before these inadequacies would be brought to their attention. This time delay would be further guaranteed because a simple company rule was to disguise any bad news from "down below" so that it would look "rosy" to the "rarified air set" up above. Generally, by the time high ranking officials became knowledgeable of these inefficiencies, it was way too late for rectification to take place. This is one of the reasons why engineers attribute two interpretations to the term high rank official, rather than just one.

The shoddy practice of promoting only yes men and personal friends to the ranks of management also had long-term devastating effects upon the demoralized engineering establishment. This approach assured that localized small level annoyances would be "buried"; that is, overlooked until such time that they might blossom into full-blown company problems. This allowed ample time for the problems to go away by themselves. Those that gained in intensity were simply passed on to other portions of the company. As a whole everyone then would share in the blame because it would become exposed that many other groups also didn't do their job correctly allowing the problem to reach grave proportions.

All employees in the firm were fighting for their very own survival. Even the twenty year veterans were conditioned first to identify, but not necessarily to become embroiled in minor insurrections that might arise.

Company supervisors were on guard for challenges from below. Employees at times were known to unscrupulously threaten and thereby presume the very positions of authority these people occupied. In addition to their own meager responsibilities, the company

supervisors naturally were assigned all of the undesirable functions managers were tasked to accomplish. This in turn generally contributed to making most of them difficult people to get close to.

The most prevalent vehicle used to mold young recruits was to replace engineering ethical and common sense practices with supervisor mandated procedures. As friction would occur during mind bending sessions, the molding process theoretically was to expunge any immoral imbalances and instill a new sense of engineering expertise.

Depending upon the resilience of any given individual, this process could take longer with some than with others. In some of the more classical cases, some of the employees just couldn't be broken. It was concluded generally that these individuals were unfit to remain at the firm because of "incompatible interests".

One way in which engineers would contest mind bending attempts was to identify management's various breaking points. Then collectively they would operate just below these thresholds. Such was the case with Dolph when he applied for his pay raise:

Dolph was one savvy engineering design specialist. He had been "through the wars" with this company now for thirteen years. Three months after receiving his annual salary "adjustment", he decided to go see his supervisor. The three months were considered a cool down period so that questions which he was about to ask would not carry with them any intimidating tone.

Dolph told the boss that one night he and the wife had been out to dinner with another married couple. The two wives were old friends in that they had grown up together in a remote midwestern town. Once Dolph's wife made the connection that the two gentlemen worked in the same kind of business, sparks began to fly. Evidently it surfaced that the other man was in a very enviable position at a competing firm. After a few subsequent outings, the newly acquainted gentleman unexpectedly offered Dolph a comparable engineering position with his company.

Dolph, upon relating this story to his supervisor, made it perfectly clear that he didn't ask for the job, nor did he expect to receive an offer. He further explained that being among friends, it was a very embarrassing moment for himself.

Dolph spent most of his active time working on engineering drawings. His speech wasn't that articulate, nor did it have to be for him to perform his job satisfactorily. Being a naturalized citizen, he sometimes presented himself as a person with a speech impediment to those who didn't know him. You could say that most of the time Dolph was lost for words.

So in order not to humiliate the friend, Dolph stepped lightly. He failed, however, to press hard enough to discourage the man's advances. Dolph alleged that his wife was putting on a lot of pressure by throwing telltale glances in his direction during one of the dinners. He

made points by impressing his supervisor that he felt as if he were bound and gagged throughout the whole meal.

The dining gentleman explained that based upon Dolph's experience and education, he would offer him a salary of "X" dollars. This was a sizable increase over what he was making at the time. In disbelief Dolph courteously asked if the offer could be put in writing.

Well, guess what happened next? Dolph produced the written offer letter right in front of his boss. Pulling it out of his jacket pocket, he laid it down pointing to the part that itemized the offered rate. In this way, Dolph hoped to show that he wasn't at all interested in the letter other than to prove that he was being underpaid.

