

Spectacles and Festivals of Organization Managing Ahimsa Production and Consumption

David M. Boje
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Preface

10 White Cadillac Limousines and the Inventor. My dad, Daniel Q. Boje has always been to me a great teacher and also a great storyteller, someone who could put on a bit of theatrics, spin a good yarn, and engage an audience with spectacle. He has also taught me much that I understand of the relation between storytelling, theatrics, and demonstration, what I mean by the word “spectacle.” No better combination of storytelling, theater, demonstration, or spectacle can be found anywhere than the time I returned home from Basic Training to visit dad, the inventor, in May, 1968.

He was living in Passaic, New Jersey, a rough, decaying urban city, but a place of cheaper rents, migration and close to science and industry, just the place for an inventor. As I walked into his shop, knowing he would be there working, and not at home, I found him futzing and tinkering with his machine: “Hi David, I have to get this ready by noon, I need you to give me a hand.” “Sure, no problem,” I replied, not knowing what I was getting myself into. I was in my dress greens, all buffed out from running, pushups and three squares a day at Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

“Scour the neighborhood, find as many trashcans, full of garbage, as you can, and run them back to the liquor store” he demanded with an air of urgency. The liquor store was not a liquor store anymore, it was now converted to an inventor’s lair, a place where dreams are made real. “Dad, I said,” what do I say if someone stops me for making off with their trash cans?” “They won’t” he replied, “I do it all the time. Just tell them Daniel the crazy inventor, needs some trash for his machine, they will understand.” Then he added “if you see a stranger lurking on the corner, just look straight ahead and act busy and be on your way.” I knew he was right about the janitors giving up their trash, everyone usually

knew Dad, and he was a gregarious soul. I had also seen the strangers, looking like they would take your life, especially around the real liquor stores on every corner.

The janitors were eager to give up their trash when I told them the inventor needs it. They knew the drill. So I lugged the trashcans to the converted liquor store, I paid no never mind to the drug dealers, and I tried to keep my dress greens from looking like the trash spilling all over the place. As quickly as I brought them in, he had me go to the back of the store where the hungry machine beckoned to be fed. "Dump it in, let's see how it works. It is not quite ready. I am hoping it will hold together for the demonstration. I had tried gears and levers, but that prototype would not withstand the pressure I need. I am using hydraulics now."

I could see metal bend and stretch as I fed the gluttonous monster its trash. The mad inventor was tightening hoses; there was oil leaking and squirting everywhere. It was in his hair and eyes, and all over the ceiling and floor. There were horrid howls and terrifying shrieks, as the monster bayed from moving and creaking its ill-fitting parts. The shop lights were blinking and dimming from the load. The monster was about seven feet in length, a long cylinder, with one huge plunger traversing its length, a smaller cylinder within that one to ram the result along its path, an opening at the top for trash to enter, and a smaller opening at the far end, narrowing into a funnel. Hoses and tubes connected a suit case sized box to the body of the cylinder machine. The monster was both violent and gentle. It was violent when it forced all the pistons to smash and press the trash, used the mechanical jaws to bite and chew, and then all of a sudden gentle as it stuffed its cud nonchalantly into a trash-sized paper bag. .

"It's got to hold together long enough for the demonstration," he said. "I don't know, it looks awful shaky to me" I replied, yelling to be heard, above the racket. "What demonstration?" I said as an afterthought. "The mayors from the largest cities in New Jersey are coming here at noon. Sam convinced them to come and see the trash compactor." Sam, a New York attorney, was my dad's

partner, along with Sol, his brother in law, who sold his jewelry business to bankroll the invention. They were equal partners to the ad-venture. The story of their partnership is a spectacle all in its own right.

My dad was fired from ITT, and was living in Passaic, when the janitor went on vacation, and asked my Dad to take out the trash for the apartment building, in exchange for the rent. He decided to help out, not knowing just how much trash an eight-story apartment building can accumulate. People throw their trash down the chute, and the janitor must stuff it in garbage cans, and then lug them to the street. In some places, the trash is burned in incinerators, which means fewer trips for the janitor and less land fill. As my Dad lugged the trash he lit on an idea: "how could this job be done easier?" A self-trained engineer, a product of the inventive spirit of generations of family farmers of Washington State, and trained to be a Navy tech in the Korean War, he had left the farm to work in the phone company, taking all the technical training he could find. Federal Electric bought up the Phone Company he worked for in Spokane, Washington, transferring him to Alaska. Then ATT bought up Federal Electric, and was itself bought by ITT and he was transferred to Paris, France. Probably where I got interested in postmodern.

But, love struck the inventor, and divorce of his old love quickly followed. Eight years had passed, so my trip home from boot camp was part of much of the contemporary life-scape, a chance to get to know the new wife and my dad in his new life. You can now read between the lines, why this blue-collar man turned manager of college-educated engineers, while the ex-wife demanded corporate intervention, had to leave ITT. The family farmer inventor and the engineer without diploma are relics of our past.

