

## Old News — Sample Desk Story — May 2019

I'M FROM TEXAS. IN TEXAS, WE HAVE AN OLD SAYING ABOUT CORPORATE REGULATIONS: "IF THE COMPANY'S NOT DROWNING YOU IN MOLASSES, KEEP RULES OUT OF THEIR ASSES." THAT'S OUR LITMUS TEST. AS LONG AS A COMPANY ISN'T DOING SOMETHING SO OBSCENE, SO IRRESPONSIBLE, SO STUPID THAT IT LEADS TO PEOPLE DROWNING IN PANCAKE SYRUP, YOU'RE OK IN OUR BOOK.

YOU'D THINK THAT'D BE AN EASY RULE TO FOLLOW, RIGHT? SURELY, IT'S EASY TO KEEP PEOPLE FROM DROWNING IN SYRUP? WELL, EXCEPT FOR SOME OF IHOP'S BRAVE FLAVOR ENGINEERS, OF COURSE.

[TAKE: FF: MOCKUP: IMAGE OF A LAB COMPLETELY FILLED WITH SYRUP, DEAD BODIES OF SCIENTISTS IN IHOP APRONS FLOATING, SUSPENDED IN THE LAB.]

LET'S TALK ABOUT THE GREAT MOLASSES FLOOD. THE GREAT MOLASSES FLOOD STARTED IN JANUARY 1919 IN BOSTON, WITH A LEAKY MOLASSES TANK OPERATED BY PURITY DISTILLING — ALSO, THE NAME OF MIKE PENCE'S NEW PODCAST.

[TAKE: FF: MOCKUP: MIKE PENCE IN THICK-RIMMED GLASSES AND HEADPHONES IN A PODCAST STUDIO.]

NOW, THIS TANK LEAK WAS A KNOWN PROBLEM. THE GIANT, FIFTY-FOOT BY NINETY-FOOT TANK LEAKED SO MUCH MOLASSES THAT KIDS WOULD BRING CANS TO FILL WITH MOLASSES DRIPPINGS. WHY? KIDS LOVE HANDOUTS — ESPECIALLY ONES THEY CAN CARRY IN RUSTY OLD CANS.

FOR ITS PART, PURITY DISTILLING HANDLED THE ISSUE HEAD ON ... BY PAINTING THE TANK THE COLOR OF MOLASSES, SO PEOPLE WOULDN'T NOTICE THE LEAKS. OF COURSE, PURITY ISN'T THE LAST COMPANY TO DO THIS. WE ALL KNOW APPLE JUST PAINTED A BUNCH OF CALCULATORS AND CALLED THEM SMARTPHONES, RIGHT? WE'VE BEEN SENDING OUR TWEETS FROM TI-85S!

WAIT - THAT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE, THOUGH. IF I'VE BEEN TWEETING FROM A CALCULATOR THIS WHOLE TIME, WHY AM I STILL GETTING HARASSED BY TROLLS...?

[TAKE: FF: MOCKUP: GRAPHING CALCULATOR WITH NUMBERS AND SYMBOLS THAT SPELL OUT "UR BOOBLESS".]

SHOCKINGLY, THE OL' PAINT 'N WAIT DIDN'T WORK. AFTER TEMPERATURES IN BOSTON ROSE FROM 2 DEGREES TO 40 DEGREES IN A SINGLE DAY, THE TANK COULDN'T BEAR THE PRESSURE. WHEN IT EXPLODED, A GIANT WAVE OF

MOLASSES 25 FEET HIGH – THAT’S FIVE DANNY DEVITOS! – AND 165 FEET WIDE – THAT’S 66 DANNY DEVITO TORSOS! – POURED INTO THE STREETS.

[TAKE: FF: MOCKUP: A WAVE MADE UP OF DANNY DEVITOS.]

MORE THAN TWO MILLION GALLONS OF MOLASSES POURED THE STREETS. THE WAVE RIPPED BUILDINGS FROM THEIR FOUNDATION, DESTROYED TRAIN TRACKS, KILLED 21 PEOPLE AND INJURED ANOTHER 150.