To the boss Dolph protested that these seemingly innocent dinner parties had made him the object of some cheap recruitment conspiracy. Being a loyal subject, Dolph figured there was nothing more "trusting" than to approach his boss for proper guidance on the matter. This showed that he looked up to him as a knowledgeable source in these endeavors; and furthermore, that he would enlist his help for his own best protection.

The supervisor was thoroughly stunned. Never had he heard a story like this before. Completely lost for words, he took the offer letter and told Dolph that he would have to give the matter some thought and get back to him later.

About a month went by before Dolph got called into the big office. The boss knew Dolph well enough to come right out with the result. He said that for thirteen years Dolph never had complained about a salary dispute, not even once. He said that this was considered a commendable company record.

He further disclosed that management was prepared to meet his financial needs by raising him a substantial amount over what he had been making. The increase, however, still would not be commensurate to that sum specified in the offer letter.

Dolph was sternly reminded that under no circumstances was he to let the result of the new offer leak out because it could create "insurmountable" internal company problems. Dolph said that he understood perfectly and cheerfully left the office.

Dolph realized for quite some time that his salary had been depressed far below fair market value. He also understood that he needed a very special story to be able to justify asking for a substantial increase given management's negative position on the subject. Once Dolph alerted his supervisor that he was now aware of this financial inconsistency, he was putting him on notice that the company no longer could continue to enjoy the luxury of paying him far less than he was worth.

Since there was no effrontery involved, Dolph didn't have to "burn his bridges". Furthermore, realizing the "cat was out of the bag", the supervisor either had to appease

Dolph, or face the consequence of losing him. In the latter case, he would have to replace a very senior level person at a very low rate of pay.

What troubled this manager far more was that Dolph already was "broken in". The group supervisor was shocked at the prospect of possibly having to mold another individual to suit his purposes.

By extending Dolph a wage offer that was lower than his competition's, the supervisor had worked himself out of a jam. He was able to appease company officials by demonstrating that the firm would be able to retain Dolph's services profitably at a wage that still was marginally below market value. The supervisor also emphasized that he was the person who arranged this, thereby taking all of the credit. He had little trouble in convincing his superiors that Dolph was well worth the increase considering the profits the company had benefited by keeping his wage depressed for so long.

A very sensitive area of overt discussion in and about the company was that of financial compensation for services rendered. In fact, any employee caught reciting his present salary to another company recruit was subject to immediate and severe reprimand.

The firm had good cause for keeping this rule on the books: First, if one person were to receive a sizable raise, then all people performing related tasks (i.e. exhibiting similar experience, grade, and work output statistics) should be entitled to the same increase. In the hourly ranks, this was regulated through a strong labor union. Engineers didn't have this form of protection, however, and so because this rule remained in effect, it permitted wage gouging policies to continue at the plant.

Moreover, there always seemed to be a small percentage of engineers who were distraught over the rate of their earned wage. Some contended that their overall salaries were depressed below the prevailing rates afforded by other competitive firms even after taking into account area cost factors to correct for where these companies were located. Those who chose to challenge management outright were considered to breach company respect since they didn't agree with what the "powers to be" thought was best. From the viewpoint of management, "You never bite the hand that feeds you".

Dolph was the real winner in this case. Always being careful to operate within management guidelines, he succeeded in demonstrating that his depressed wage was nothing more than an industry "aberration"; and, in bringing the issue to his supervisor's attention in a nonmalicious manner, he convinced him that it had to be corrected.

Speaking of salaries, Eddie now was at the company for one year, and his review was coming up. He was happy over this prospect since he wanted to know how management regarded his performance. Little did Eddie expect that he was required to fill out a form explaining exactly what he had accomplished over the last year; further, that he was to submit the completed form to management for their evaluation at least two weeks prior to the review date. This approach deflated his hopes about the review.

Eddie found the form to be somewhat trivial. He didn't appreciate filling it out because he envisioned he was doing management's job. With this evaluation approach, it wasn't even necessary for the supervisor to know what the employee had accomplished during the past year.

