

**Tribute to the Fallen:
“Why We Do What We Do”**

**Jim Newberry
Assistant Vice President and Risk Control Manager
Island Insurance Company, LTD
Honolulu, HI**

Lawrence Bamber

Introduction

This paper is not intended to reflect the presentation put on at the San Antonio Safety 2009 ASSE PDC because the presentation was an audio visual experience with copyrighted photography. However, the message at the conclusion of the presentation is provided in full and exemplifies a critical and well-conceived message propitious for all safety and health professionals. The presentation was intended to speak to our colleagues about the work we do at an emotional level, but also to demonstrate how telling stories is an important method of communicating to the non-safety community who need to hear our message about the importance of safety. The end result being that we wish all workers return home safe at the end of each work day, having gone to work in good faith that management would be looking out for their best interests as valued and productive contributors to the enterprise they operate (many of which are in business to make a profit).

This paper reflects the background of the project and highlights of the material. It also speaks to the need for our profession to look at refreshing ways of communicating within our profession, within our companies, and publicly throughout our communities.

How It All Started

As a Practice Specialty Newsletter Editor, I'm often striking up conversations with folks that might result in a good article. So in 2007 when I first took on this obligation and was attending a CIH Review course with Emeritus Professor of Industrial Health at the University of Michigan, Steven Levine, PhD, CIH, I asked him for an article, knowing that he'd written many when he was President of AIHA. After he sent me seven articles to read and to choose from, I had a positive emotional reaction to the personal nature of many of his articles, which resulted in an insight. The basis of that insight was the power of telling stories in a way that jumps generations, social strata, educational levels, and hopefully would translate into the board room. As the Newsletter Editor for RM/I, I chose “Joe’s Story.” I hope you had a chance to read it and, if not,

let me know and I'll send you a copy, gratis from ASSE and the RM/I. If it grabs you and you are in Loss Control or Risk Management, please consider joining our Practice Specialty.

Steve and I continued communicating and he expressed a desire to come to Hawaii to participate in the Governor's Pacific Rim Safety and Health Conference in 2008. So we (I was a board member of the local Hawaii AIHA Section at the time and there were several of us who worked on getting him here) began hatching ideas to get him to Honolulu. Having been past Chair of the Governor's conference I was aware that they would need a program for the memorial breakfast session that is done at every conference, so I proposed to the steering committee that I be assigned to take care of it. I was given permission to design the morning program, which is held on the last day of the conference. With that idea in mind, I told Steve about the memorial breakfast that commemorates workers who have died and that I had the go ahead to create the morning program—the rest was his brainchild. In addition to using his own articles, he went to his broad network of friends and colleagues that included Earl Dotter, Photojournalist and Visiting Harvard Professor; Tom Hethmon, Senior VP of EHS & Sustainability at Dyno Nobel Corporation; Dave Stangis of Intel Corporation; Jonathan Rosen of the NY State Public Employees Federation; and Axel Bogdan of 3M Corporation.

So how did Lawrence and I come to be putting this program on? Well we were sitting in an Irish Pub on Monday evening after the first day of the Governor's conference when I got a call from Jim Peck, who'd been host and guardian for Steve on his many trips to Hawaii, including this one. Jim told me that Steve was in the hospital and would not be able to give the presentation, and he wanted to know if I would be willing to do it for him. Of course I said yes, but was caught a bit by surprise and turned to Lawrence and asked him if he would co-present with me on Wednesday morning. Well as it turned out, Steve was not better on Wednesday, so Lawrence and I gave the presentation.

We had a little homework to do and preparations to make. I'd already asked the audio visual specialist at the convention center to be available for a run-through on Tuesday afternoon, to give Steve a change to get familiar with the space and practice a bit. That turned out to be a blessing because we had eight PowerPoint presentations with about three gigabytes of photos to manage and we had to figure out what to do and say. Well that afternoon, I found a 44-page script for the presentation that Steve had prepared for himself and I took it down to the convention center's business center to get it printed so we could have a go at the program. Do you have any idea what the business center charged me for that little print job? Well, I needed my credit card for sure.

