

Shooting the Messenger

Till Death Do Us Part

One of her last requests was that I make one more attempt at telling my story; now, our story. I should not have been surprised that my firing from the Canadian Public Service still bothered her considering the surroundings in which she died—and neither will you once you read, in essence, the extended edition of what Les Brost called “a powerful, poignant story.”

Shooting the Messenger – Till Death Do Us Part begins with a slightly abridged version of A Whistleblower’s Tale, my eyewitness account of a sustained multi-million dollar fraud perpetrated on the Canadian taxpayers and how, without the benefit of a lawyer (which we could not afford), I appealed my dismissal all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. Till Death Do Us Part reveals the next leg of this personal journey, starting with finding a job and ending with the assisted death of my beloved on the afternoon of July 5, 2019.

Beyond all expectations, two years after being escorted out of 125 Sussex Drive, I was offered a job by a Montréal consultant whose company had won a lucrative support contract with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), with the connivance of two public servants he bribed. He wasn’t worried I would tell anybody. He hired me knowing my history, confident that I would not repeat the same mistake. I am sad to say, he was right. I now knew better than to stand in corruption’s way.

After CIDA, I became a consultant myself—an honest one, as my advice to the Ottawa Heart Institute will attest after their patient database experienced a year 2000 meltdown which I had warned them about—using an application I developed called the Boreal Shell as my calling card. The people who fired me hoped to make me totally unemployable by adding to my file a performance appraisal that rated me unsatisfactory in all categories. My Shell became the performance appraisal by which I would be judged.

My first customer was an engineer in charge of CAIS, short for Capital Asset Inventory System, a failed attempt to create an electronic catalogue of all assets on First Nation communities for which the federal government was responsible. I promised Denis that, starting from scratch and using the Boreal Shell and the Canadian technology on which it was based, to have the thing done in four months or less. Not only that, the application would respond to users in either official language and produce reports in French or English on the fly.

After a promise fulfilled, I was asked to build ACRS (pronounced acres) for Asset Condition Reporting System, CAIS’s sister component. ACRS won the Deputy Minister’s award for excellence, coming in on time and under budget while exceeding requirements and user expectations.

During this time, the government had a policy of devolution of technology to First Nations to help them manage their affairs. To help make it happen, I went to work for the Ontario First Nations Technical Services Corporation (OFNTSC) based in Toronto, and later enlisted Michael Cowpland’s support. The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs had other plans, however, and the initiative was utterly and despicably defeated.

With the transfer of technology to help First Nation managers manage stymied, I went to work for Bell Enterprises in Montréal to incorporate the Shell

within LEGOS, Bell’s telephone network monitoring system, and improve the Shell’s text search capabilities. We were days from launch when the plug was pulled. Doing Google Before Google Did Google is not a tale of malfeasance but of lack of imagination.

The technology on which my Shell depended was developed by Bell Northern Research before it was spun off as Nortel. A week or so before the inauguration of my improved Shell, Bell announced that it was spinning its entire programming staff to CGI, Canada’s largest computer consulting and systems integration company. CGI did not “do ZIM.” They put LEGOS in maintenance mode while waiting for an Oracle replacement and killed the Boreal Shell implementation and with it Bell’s brainchild.

In the 1990s, the Canadian government, looking to standardize how information was stored in government databases, turned to the past, to the relational model. The ZIM database component was based on the hierarchical model, the model that has become the standard for how the Web handles information. The ZIM implementation of the superior hierarchical model had no impact on its interoperability with other databases. Nonetheless, the government declared the last remaining piece of advanced Canadian information management technology non-compliant, therefore outside the normal procurement process. This meant no new government clients.

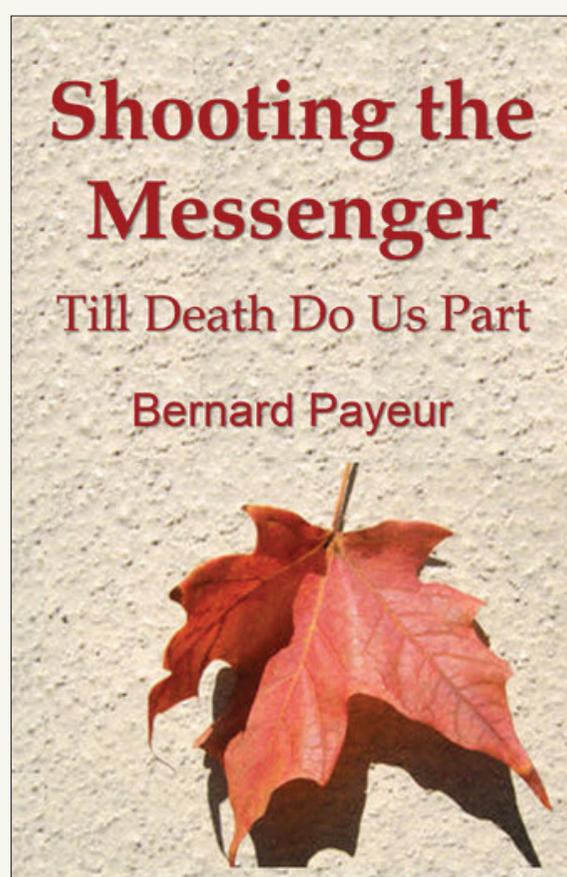
With a disappearing client base for the amazing technology that powered the Boreal Shell, I could no longer operate as a one-man consulting firm using it to open doors. Finding work the old-fashioned way, with that abject appraisal on file—not to mention my firing, to which I would have to admit—was not realistic.

It was shortly after 9/11 when, spurred on by the events of that day and what a young African immigrant in Montréal had told me about her religion—my time with she who was the inspiration for the character Uzza of Remembering Uzza: If Islam Was Explained to Me in a Pub (www.amazon.ca/dp/1928023193) is recalled in Love, Sex and Islam (www.amazon.ca/dp/1928023231)—I bought an approved translation of the Koran and quickly read it from cover to cover. It more than lived up to Edward Gibbon’s assessment of “as toilsome a reading as I ever undertook; a wearisome confused jumble.” Is it any wonder so few non-Muslims have read the book?

I was both a programmer and a systems analyst; the latter skill often involves bringing order to chaos. Could I do the same for the Koran and make it more accessible to the layperson, perhaps making a living as a writer? The result was Pain, Pleasure and Prejudice: The Koran by topic, explained in a way we can all understand (www.amazon.ca/dp/1928023118). A friend had challenged me to make getting acquainted with the Koran less of a chore. The result was Remembering Uzza, the last book for which my beloved was my sounding board. When the first draft was completed, she called the number to say she was ready, and three days later she was gone.

My books on Islam are incidental to the story Lucette wanted to me to tell and which ends with her passing, far away from where she had hoped to die, with only Scott Brison at Treasury Board admitting to his helplessness.

-Bernard Payeur



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