Eddie received a letter encouraging him to meet Bill Smith at a predesignated time in a little private office for his review. As can be expected, Eddie was particularly uptight. He was surprised because Bill, acting on his best behavior, was smiling and for a change treated Eddie like a real professional.

Bill rumbled through the questionnaire Eddie had completed two weeks earlier. He acted as if he were reading it for the first time. He expressed surprise that Eddie had rated himself outstanding right down the line.

Bill got right to the point. He indicated the average engineering raise for the year was 4%. This gave Eddie further cause for apprehension since he was well aware that the rate of inflation for the country was 7% for the same period.

Eddie realized that if he received a pay 4% raise, then his buying power actually would diminish rather than increase. To be apprised of this was a little discouraging. Eddie gulped hard!

Bill continued right along. He explained that Eddie did a good job listing all of the areas that he had worked on over the past year. Smiling more and more, he stated that he disagreed, however, with Eddie's outstanding performance rating of himself. He hinted that the company had found his services to be unacceptable.

Eddie was being put on "probation". He was given ninety days to get his act in order or else would have to pack his bags.

Eddie demanded that Bill explain the reasons for this unacceptable rating. He had graduated very high in his college class and didn't understand why he could do so well in one place and so poorly at another while applying the same work ethic and engineering principles.

Bill was grinning from ear to ear by this time. Eddie regarded the meeting as a very solemn occasion where any smiling easily could be misinterpreted as an act of bad faith. To the contrary, though, Bill really enjoyed socking it to him.

Eddie never had done anything to offend Bill to an extent which would warrant this grave assessment. He couldn't accept that Bill would take things this far just because he refused to bend a little bit to meet his absurd whims. This reminded Eddie of the bend over jokes that were thrown in Howard's direction. Eddie wondered if there truly was a correlation.

Bill informed Eddie that his working skills as a graduate engineer were seriously lacking. He supported this with a statement that Eddie from time to time would go off on his own tangents contrary to company concerns. In effect he was acting like a "loose cannon" by appearing to be out of control and failing to inform Bill about where he was going with his designs. Clearly this was unacceptable and things would have to improve in order for Eddie to be able to remain at the plant.

Eddie felt that Bill's claims bordered on the ridiculous. It could have been very difficult for him to rebuke this position considering that he had no active support from anywhere else in the whole plant.

Novice as he was, Eddie was smart enough not to get caught up in Bill's allegations. Were he to antagonize his boss further by trying to justify his own position, he might elicit opinions alleging other areas of unsatisfactory performance. And this only could serve to erode his performance review to a greater degree, thereby driving the two men even further apart.

So instead of putting Bill on the spot and asking him to substantiate his position, Eddie backed off. He reflected way back to the days of the hiring process when Bill seemed to have great confidence in his ability to perform his job satisfactorily. Now, why the sudden change?

This too was easy to discern. Bill was pushing his loose cannon hypocrisy in an effort to get a better handle on what Eddie really was doing technically. He hoped that his "scare tactic" would wake Eddie up to the fact that it was either play ball Bill's way, or face a whole gamut of lies that very possibly could cause Eddie's demise.

And so, what Bill did was put Eddie in between a rock and a hard place. Either Eddie would argue his case and lose or else show some sort of a sign of submission.

Bill didn't let Eddie's tactic of dodging his assertions go by that easily either. He made every attempt to demonstrate that he had regarded Eddie's impulse to move on to other matters as a token indicator of new found subservience. Bill acted very appreciative over all of this and rewarded Eddie by exhibiting a similar eagerness to move ahead into other uncharted waters.

By this juncture, Eddie was extremely frustrated although he tried his best not to tip Bill off to the fact. Eddie's guise wasn't even close to adequate as he started to bite his lip.

Eddie, inexperienced as he was in this sort of thing, came right out with a frontal attack announcing, "I don't understand why you think this is a laughing matter. Every since we convened, you have been grinning at me."

Bill responded, "Eddie, I am here to help you. I consider myself to be your friend as well as your supervisor. I don't know what on earth would give you the idea of anything

otherwise. Please don't confuse my smile with laughter. I always have been your friend and that is why I hired you. I don't understand, though, why you don't come to me with your problems."