With the script in hand, I returned to the ballroom at the convention center to work with the AV specialist where we spent some time choreographing and timing the presentation. The first issue we had was that we couldn't open all of the PowerPoint files at one time. He said we needed another computer and that he had a way he could hook them up, so we'd have a seamless show – I thought, “all right, this is going to work,” and said I'd bring my laptop with me in the morning and we'd get things connected. It all did work out.

Mike Thompson, ASSE President, was at the session and we asked him for his endorsement to bring this program to PDC and with Dewey's assistance — the rest is history. If you saw the program, we hope you enjoyed it. If you would like a video of the first time we gave it, we were fortunate enough that the folks at HIOSH (our state OSHA program) were our

conference partner at the Governor's conference and they captured it on video. It is an 18 GB video file in Quicktime (.mov) format, so a large thumb drive or USB drive is necessary for portability. So while this paper is not a complete version of the presentation, there is a way to experience it in its entirety.

I'd also like to mention that Steve has refined the program and since given it twice at smaller venues over the past year. We are pleased to be active partners in offering this program and want to send out a special thanks to Dr. Steve Levine, CIH and his collaborators for allowing us to make this program available for us to share with you.

Some Highlights of the Presentation

The program outline is as follows:

1. Introduction to the "Why" of this talk –
2. Seven and Earl's Photostories
3. A segment on How to Do It Right
4. A wrap-up of Lessons Learned

I think Steve said it best ...

"Let's start with the "Why We Do What We Do" as professionals

To improve safety and health performance, we must understand what is at stake. This might seem to be an obvious issue. Who else but safety and health professionals understand what is at stake?

We see the blood, the broken bone, the burn. We might see the ambulance leave the facility or scene of the incident, but do we really see what happens? Do we really understand the breadth and depth of the pain that is caused when a person is injured or develops an occupational illness?

Where is The Bright Line between a safe workplace and one that is hazardous? Is there a line at all? And which of us in this audience decides where the line should be – will be – between the safe and hazardous? Which ones of us police the implementation of that line?

This presentation is designed to help us all better understand what is often not acknowledged:

The victims.

Injury, Illness & Fatality RATES:

Is the need for safe businesses based entirely on the imperatives of injury and illness, and also fatality, statistics? Do those statistics tell a compelling story? Or is the Compelling Nature of such numbers limited to a few of us geeks who understand statistics?

Who polices? Who watches? Who allows us to turn our heads and not look? Or to be blindfolded and not see? Who says that we must work under hazardous conditions as a cost of employment? That without the hazardous worksite, there will be no work, and that our family will not eat?

Is this the new global business model for construction, for agriculture, for fishing, and even for the tourist industry?

Is there no Business Model that combines a profitable business with a safe workplace? Must we resort to that tired, failed communist theology that accuses capitalists of crimes against workers and communist masters as holders of the grail of a safe and healthful workplace? A trip to any “communist paradise” will quickly convince us that that is not the path to a safe workplace. What, then, is that business model?

Whether you’ve been in this profession for two months or 25 years, we all have strong opinions about the right way to do things. We feel strongly about what is right and why. The following principles are not written in stone or unimpeachable, but reflect the common knowledge of a number of experienced S&H professionals who have a common characteristic: they work for companies with world-class safety performance.

How then, can we tell the story – the Tribute to the Fallen – that compels us, as safety and health professionals to Do What We Do? There are many stories, from which we have chosen but a few.”

Steve’s words above were the introduction of the presentation, the foundation on which 7 compelling photo-stories were told, depicting horrid and brutal work, men and women risking their lives and limbs for a day’s wages. Many of whom the toll was far too great for the rewards received.

Following are the ideas expressed at the conclusion of the presentation on how to do it right. Any undertaking of this nature deserves a positive resolution, a way to foster action and the possibility of prosperity for all. Here now are Steve’s final ideas on where we must go – to help create a better world that allows the worker(s) to return home to his/her/their family(s)...