As this unemployed, highly skilled blue-collar man, not yet inventor took the trash out to the curb, by the third week, he had imagined a solution. He took an envelope from the trash, opened it up and scrawled a schematic of a machine. His feet carried him to a phone booth, and in a New York directory he picked from the long list of lawyers a name at random. He dialed Sam Permut, and told the secretary "I have an invention that will cut air pollution and make

your boss rich.” There was a long pause at the other end, and the secretary said Mr. Permut would take the appointment this afternoon at 2 P.M. Sam heard my dad’s presentation, saw the drawing on the envelop and agreed to finance the start up. Why? Because, at that time Sam needed a good tax write off, and Sam was also the most influential of lawyers in New York, a man of power and means, knowing in the unlikely event of a long shot, there was fortune here.

As I eyed the liquor store, I asked, “Dad what in the hell is going on?” “Sam wants the mayors to pass a law that will make my invention a legal alternative to the scrubber. He sent limos to pick them up.” A scrubber, I knew cost about \$12,000, and in apartment, factory, and malls, the scrubber, washed the smoke that came from incinerating the trash, sent down the chutes to some basement. My dad knew he had a cheaper, more efficient, and more ecological product, the monster, the mechanical cow.

“Get more trash,” he yelled, “we don’t have time to be standing around gabbing.” It was ten till noon. Were their really ten limousines, with mayors and chauffeurs, about to pull up to see the monster? You never knew what was going to happen, for an inventor is a natural born dreamer, someone who makes fantasy real, and real into fantasy. Which would this be?

As I pulled and tugged and rolled, yet another trash can around the corner, they were there, ten limos, white as could be, with well-groomed chauffeurs, quickly opening doors, and portly gentleman, dressed for power, making their way into the liquor store. I ran past with the trash. “This is my son, David, on leave from the Army” he yelled to the mayors, “Get more trash?” I dumped the cans into the hungry monster, and scurried to get more. The monster was cranking, moving faster than ever I had seen this cow, belching trash into those paper bags, oil squirting and metal a bending, as my dad put on his show. “Gentlemen, you see here the future of trash disposal, no more air pollution, from the incineration. We are here packing trash in tighter compaction, than if it had been burned.” They leaned in, but not too close, because the monster’s teeth, driven by pistons, could bite through two by fours, as easily as a man’s arm. The piston could smash tin cans with ease, cut through coat

hangers, boxes, and bottles. Every once in a while, dad would show off by putting a two by four in the jaws, holding one end, as the monster bit it clean through with out pause. Then he would place a four by four into the jaws, and the Mayors would watch open-mouthed, and I think a bit afraid. The piston cranked up more foot pounds of pressure, and the machine groaned and stretched, seeming to pause to find its strength. Maybe it would stop altogether and bust into a million pieces, killing ten mayors in the process. But, after seeming eternity, the exhaled smoke and spiting grease arrested, and the four by four was seared in two, no match for the monster. Then he would put a solid hunk of iron in the jaws, to show how the robot could sense it was too much to chew, draw its cylinders back and try once more, and not break its monster teeth on food too tough to digest. A human tender would come eventually and remove the iron from its jaws.

Somehow, the robotic trash-eating machine held together, and the demonstration continued, and my dad went back to his theatrics. “The trash compactor can be installed for about \$4,000 per building, unlike the scrubber, that costs you over \$12,000. It will save you land fill costs, hauling costs, and it will give you cleaner air to breath. I think you could install it in landfills to compress the household trash, and properly sorted trashed could press newspaper and cardboard into logs for fuel.” As I looked about I saw the mayors, dressed in their pin stripes and patent leather shoes, stepping in the oil to get a closer look, and leaning to hear my dad’s stories. “What you see here” he continued, “is just a prototype. The working model will be clean, quiet and efficient to operate. I have an idea of perfuming the trash to get rid of any offensive odors.”

He also explained about his hero Sir Isaac Newton, ‘One of Newton’s laws of physics is that as you compress matter, in this case trash, through a funnel, it will either compact to solidarity or will fall though without compaction like sand. The trick is to use the right geometric angles and a second plunger to break it loose before compacting so tight it is a brick. “

These mayors, like his partners Sam and Sol, were impressed by his spectacle of demonstration, the grand theatrics and the inventor's knack for storytelling. And the rest is history, laws were passed, a factory was built in Brooklyn, a sales force was sent across the land, the business was sold to a bigger business, and the inventor and his two partners became rich, living the American dream, the spectacle of invention and prosperity.

I am proud of the invention. It is ecological, doing something about the problems of air pollution, landfill limits, and an economy doing violence to the planet. I write this book to do something about a planet overrun with trash, a lifestyle of over production and heedless consumption that exhausts the resources of the planet, while telling us stories that growth will go on forever. We manifest a life style in which the billion privileged consumers appropriate life-giving resources from the other five billion.

I played a bit part in the theatrics of the monster robot; my dad did the storytelling, and everyone who stood about the liquor store that day, were spectators and players in wider ***spectacles and festivals of organization***.

There is another project I have in mind. I want to look at what has happened to an American Dream that for millions of people around the globe has become has become their worst nightmare.