Bill really was reaching out trying to totally control, corral, and dominate Eddie. Eddie couldn't imagine for what reason this psychological brainwash was taking place. He fathomed that Bill recognized him as an intelligent engineer with very good sense and ideas. What he didn't understand was that in getting wind of Eddie's recommendations ahead of other supervisors in the firm, Bill could act as if Eddie's ideas were his own, thereby further securing his own position as a contributing supervisor.

It was considered as nothing more than a matter of record for Bill to introduce Eddie's well founded thoughts during design reviews. He could make recommendations appear as if they were his own since Eddie would not be around to challenge them.

As spontaneous a person as Eddie was, had he even a remote clue about what really was going on, he probably would have quit right on the spot.

Bill said that he was a little concerned that Eddie had gotten such a slow start and that he wanted to be kept closely apprised of everything Eddie would be doing over the next few weeks. In return for this courtesy, Bill informed him that he was being given a marginal 2% pay raise.

Bill also quipped that a written statement concluding that Eddie was to be put on probation was going to be added to his file. The reason for the 2% increase was only because this was Eddie's first review and the company didn't want to appear to be particularly harsh to a first year graduate engineer.

Eddie didn't know quite what to say. The only thought going through his mind was that company management really had this employee review operation "down to a science". There was no way that Eddie could compete against this form of organization and interrogation. Well it looked as if Eddie had just completed his first crash course in "company coercion -- one"!

Eddie pumped himself up; he was very reluctant to accept the shoddy reasons for dissatisfaction which the boss had expressed. Eddie was one tough customer; one could feel only admiration for him. By gosh, he was standing strong directly in the face of adversity!

Eddie decided to apply some strategy of his own. He contemplated that the best thing he could do would be to play along with Bill's game, thereby allowing valuable time to research this whole review process phenomenon. Simply speaking, he just didn't want to be the cause of any more conflict until he knew exactly what was going on. For the time being Eddie was on the right track. He figured that he could play along just as well as the next man if he had to.

Eddie surly didn't have all the answers, but what he did know was that Bill was the last person on earth to trust. There was a small voice way in the back of his mind urging him that Bill genuinely wasn't "playing true to form"; i.e., divulging all of the facts.

He thanked Bill for being so generous, especially after taking the time to go over what had transpired over the past year. Eddie tried his best to sound really earnest in his statements and wondered where this newly adopted employee direction might now lead. He decided it could be no worse than to continue along on his present collision course.

Eddie didn't know why Bill was trying to change him, but did recognize that a deliberate attempt was being made to have him do things in a manner in which he was unaccustomed to.

Bill gave him a copy of the review form authorizing the marginal raise. Without further ado, Eddie got up and left the office.

At last the weekend finally arrived. Eddie was at home contemplating all that had taken place at work and, needless to say, was extremely upset about what had happened. Had he any idea that pursuing his ambitions would bring him to this worthless stage in his career, he never would have become an engineer in the first place.

Eddie wanted something tangible in his life, but there was nothing! He yearned for an outlet which would allow him to forget his nagging problem. His mind raced over current relationships that he was having with women. All turned up "duds" since there was nothing of substance, only sexual affiliations. He had left a lady back East who understood him a little bit better than his present playmates. Even though the relationship did not represent a flagrant example of eternal devotion, he decided to make a call.

Eddie, in a panicked state, longed for some clear-cut direction in his life. Being young, he reflected that maybe this prior relationship could develop beyond the point where it had collapsed when he decided to move out West.

Eddie hadn't talked to this woman for over a year. Remembering the stifling influence the lady had once instilled upon him, he considered this might be an ample adjustment period to allow the relationship to "breathe" a little bit. He reflected upon the amount of time he had given the romance and what his dad had once told him, "When you're young you have all the time in the world; but if you don't use it, you lose it." He contemplated whether this could have been a real reason for the relationship's failure. He figured that a phone call at least might be rehabilitating for the both of them.