I did not show these images and tell you their stories to entertain you, but to educate you to the opportunities you have as a health and safety professional to have a greater impact than you did yesterday.

That leads us to ask the logical question: What do we need to do to improve?

Much of the part of the talk immediately following (not counting photos) was written by Tom Hethmon, with extensive editing by Steve.

As I see it, you have three options: keep doing just what you’re currently doing and expecting different results. After all, the reason things don’t prove is not that you don’t have all the right answers, it’s that not everyone is listening, right?

Option two is to become more militant – be a bigger safety cop. After all, if you can just get workers to follow the rules, everything will get better, right? Oh, except that there is reliable data that indicates this doesn't always work. What happens if managers themselves don't follow the rules?

Of course you can always sacrifice yourself for the cause. I have known professionals who have had to do this because they felt they had no other option. But I wonder if they really had no other options or maybe they lacked the skill to influence management and others to work more safely.

For those of you who are truly motivated to improve, I offer this seemingly simple plan that has proven effective across many industries and many types of organizations.

First: Make sure your organization has a S&H goal or vision. What are you trying to accomplish? Without a well-defined and justified goal/vision, it's just random guesswork. Are you trying to achieve greatness or just get a little better? Your methods will reflect your goal.

Second: We all need to ask ourselves what we (and our organizations) believe relative to safety and health. Do you have your own safety and health principles?

Third: Develop a plan to improve based on your goals and principles. The design will reflect the goals and principles.

Fourth: If you are not already, try to be both a strong technical professional (regs, exposure assessment, safety engineering, etc), and learn to coach others. Learn to influence behavior.

Lastly: If you want management to listen to your beliefs and plans, learn to speak in their language.

Let's spend a few minutes talking about each of these.

You have to have a clear and unambiguous goal if you want to improve safety. Otherwise, people don't know what they are working for. Do any of your organizations operate without a clear profit and loss expectation each year? Hardly - so why is safety and health any different?

Ask your self and more importantly, your management, "What are we trying to accomplish?" What's the goal? Do you have consensus without your organization? Are you all on the same page? If not, you have some work to do.

To help you think about some of the options for choosing a safety goal, let's do a short exercise:

Think about your own organization. Ask yourself what the % of I & I improvement should be for next year, e.g., 20%? (call on Jim: how many employees, what % improvement?)

Once identified, ask yourself to do some simple math because the answer to the question

above will be: “How many of your workers will be injured next year?”

Now that you know how many of your workers will be injured next year, write down the names of those who will be injured and while you’re at it, write down the nature of their injuries.

Moral to the exercise: anything short of zero is budgeting for people to get hurt. The only morally acceptable goal is zero!

Whether you’ve been in this profession for two months or 25 years, we all have strong opinions about the right way to do things. We feel strongly about what is right and why.

The following principles reflect the common knowledge and experience of a number of experienced S&H professionals who have a common characteristic: they work for companies with world-class safety performance.

All injuries are preventable:

Some people struggle with this notion. But no organization has eliminated injuries who didn’t also believe it was possible. It is only acts of God that are sometimes inevitable, e.g., earthquake. And even then, we can always improve our warning systems. Challenge your organization, but as we will talk about in the next couple of slides, you will need a good system, culture and leadership to have a realistic chance to do so.

Safety is a line function:

Line managers have authority/control over many of the variables that contribute to injuries and illness. As such, they are best positioned to control those variables that reduce the potential for injuries and illness. When line managers treat safety like one of the functions (production, planning, maintenance, etc) it generally results in more attention and resources being paid to safety and health.

This effect is magnified when safety is treated as a line function by senior management. You may have heard the phrase “What’s important to my manager is critical to me.”

Focus on unsafe conditions & behaviors:

There is an on-going debate about which is more important: unsafe conditions or unsafe behaviors. In fact, they are both important - you have to address both. Keep in mind that many unsafe conditions result from unsafe behavior by supervisors and by higher levels of management.

Focus on the interaction between people and equipment:

90% of all injuries result from either something striking a person or visa versa. It is the interface between man and equipment, tools, machines and infrastructure that must be considered.