Life on the Family Farm The care of animals has taken on a change since the days of the family farm. My grandparents and their parents, and parents' parents lived the family farm life. My grand parents knew their animals by name, each had their personality, and for part of the family. My dad raised his calf from birth to maturity. He grieved when the calf had to be slaughtered to put food on the family table. Each morning my grandparents rose at 4:40 A.M. They milk and fed the cows, worked in the orchards or corn fields, fed the geese and chicken, and returned for a hearty breakfast. They raised and sent to slaughter their own animals, and ate the plants and animals they had grown, participating directly in both production and consumption. They participated in ways that are totally alien to who we participate in consuming carefully wrapped and presented supermarket food. Animals were cared for, their stalls cleaned, their manure

spread on the fields, fields and crops were rotated to keep the ground healthy. My grandparents did not buy a lot of chemicals, did not genetically engineer anything. After breakfast, my grandfather went to work at the Pittsburgh Glass Works in Spokane, Washington. He was a master craftsman, a journeyman stain glass window maker, and a blue-collar man all his life. Once he was asked to become a manager, a supervisor of the other workers, but he declined, without thinking too much about it. He valued his life with the other journeymen and knew that becoming a manager would put a divide between him and his close friends. He worked his entire life as a journeyman and family farmer, staying with the same plot of land for most of his life. Grandmother during her day would take care of the people who drove from miles around to purchase the milk, honey, and apples grown on the farm. There were no signs, no advertising, everyone knew where to go. Grandmother also took care of the loveliest flower gardens I ever saw, with flowers budding and blooming according to the seasons. It is the closest thing to festival I have seen, with friends and neighbors stopping buy to purchase and chat, to visit the orchards, see the animals, and inspect the production.

As my grandparents grew old and I was in junior high and then high school, I took the bus on weekends to work on the farm. I mended fences, painted sheds, milked a few cows, harvested the honey, and shoveled tons of manure from the barn near the Little Spokane River. Farming is hard work, long hours, and has to be done, rain or shine, snow or blizzard.

I remember grandmother never swatted a bee. She would let it land on her smock and carry it gently outdoors and set it free. I did not grow up around bees so I was very cautious around them. Much of what I ate for breakfast and lunch came from the farm. People not only came for the honey, they called to have my grandfather to take care of a problem swarm of bees, not his own, but one that was a problem to the community. Swarms would nest where people found them a nuisance. He would collect them up and move them to someplace where bees were not a nuisance. My grandparents were not Ahimsa, and not vegetarian, but they had their own way of respecting all life forms.

After my grandparents died, one of my uncles razed the farm buildings, including both barns and all the wooden sheds. The pastures were divided into small, suburban home tracts, and the farm ceased to be reality. When my children and I visited my hometown, I took them to Maringo Road, along the Little Spokane River, and took pictures of them standing in front of a simple mound of smooth and round stones, a storage cellar, made by my grandparents, to store grandma's preserves and roots that would be planted in the right season.

In the factory farm, animals no longer have names or personalities, they are no longer assumed to be living, they are just simple machines. Transforming animals into machines of production, while sustaining the spectacle illusion that animals are well-cared for to a consumer public that no longer participates in growing or slaughtering their own animals is expensive, but not too difficult.

The cosmology of mechanism is endemic to the factory farm, because setting up a mechanistic organization is part of treating animals (and workers) as production tools and production machines. How else can one legitimate slaughterhouse practices that are now manifest, practices exhibiting as much horror as Sinclair's Slaughterhouse Jungle? The safety record for animals and humans continues to worsen with not a single fine imposed against rather obvious cruelty behaviors. The federal Slaughterhouse regulations passed as a result of Sinclair's expose have never been enforced (the fine is only \$500, which is not a deterrent anyway). Any reform has come from the economic choices from consumer boycotts, such as the 300% reduction in veal consumption, and lesser declines in red meat consumption.

Boje Indians I am part Native American. My grandfather's brother, you see, married an Indian woman in Washington State. He went native and lived on the reservation. I only recently learned my heritage since my grandparents erased this man, his bride, all their children, and children's children from our family tree. It is a symbolic massacre, born in guilt and shame at being this closely linked to native. For many generations the Bojes crossed the Rockies in their covered wagons, tamed the Wild West, resettling what had been native. To marry one and go native was more than our proud Danish family could bear. We

did not directly participate in the violence I will describe below, but the racist attitude is part of the problem. Nor, do most people know directly execute the violence, but attitude continues. We are all participants in the violence that continues, even when we are several links away from the executor, and do not have attitude.

I was shocked when I heard my sister tell me this racist story, uncovering strange tellings of our family history for her college project. I was stunned that my family could deny me my heritage. But, as in the stories I share below, almost all the white settlers were racist. I went to try to find my Boje-Indian relatives, my second cousins, but could not locate them. My sister has met them and I believe that the Boje Indians do still live on in the Washington reservation system. My search continues. I tell you this story so that you will know that I have a personal stake in spectacles of corporate/state colonialism and racist land accumulation. I think the masking of my Indian family tree is somehow connected to the destruction of native festival.

I would like to write a new story of production and consumption, one in which people fashion festival in their everyday lives. I want to pass along a world to my children's children that has respect for all life.