Picking up the phone, Eddie dialed the number from memory. As the phone rang his mind raced over his past life. He wondered if Brenda now had a new boy friend or possibly even was married.

Well, guess who answered the phone? Her father. Eddie felt a shock wave rattle through his body. Groping for his voice, he asked if Brenda were at home.

Eddie suspected the sound of his voice might immediately give away his own identity and signify impending disaster for the embryonic phone call. To his surprise, however, and without expressing any apparent emotion or interest for his daughter's welfare, all her dad could come up with was a polite, "Hold on, please."

One thing that always appealed to Eddie was that he really appreciated never having to take any "flack" from Brenda's dad. It also was questionable just how far this could be pushed.

Well at least Brenda was still living at home. Eddie emitted a sigh of relief over this. Actually, if she no longer lived there and couldn't be contacted, it might have strengthened Eddie's resolve to fight his own battles rather than to rehash old relationships, ultimately only to possibly hurt an innocent party.

Brenda answered the line wondering who could be on the other end. She knew something was up by the way her dad handed her over the phone. She also didn't maintain an active suitor list because of her very slow nature for getting involved.

Eddie found his voice saying, "Hello, Brenda....this is Eddie. So how are you doing?"

Brenda acted as if she weren't even aware that time had passed, or that she had been forgotten for a period of over a year. Probably she was waiting for this call all of the time. It appeared that time had stopped for Brenda the day Eddie had left town. Eddie, wishing that he could physically be there to see her reaction to this blossoming communication, couldn't discern if any changes had taken place.

It was obvious that at one time Brenda must have been deeply in love with Eddie. She said that things were kind of quiet since he left. She wanted to know if Eddie were coming to see her. Quickly defending himself, he curtly responded that he was out on the West Coast and that visitation at this point would be quite impossible. He hoped this was sufficiently stated for Brenda to accept this fact and pass onto another subject.

Whereby, Brenda just replied, "Oh."

Thinking deeply, and changing the subject, Brenda exclaimed, "We have been undergoing a garbage strike back here. This place virtually stinks. The only thing people are talking about is how bad it smells where they live. A rumor is going around to incorporate the town under the official name of Filthydelphia."

Eddie couldn't believe his ears. After one year, all Brenda could do was muster up some sort of small talk.

Since he considered himself still to be a good friend, he wanted to know how Brenda was doing. He further asked if any major changes had occurred in this period of time.

Brenda just kept her responses simple, whereby the discussion didn't grow into anything substantial.

Concluding that the phone call was a mistake; that the conversation largely was inadequate or not up to par, Eddie elected to get off the phone (ASAP).

The conversation abruptly terminated with Eddie saying that he just had bought a dog and it was peeing all over his guitar. Thereafter nothing more remained but to yell a quick good-bye.

Eddie didn't indicate that he would call back; nor did he give Brenda his telephone number at the tennis complex. There was absolutely no way that the phone call could connect Brenda to Eddie's present life. Eddie figured that Brenda probably would be expecting him to call back soon, presumably after a long hypothetical dog walk.

Eddie was strengthened with a new resolve. He breathed a sigh of relief because at least he was easily rid of the situation. He was quite sure that he had felt a pressure of responsibility right over the phone. He resolutely concluded that he didn't want to get into any position where he felt that he might have to consummate something which didn't have his full endorsement.

He decided that he would have to make a new leap forward; that everything in his past was wrong for him. He suspected Brenda's dad probably would be livid over what had just transpired, especially in light of the fact that he was not going to call back at all. That small voice way in the back of his mind reiterated, "There is no way of turning back the clocks." Eddie could never call again.

Strolling in an hour late to work, Eddie walked over to see his drafter, Roland Bolag. For a while Eddie stood watching the man place final artistic touches upon some upgraded drawings. With the widespread use of the computer, Roland was the last of a dying breed of drafters at this firm.

The book on Roland was as follows: He was an ex-Jesus freak who converted to a special case situation. Fearing that people might think that he was crazy, Roland kept his personal opinions to himself during working hours. Only certain select friends became privy to his private aspirations.