Controlling unsafe behavior and equipment, processes and procedures greatly reduces the risk associated with these hazards. Are you looking at this in your workplaces?

No accountability = No control:

It is not enough that you and your colleagues are responsible for safety. People must be held accountable for their actions, compliance and the conduct of their safety-related responsibilities to prevent injuries from occurring. Does their safety performance show up in their paycheck? Too often there is no connection between I & I & Fatalities and annual salary increases or decreases.

Accountability is responsibility with consequences.

Simply put, a lack of formal accountability is one of the most important differentiators between world-class safety companies and those that are not. Does your management agree with this? If they do, you have a good chance to have excellent safety performance.

In safety and health, we measure negatives like the number of injuries or illnesses. This is a very different language from that used to manage the company. If you want to gain the attention of your managers, start speaking safety and health in their language.

Do you know what your organization's key performance metrics? Tons or pounds produced? Dollars of sales? Customer orders? Cash flow? Get to know it. If you don't understand, ask for help.

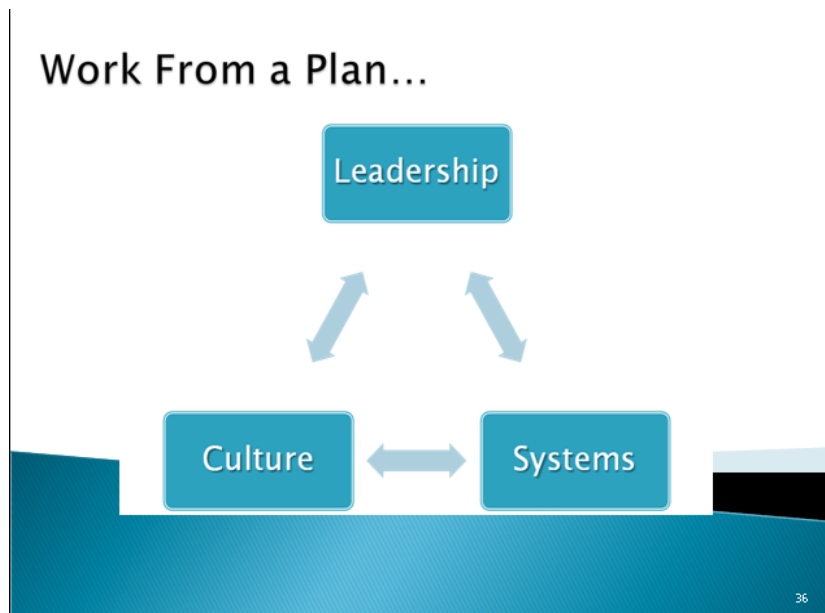
It is important that you be able to translate the equivalent cost of a LT injury relative to your companies' key metrics. For example, how much more production is required to make up for a LT loss?

Another good thing for you to learn is how to calculate return on investment. This is important because it will help your management understand the financial cost benefit of controls and other initiatives you propose regardless of their regulatory requirement. It is beyond the scope of this presentation to explain this concept further. However, your company accountant or CFO can help you with this.

Safety and health has a long value chain - we add a lot of value to a company, even if that isn't measured in positive revenue.

This graphic highlights many of the value points associated with good safety and health management, and conversely, for poor safety and health performance. There is a cost associated with safety and health. Learn to understand both the direct costs (noncompliance citations, property damage, lost production, medical costs, insurance premium increases, etc.) and indirect costs (loss of future contracts, negative reputation, cost to retrain, lost morale, etc.)

Don't expect your management to identify these costs. That's our job and doing it well helps to justify the resources necessary to operate safely.



This is arguably one of the most important slides shown today. If you remember nothing else, remember this: to achieve safety & hygiene excellence, you must address three concurrent and inter-related domains in your organization—leadership, culture and S&H systems.

All three of these are measurable and changeable. That is, they can be managed despite the fact that each is complex and simultaneously subtle. This model of safety and industrial hygiene excellence is true of all organizations whether large or small, regardless of your business, your location, or your products.