NOW, WHAT WAS THE ROOT OF THIS? TEXAS - I’M SORRY, I HAVE TO SAY IT: CORPORATIONS. CORPORATIONS KILL PEOPLE ALL THE TIME! PEOPLE DIE ON BLACK FRIDAY. THEY DIE FROM PREVENTABLE OVERDOSES. THEY DIE WHEN CAR MANUFACTURERS INSTALL FAULTY AIRBAGS. IN A WAY, THIS WAS BOSTON’S FIRST \*TASTE\* OF THE DANGERS OF UNCHECKED BUSINESS. HEY! THAT PUN WAS AN ACCIDENT! HOW DARE YOU LAUGH. PEOPLE WERE PANCAKED! THEY WERE TOASTED. THEY WERE SCRAMBLED LIKE EGGS. HOW DARE YOU! MRS. BUTTERWORTH WAS REAL AND SHE DIED ON THAT DAY!

[TAKE: VIDEO CLIP MOCKUP: BOTTLE OF MRS. BUTTERSWORTH SLIPPING UNDER THE SURFACE OF A POOL OF SYRUP, GURGLING SOUNDS V.O.]

WE APOLOGIZE TO OUR YOUNGER VIEWERS FOR THAT.

NOW, NORMALLY, YOU’D THINK THIS WOULD HAVE A SIMPLE ENDING. REMEMBER PURITY DISTILLING? THE COMPANY THAT PAINTED THE TANK? WELL, IT WAS TRUE IN 1919, AND IT’S TRUE A CENTURY LATER: WHEN CORNERED BY THEIR OWN COLOSSAL FUCK-UPS, BIG BUSINESS LOVES BLAMING TROLLS.

[TAKE: VIDEO CLIP: MARK ZUCKERBERG TESTIFYING BEFORE CONGRESS.]

JUST LIKE THE CEO OF ONE OF THE BIGGEST COMPANIES IN THE WORLD-

[TAKE: PHOTO OF MARK ZUCKERBERG.]

-BLAMED TROLLS FOR TAKING ADVANTAGE OF A SITE THAT WAS BUILT FOR TROLLS, BY TROLLS IN THE 2016 ELECTION, PURITY TRIED POINTING THE FINGER TO ... TERRORISM! PURITY PULLED THE ORIGINAL ZUCKERBERG, CLAIMED THE DISASTER WAS CAUSED BY AN ANARCHIST ATTACK, AND HOPED NOBODY WOULD HOLD THEM - THE *WEAK, WITTLE* CORPORATION - ACCOUNTABLE.

NOW, IN THE EARLY 1900S, ANARCHIST ATTACKS WEREN’T UNCOMMON. JUST A

FEW YEARS BEFORE, WORLD WAR I HAD JUST ENDED. AMERICANS HAD JUST FINISHED LIVING THROUGH FIVE YEARS OF THE RED WEDDING FROM “GAME OF THRONES” – THEY WERE ON-EDGE, THEY’D JUST WATCHED ALL THEIR FRIENDS DIE, AND THEY WERE SICK OF HAVING WEIRD FANTASIES ABOUT GUYS IN UNIFORM. OH, COME ON. WE ALL WANT JAIMIE. WE ALL WANT JAIMIE.

[TAKE: VIDEO CLIP: GAME OF THRONES’ JAIMIE LANNISTER SITTING IN A MUDDY CAGE, CHAINED TO THE GROUND, LEERING FROM BEHIND HIS DIRTY, MUDDY BANGS.]

ADMIT IT. YOU STILL WANT JAIMIE.

SO, RATHER THAN OWNING UP, PURITY DECIDED TO BLAME THEIR WRONGDOINGS ON ANARCHISTS. AT LEAST IN FACEBOOK’S CASE, THERE WERE ACTUAL RUSSIAN TROLLS TAKING ADVANTAGE OF A FLAWED SYSTEM. BUT IN PURITY’S CASE, IT WAS JUST A HAIL MARY TO AVOID BLAME. THERE WERE NO ANARCHISTS. NO BOMBING. JUST A COMPANY DOING WHATEVER IT WANTED IN A WORLD WHERE REGULATIONS WERE AS RARE AS WOMEN BEING ABLE TO READ. THAT’S ... STILL A JOKE ABOUT THE MEN, FYI. IT WAS ALL THE MEN’S FAULT. EVERYTHING BAD CAN BE BLAMED ON MEN.

IN THE END, PURITY WAS HELD RESPONSIBLE. IT WOUND UP PAYING ONLY AROUND \$15 MILLION IN TODAY’S MONEY, OR, IN ITS DAY, THE COST OF A LOAF OF BREAD WITH ONLY A FEW HORSE TEETH BAKED IN.