Roland liked to talk a great deal. His occupation as a draftsman consisted primarily of transcribing rough engineering sketches into professional forms that were acceptable to the customer. As can be expected, it wasn't necessary that he

concentrate particularly hard on the job. His performance was measured in terms of output quantity only. Roland understood that he was required to apply the same technical skills repeatedly in order to render new complete drawings.

To fill the void left by not keeping his mind on what he was drawing, Roland generally was running at the mouth. As long as his pencil kept moving, he never got in trouble. This wasn't the case for unsuspecting victims that he would lure in with his tantalizing stories.

Roland had spent the last two months becoming a rampant supporter of Far Eastern lore. He seemed serious about this new pursuit because he apparently had adopted new unconventional practices on the job. For example, Roland now was doing yoga exercise right in the middle of the floor during lunch period. Roland's association with this new found love bordered on schizophrenia, coupled with a conscious effort to approach life from a new point of view. In any event, it truly had affected him.

Of further note, his eating habits became very unusual. Roland found himself a strong proponent of the "lecithin diet" where he ate this type of food to supplement his normal daily intakes. He had fond hopes that it would vastly improve upon his physical consciousness.

Being an hourly worker and subject to union rules, Roland was entitled to one and one-half times his hourly pay rate for overtime work. Even though he had the potential for really raking in the money, the firm just wouldn't go for it. Instead they allowed draftsmen to be "loaned out" from one department to another to account for any work surges, thereby paying out just straight time for work rendered.

Roland's friend, Lester, was one of the better working underpaid employees at the plant. Being an engineer, and therefore not permitted to be in Roland's union, Lester was accustomed to receiving only straight time for all overtime hours worked.

Lester was doing about two hours a day overtime for about three years now. This was quite a record. He woke up at about 5:00 A.M. in the morning, took a half hour lunch break, and didn't arrive home until about 5:30 P.M. each evening.

Lester sure was a game worker. For the last year now he was promptly coming into work about three out of every four Saturdays adding another eight hours of overtime to his paycheck each trip. He was accumulating his vacation time also. By not squandering it during the last five years, he had accrued an amount of time off on the books requiring four years of service. The real kicker was that Lester also had taken very little sick leave.

He offered his time and the company took advantage of it. It was a symbiotic arrangement where the company only had to instruct one person, pay one person's medical, sick leave, and vacation benefits, but gained an extra day of work without having to add proportionately to the fringes. This was far better than

having to hire a second worker who would have to be instructed separately, paid the same extra day's pay, and be given an additional benefits package. By applying this principle across the board with five or six "workaholic engineers" the company could get an extra man's output while saving the cost of individual benefits; and so the company made out.

On the other side of the arrangement, Lester was becoming indispensable because of the many engineering intricacies which he alone was aware of. As such, he would be far better off in surviving layoff cycles as they were to occur.

Word of Lester's manpower accomplishments had made it around the firm to where one roving manager jokingly asked Lester's supervisor if he ever was going to let Lester have time off. The boss curtly responded, "What for, I let him go home every night!"

Roland drove about eighty miles each way to work. He had acquired all of the appropriate fixations to go along with this unenviable sojourn. The first thing on his mind every morning was to travel like a "bat out of hell" straight to the firm. As you can see, he couldn't afford to let anything get in his way.

The drive would take him at most one and one-half hours depending on traffic. Roland didn't account for time spent getting into and out of the company parking lot. It was very doubtful this would be included in his estimates anyway since he considered this to be a penalty everyone had to endure who worked at the plant. As it were, he deduced it was not a true indicator of distance traveled or time spent in transit.

Naturally Roland already had numerous run-ins with members of the state highway patrol office and local police constituencies about the county. He liked telling one story about a driving school course he had taken. Even though police administrators had had it arranged for a speeding violation to be expunged from his record, Roland exhorted that his only interest for attending the driving school had to do with keeping the rate of his automobile insurance down.