Each of these three elements is interrelated. Affect one and you affect the others as well. Most importantly, improve any one and you can get a positive reaction in the others.

The days of safety and health professionals being purely technical professionals, knowing only regulations and engineering and the like, are fading fast. Today, we need to be more aware of organizational behavior and organizational development as well as the technical.



Here's another way to look at the same model. Think of safety and health excellence as a well-designed car that goes where you want it to go under good control and with good performance. Using this analogy, the car is the S&H system, the driver is leadership and gasoline is the culture. If any one of these elements is inadequate or missing, you won't get very far.

Systems are all the policies, processes, procedures, programs, standards and regulations that allow you to operate safely. But a collection of policies, procedures, programs, standards and regulations by themselves don't make a system. It is when they become coordinated and systematic that you develop a system. It is when they are designed to accomplish one goal, e.g., reduce/eliminate injuries, that the system becomes indispensable.

To develop a system you need to identify everything that needs to be done relative to all the procedures, programs, standards and regulations; assign responsibilities – authority – resources to various people in your organization to see that they get done; document the results; audit your performance; and, periodically evaluate how to make the whole thing work more effectively, i.e., fewer incidents.

There are many domestic and international S&H management systems that can be modeled if you don't want to develop your own, including the ANSI/AIHA Z10, BS 8800, OHSAS 18001 among others.

At the core of all good management system is a focus on behavior, communication and structured accountability. Every world-class safety company has its own safety and health management system. Don't be intimidated by the detail. It's easier than you might think.

Safety culture is work culture. It's how things get done at your company or organization; it's what we do when no one is looking. It's what is said and what are acceptable behaviors.

Like systems, culture is measurable and is subject to incremental improvement that can make a big difference in worker's attitude and safety performance.

So how do you measure it? Some of the important measures of safety culture include:

Is there open communication between hourly workers and management?

Is there genuine trust between hourly workers and management?

Are there recognized opportunities for safety-related problem-solving on the part of hourly workers? Real problem solving not eating donuts at a safety committee meeting.

Are there management processes that fix line management accountability? For example, is part of their annual bonus tied to safety performance or the effectiveness of the safety management system, or their safety leadership?

Lacking in any of these areas? You must have an action plan to improve culture and safety performance.

Last, but not least is leadership. It can have a very profound impact on safety and health performance, as well as profitability. Many of us just assume that anyone who ends up in a senior management position is a good leader.

We must recognize the difference between positional leadership (the ability to make change happen because of your title) and personal leadership. An hourly employee can be an extraordinary leader while a CEO can have a complete absence of leadership skills.

It is also important to understand the difference between management and leadership. Leadership is initiating the right things while management is doing them right.

You can develop anyone to have better leadership skills. There are some good generic courses by the AIHA, ASSE, National Safety Council and others, or you can develop your own.

A big part of learning how to measure, change and manage culture, systems and leadership is learning that their management is best achieved through the application of basic quality principles,

i.e., plan, do, check, act.

Once the system is in place, you apply plan, do, check, act to control long-term development. Specifically, system thinking says that if you design and manage the right system, you shouldn't experience any incidents. If you do, there is a design or management problem. It will be important to understand what went wrong using root cause analysis.

If a sub-element of the leadership system isn't working to improve performance, change it or get rid of it. No more second guessing and changing direction frequently. Design the plan based on your key S&H principles, manage the elements effectively, and incidents should decline significantly.

So if safety is a line function, what's the role of the safety and health professional? As I discussed earlier, we must all learn to change our organizations from the inside, by affecting culture and improving leadership competency. Easier said than done, none-the-less, it is important that we do what is necessary for senior management to understand this model.

We must look for opportunities for management to exercise their improved leadership skills. Speaking to groups of employees, leading safety initiatives are but two of many options.

The higher you report in the organization, the easier it is to affect change in all they areas I have discussed today. How is that accomplished? There is no clear rule, but start by letting your manager know how you feel. Never pass up an opportunity to consult with management.