[TAKE: FF: MOCKUP: LOAF OF BREAD WITH GIANT TEETH STICKING OUT]

STILL, THIS FLOOD IS REGARDED AS THE BIG EVENT THAT INTRODUCED REGULATIONS INTO CONSTRUCTION. THIS MIGHT SEEM TRIVIAL, BUT IT’S ACTUALLY A HUGE DEAL. THE HOUSE YOU’RE SITTING IN RIGHT NOW? IT WAS CONSTRUCTED. THE STUDIO I’M SITTING IN RIGHT NOW? ALSO CONSTRUCTED. EVERYWHERE YOU WENT TODAY AND WILL GO TOMORROW? ALL PLACES THAT WERE BUILT!

YOU KNOW WHAT ELSE WE USED A LOT? SOCIAL MEDIA. FACEBOOK. TWITTER. HECK, WHATEVER TOMORROW’S VERSION OF SOCIAL MEDIA EVEN IS!

TODAY, SOCIAL MEDIA IS AS MUCH A PART OF LIFE AS CONSTRUCTION. SO, RIDDLE ME THIS: WHAT EVENT INTRODUCED STRONGER REGULATIONS? WHAT’S FACEBOOK’S GREAT MOLASSES FLOOD? TWITTER’S SYRUPY WAVE OF DANNY DEVITOS? HAS THERE BEEN ONE YET?

WE KNOW MARK ZUCKERBERG TESTIFIED BEFORE CONGRESS FOLLOWING FACEBOOK’S ROLE IN THE 2016 ELECTION. HIS EYEBALLS REMEMBER THAT DAY,

TOO, BECAUSE THAT'S THE DAY THEY DIDN'T GET EVEN ONE BLINK'S WORTH OF MOISTURE FOR 10 HOURS.

[TAKE: VIDEO CLIP: CLIP OF ZUCKERBERG TESTIFYING AND NOT BLINKING FOR SEVERAL SECONDS]

AFTER THE TESTIMONY, TWO LAWS WERE PASSED THAT HOPE TO PREVENT FUTURE MEDDLING. UNFORTUNATELY, SCHOLARS HAVE ARGUED THAT THESE LAWS, INSTEAD OF SAFEGUARDING SOCIAL MEDIA FROM BEING WEAPONIZED, WILL LARGELY AFFECT U.S. POLITICIANS' ABILITIES TO TAKE OUT ADS.

SO, DESPITE IT ALL, ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL INDUSTRIES IN THE WORLD IS LARGELY UNREGULATED. WE'VE SEEN WHAT HAPPENS WHEN SOCIAL MEDIA'S WEAPONIZED. WE'VE GOT ANOTHER ELECTION COMING UP. WE DON'T WANT FOUR MORE YEARS OF THIS.

[TAKE: VIDEO CLIP: TRUMP LEAVING AN OPEN UMBRELLA OUTSIDE AIR FORCE ONE.]

OR THIS.

[TAKE: VIDEO CLIP: TRUMP STANDING IN THE WHITE HOUSE BEHIND A TABLE FULL OF FAST FOOD]

OR THIS.

[TAKE: VIDEO CLIP: TRUMP SITTING IN AN 18-WHEELER, HONKING THE HORN.]

GAFFES ASIDE, WHAT HAPPENED IN 2016 WAS JUST PLAIN SCARY. THOSE CLIPS, SILLY AS THEY ARE, MAKE IT EASY TO FORGET JUST HOW PRECARIOUS OF A SITUATION WE'RE IN, AND HOW DANGEROUS THAT MAN IS TO WOMEN, TO MINORITIES, THE IMPOVERISHED, AND TO THE FUTURE.

THERE COULD VERY WELL BE ANOTHER SYRUPY WAVE BUILDING IN TECH. AND IF THAT WAVE IS ANYTHING LIKE WHAT HAPPENED IN 1919, OR IN 2016 — OR WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IN EVEN ONE EPISODE OF 'PURITY DISTILLING' —

[TAKE: FF: MOCKUP: MIKE PENCE IN THICK-RIMMED GLASSES AND HEADPHONES IN A PODCAST STUDIO]

-I DON'T WANT TO SEE IT.