During his first evening at the driving school, Roland had to wait in line for thirty minutes before being permitted entry into the facility. He noticed a macho-looking teen-ager standing in front of him who bravely brandished a newly fashioned black eye.

Roland was the cowardly type. This often ran into conflict with his curious, extreme personality. This dichotomy was aggravated by Roland's mounting boredom rooted in his concern that he was wasting time standing in the line. As such, he decided to initiate some small talk.

Roland said, "What did they nail you for?"

The response quite unassuming was, "This time or last?"

Since Roland naturally had some time to kill, he responded, "Both times."

The brash teen-ager stated that about five months ago they clocked him doing 109 miles per hour on the highway. Last month he was ticketed for doing 65 mph.

Roland after doing some number crunching responded, "Well it sounds as if you are improving, doesn't it?"

The fellow just turned around and gave Roland a very disconcerting sneer. Realizing that Roland definitely was not a threat, he finally stared him down. Spitting on the ground, he quietly said, "65 miles per hour in reverse!"

In putting together the blazon black eye with the reckless driving habits of this young soldier, Roland by now was realizing that something was awry. It dawned upon him that he might have struck up a conversation with the wrong person. Trying to leave well enough alone, he just mimicked, "Oh."

Roland by now had hooked Eddie onto his lively suspense stories. He became truly victimized.

Roland quietly explained that he viewed the 160 mile round trip commute as a self imposed hardship or cleansing experience. He said that he had heard voices from above; that he was being tested, using this idiotic daily car drive to temper his mental toughness. This was to prepare him for bigger and better things to come. Naturally, he couldn't inform Eddie about what they might be at the time.

Roland's stories sounded like a modern daytime television serial where, once you got hooked, you kept having to come back to find out the aftermath. Eddie by no means was the only person who was a steady customer of Roland's either. Roland had a strong reputation about the company for entertaining.

Roland was a very good example of an individual who had had his mind totally burned out. Nobody knew exactly what had caused this, but evidently something of calamitous proportion must have occurred. To all accounts, all that remained of Roland was a meager shell of a man who no longer wanted to partake in the harsh realities of the outside world. As such, he liked the "sheltered" life-style of the company. He had absolutely no aspirations to alter, or for that matter to improve upon, this condition at this late point in his career.

Little did Eddie suspect that during his visits to Roland's area he was being monitored by someone in a distant enclosed area. Sometimes an ensuing phone call resulted based upon the frequency of visits and time spent listening to Roland's stories.

The exact nature of these phone calls wasn't of particular importance. Every time one was made, however, it patterned something like, "It would be a good idea to keep your man out of this area because he is interrupting my man from doing his job."

For the phone caller, this was a far smarter move than possibly having to confront Roland along with his drafting union, particularly considering that Roland's statistics substantiated that he was a high volume producer.

The reason Eddie never heard about these complaints was because Bill didn't care to inform him. He was contented with just stacking this new found information into his own department file.

The department file differed from Eddie's official file on record in the Personnel Office. Eddie could review the official file whenever he wished. All he had to do was fill out a form to gain access. Thereafter, the form would remain inside the file as an indication that Eddie had reviewed it as to a particular date.

Bill's department file was a secret to all engineers. This was important because it contained sensitive job performance information which could be transferred into the company's official files during "expeditious occasions" such as just prior to notification of a layoff. As such, Bill had at his disposal a great deal of private data, or "trash", that he could use in any manner he wished once an employee was about to become terminated. Since some of his engineers never bothered to check their official files, Bill could add virtually anything he had on record without scrutiny.

Had Bill decided to tell Eddie about these sordid incidents, then the problems would cease to exist, thereby providing Bill with less "ammunition". Merely by enlarging Eddie's department file, Bill had succeeded in obtaining a lot of information to hold against him in the event it became needed. This was just one of those little undertakings Eddie had no knowledge of.

During a visit to the drafting department, Eddie was primed for one of Roland's famous story punch lines. This was to be the finisher for one of Roland's epics where he was explaining his involvement in a small litigation with a police department of a neighboring city. The locality was considered to be one of the poorer sections within the county. Roland was urged by legal counsel to initiate a suit over an incident that took place about three years earlier.