Show them that your knowledge is to be trusted and will help lead to improved performance.

So where do we go to see examples of this model and safety excellence? What companies go beyond compliance to safety excellence? Intel is one such company.

Intel is a standout in their industry (semiconductor manufacturing) because they have learned and internalized many of the principles we have discussed today.

Their practices show that they have embraced the philosophy that good business is responsible business.

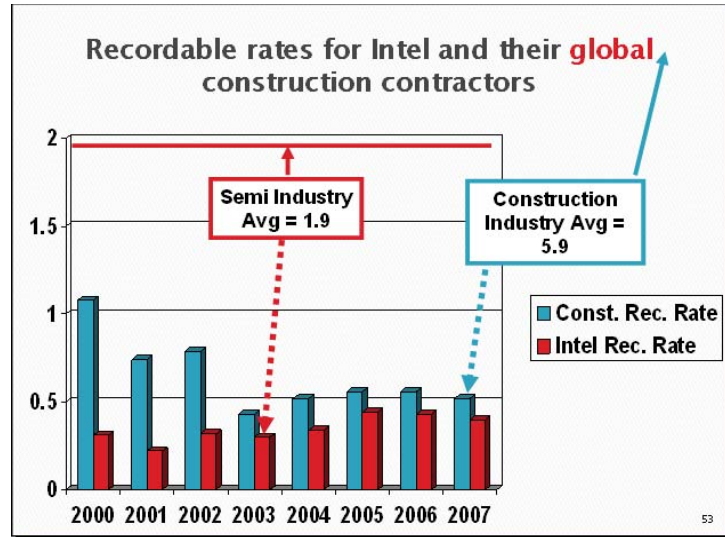
Their safety and health performance is substantially better than the US average as measured by recordable incident rates. Some may argue that their business is easy and simple without much risk of exposure to high hazards. However, a close look at the business reveals that this is not true. They work with very hazardous toxic, corrosive and pyrophoric materials under unusual conditions.

A good example of this progress is the low level of injuries seen among its contractors and its new employees operating in second and third world countries with very dissimilar safety and health regulatory schemes.

With new semiconductor fab facilities going up in China and Viet Nam, Intel has been tested and demonstrated the organic nature of their safety culture, their excellence safety leadership throughout their ranks including their board of directors, and their mature and effective systems.

Most noticeable for their international operations, while they could save money doing things more cheaply, they apply the same set of design and construction best practices where ever they do business.

They are concerned about regulations, but see them only as a starting point in their model



Note that the Intel data are global while the benchmark is US industry only

There are those companies that are devoted to the idea that good business and good worker protection can be synonymous. That, through the use of “beyond-compliance” practices, and for some the OHS management systems approach, OHS professionals can be integrated into the mission, vision, values and policies of the organization.

We need business to thrive by exceeding regulatory standards rather than by challenging or circumventing them, because meeting regulatory standards is not enough.

Good business, high profits, and effective protection of workers must be synonymous. To me, there is no other belief or practice that is acceptable.

Remember the lesson: OHS is not just a profession. We must succeed in our efforts to prevent workplace injuries and illnesses. There is no alternative. I learned first-hand.”

At about this point in the presentation Steve shows pictures of himself convalescing following a near fatal motorcycle accident he had, and a few other high impact photos. Much of Steve’s current point of view about safety came from his experience of rehabilitating in a hospital. He got to personally know some critically injured hospital roommates who were victims of industrial incidents that affected his thoughts and feeling on this subject matter.

Conclusions

“Of what importance is all of this?

How can we use the feelings and understandings?

Is this all soft science when we need hard science answers?

If you have a true understanding of why we do what we do, your behavior will be different than if you approach the practice of OH as a technical endeavor.

You will do a better job.