Roland and a friend were traveling down a boulevard looking for the entrance to an expressway. Diverting into a left-hand turn lane, Roland was preparing to stop his car as he approached the intersection.

Once stopped, his friend noticed that Roland was in the wrong lane. He told Roland that the freeway entrance was straight ahead about two hundred yards up the road.

Mind you, Roland's friend was a polished college graduate from England. Just as Roland was about to knife into the lane directly to his right, thereby avoiding the left turn, his friend observed a police car waiting to proceed straight ahead. Weirdly enough, the

policemen had taken it into their jurisdiction to watch Roland who was stopped directly to their left.

His friend told Roland to wait there until the police car passed by, and then go straight on through in order to get to the highway. Roland's delay had an enormous effect upon all cars stopped since he definitely didn't follow the prime rule of driving being, "He who hesitates is lost". As the police car began to advance, its driver realized that Roland did not proceed when he was supposed to. With two lanes of cars in each direction, and an accompanying left turn lane for each, there must have been ten, or so, cars piling up behind Roland and the slowing police car.

The policeman who was driving thought that Roland had some sort of a problem with his car; but the other officer who was in view believed he had a better awareness of the dilemma and, yelling out with a bull horn said, "Somebody go!"

Roland was stunned by all of this. Remember, he wasn't a thinker. His friend told him to step on the gas and Roland obliged him; then on second thought the "Brit" told him to round the corner and then swipe the tip of a pole located on the far side of the street. Roland, caring little about his own life and limb and always being accustomed to taking his friend's recommendations, didn't realize that the man from Great Britain was just kidding. They braced themselves as Roland hit the gas pedal. As his vehicle struck the pole, needless to say the police were dumfounded.

Roland's friend immediately took charge. He wrote down the license plate numbers of the police and all witnesses present.

It now was about time for the case to be heard at trial. Roland was alleging that the policeman demanded that he proceed prior to showing proper caution. Roland was asking for \$728.00 damages for his automobile and \$30,000 on a trumped up back injury charge that was difficult for medical experts to disprove.

CHAPTER 5

THE HEAD-HUNTRESS

The head-huntress came my way;
She enchanted me
And then gave me a new future.
What of this new worldly seductress?

Eddie arrived at work bright and early trying to clean up certain loose ends. His work habits were outstanding, a commendable trait indeed that was rare in this business. But, as described to a curious director who had shown interest in Eddie's dedication on various prior auspicious occasions, Bill quipped that he had no idea what Eddie was working on so diligently, but that it surely didn't serve to improve upon his productivity at work.

Bill, knowing the visible high ranking dignitary pretty well, considered his interest to be nothing more than a passing fantasy. He never fathomed the informal visits possibly could have something to do with an engineering department transfer.

That's because Bill was keenly aware that this director was "put out to pasture"; that is, he was relieved of his normal primary responsibilities because of company fears that his acumen had significantly deteriorated over time. The "powers to be" had made many attempts to retire him, but he just wouldn't "bite the bullet". Naturally, since he was an entrusted friend, a peer, and even one of the "good old boys" who was around during the company's start-up, or "big bang", upper level management simply didn't have the will or the compunction to "cast him out over the ledge". By keeping him around, the glorified managers didn't have to come to terms with insecurities that they too were fast approaching retirement age. As such, it was far easier to let this form of inefficiency prevail.

Being that this director had ceded his overbearing authority to others, he had to come to grips with a significant amount of "down time" on his hands. As such, he was in the habit of taking excursions during the workday where he passed time on matters of seemingly little interest or importance to anyone. Had he been performing bonafide duties, he wouldn't have had time for this sort of idle banter in the first place.

Lower level managers became aware of the existence of these so-called "sacred cows" about the company because they were so easy to spot. Furthermore, one could matter of factly differentiate between the constitutions of these people as opposed to those who were making real company contributions.