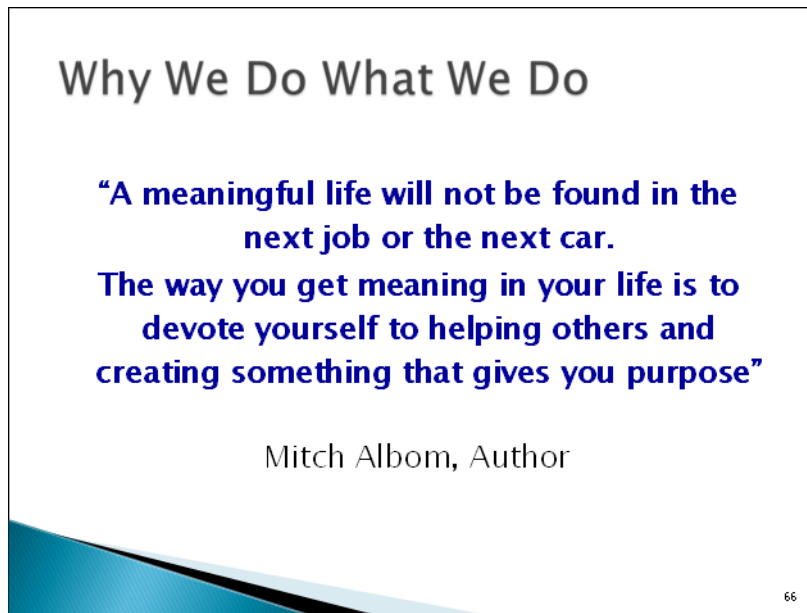
Reiterate: We in no way seek to demean technical skills or knowledge. That knowledge is the basis of the value we bring to the workplace. Technical skills and knowledge are vital!

And some workers are not so lucky to be rehabilitated.

Take the coal miner's widow for instance.

Make sure it is not the spouse of any of your employees.

The safe and healthy worker in a profitable company is entirely realistic.



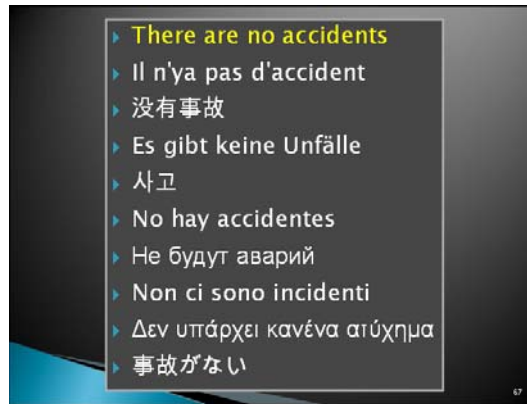
The author Mitch Albom says that we often search in the wrong place for meaning in our lives. How lucky we are to be safety and health professionals wherein we can devote our time helping and protecting working men and women.

If being a safety and health professional is just a paycheck to you, perhaps this is a good time to assess whether you are in the right profession.

I don't say these things lightly, to put anyone down, or as an academic idealist from an elite university, but as one who has seen the reality of what happens when safety and health professionals are not present and when they abdicate their moral responsibility.

I would like to express my honor and pleasure over the opportunity to have worked with my co-author Earl Dotter on this project. Tom Hethmon was also a valued collaborator without whom this project could not have been completed.

We thank you for your attention.



Credits

This is a very special sharing of thought and ideas that express powerful opinions and hope for our profession. If you have an interest in contacting any of the collaborators, please feel free to do so.

- Steven P. Levine, Ph.D., CIH, Emeritus Professor of Industrial Health, University of Michigan slih@comcast.net;
- Earl Dotter, Photojournalist and Visiting Harvard Professor earldotter@verizon.net (website www.earldotter.com);
- Tom Hethmon, Senior VP of EHS & Sustainability at Dyno Nobel Corporation tom.hethmon@am.dynonobel.com;
- Jonathan Rosen of the NY State Public Employees Federation jrosen@pef.org
- Axel Bogdan of 3M Corporation abogdan@mmm.com; and
- Dave Stangis of Intel Corporation dave.stangis@intel.com;
- Safety 2009 Presenters and editors of this material; Jim and Lawrence can be contacted at jnewberry@islandinsurance.com / GYBamber@aol.com respectively.