

Dynatron Incorporated



On March 6, 1943, my Dad was drafted into the US Army. My Mom was two months pregnant when he left Sacramento for basic training. A few months later, he was on a troop ship headed for Europe. In May 1945, Adolf Hitler realized his army could no longer defend Berlin and committed suicide a few months before my Dad entered Germany. What my Dad thought was going to be a liberation mission had suddenly become an occupation mission and he was assigned to a logistics position.

My Mom and Dad wrote each other often about their love and longing for each other, my brother, then a toddler, and their daily living. On June 19, 1945, my Dad wrote my Mom a letter that I'm surprised was not intercepted by Army censors. A Scottish prisoner of war traded him a Zeiss Icon box camera for a pack of cigarettes and Dad enclosed photographs of the Nazi death camp at Nordhausen in his letter to my Mom.

"I'm enclosing the Nordhausen atrocity pictures in this letter darling and when you come to number 6 honey you'll see the very last thing in inhumanity. This baby and little girl were gassed, beaten and machine gunned to death as were all the rest and hundreds more like them. I passed by the graves of people only last week and believe me darling that the ones you see in the pictures are only a small minority as compared to the graves. When you think of the other murder camps, Dessau, Buchwald, Dachau and the others you wonder how any of the refugees got away with their lives. I saw Dessau honey and it was one of the smaller ones compared to Nordhausen but I'll never forget it."

Two weeks later, my Mom replied,

"The ones of Nordhausen were like the movies I saw daring only the movies were worse. There are a few people I would like to see these pictures as they don't believe the Germans did these things."

On July 6 1945, my Dad replied to Mom's letter and to those who didn't believe that the Holocaust could happen in Germany,

"I have 16 rolls of film left for my camera honey and if the sun ever stays out long enough I will send you some more pictures. You said that George's mother believes the Germans never committed atrocities such as those at Nordhausen, Dachau, Buchwald and Dessau and other places and it's easy to understand why they wouldn't. Its hard to believe honey but I seen it with my own eyes and what I've seen no one can make me deny. Do they think that for one minute the US would stand for pictures and stories as horrible as those to be released to the public if they weren't true? This is the very lowest extreme of inhumanity and I

doubt that even the lowest form of animal life ever equaled it in its torture and treachery."

In 1975, I was studying at the University of Idaho. A psychology professor took a few of us to tour Eastern Washington State Hospital at Lakeland Village. Deep inside the hidden recesses of the institution was a ward for those considered as having the most severe developmental disabilities. Twenty or thirty men, partially clothed or naked were locked inside a concrete room on the ward. Some were moaning, others crying out. I noticed one man sitting in front of a concrete wall. He was slamming his forehead into the wall for so long that his forehead had turned into a large bulbous scar. His quiet moans were punctuated by a sickening cadence of his flesh pounding into the concrete. He and others in the day room had no therapeutic contact save the occasional orderly, who would come in with a garden hose to wash feces and urine into a drain in the middle of the room. At that moment, I decided that I wanted to serve people who were most vulnerable in state institutions. Later, I would learn of the rape, beatings, ash rooms and tortures that were common to state institutions throughout the country.

What my Dad and I observed was the implementation of the *eugenics* social movement. Eugenics was inspired by Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. The idea was that only the fittest of human species would survive. Biologists, mathematicians and philosophers in the UK and US began with positive eugenics, a proposal that the fittest human race procreate at greater rates than the unfit, commonly referred to as the feeble-minded. They turned to negative eugenics when positive eugenics appeared to be failing. Negative eugenics social actions included marriage laws prohibiting interracial marriage and methods used to identify the unfit, isolate them, involuntarily sterilize them and abandon them to state hospitals like the one I visited in Eastern Washington.

In 1975, Congress passed the Developmentally Disabled Assistance and Bill of Rights Act. With parents, professionals, friends and advocates providing testimony and describing experiences much like the one I had in Eastern Washington, the Act put an end to eugenics. It mandated basic rights such as the right to a nutritious diet, medical care, dental care and clothing. It also prohibited the use of punishment, physical restraint and chemical restraint and mandated person centered training. It established research centers in Universities that developed evidence based support practices judged by their effectiveness in new community service programs. Perhaps the most significant shift was from the use of IQ test used to institutionalization people with developmental disabilities to person centered planning that established annual service goals and objectives with measures of progress.

The strategies to end eugenics were elegant and effective. For children, we would develop language and communication skills so they could interact independently with their neighborhood peers. For adults, we would provide jobs that would allow those held in institutions to work for wages. The University of Oregon's Specialized Training program developed new training and support practices that taught electronics assembly skills to the most vulnerable people exposed to atrocious conditions in the back wards of state hospitals like the one I had visited at Lakeland Village.

In 1979, I opened my first business in Bend Oregon. It was a not-for-profit organization governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. I believed in public accountability and publicly posted our evidence-based data showing our progress. A wonderful Board member, Bill countersigned every check I wrote and reviewed every financial transaction we ever made. While this resulted in some heated debates between Bill and I, it also did what it intended to do- give the public oversight over the public funds we used. Our resources came from tax payers and tax payers had control over the investment of those public monies and the return they provided measured by wages, productivity and positive behavior changes.

I had taught preschool children with very significant developmental delays, but, supporting adults subjected to unmentionable atrocities and abuse was so much more challenging. Many had been taught to abuse themselves. Others were never taught how to dress or basic hygiene skills. Most of them had no verbal skills so it was difficult to communicate with them. When we were opening the company and recruiting prospective applicants we discovered that we could not find those we were designed to serve living in Bend, because they were still being held in state institutions. So, we established a new employment criteria in conjunction with the Residential Assistance Program, or, RAP. Our applicants would be endanger of losing their lives in the institution due to physical or chemical abuse.

RAP is worth mentioning. Residential programs for people with developmental disabilities were funded using Title 19 Medicaid funds. As we know, Medicaid is used to fund community medical assistance for the poor. The funds were used to institutionalize people with developmental disabilities. At the community level, the funds were used to fund nursing homes. These were mini-hospitals with 20 or 30 beds. For people with developmental disabilities, the minimum group home size was 16-20 beds. My sweetheart, Anastasia, worked with the Oregon Mental Health Division, parents and a local attorney to change the traditional Medicaid system of residential services. She found a new model through our relations with the University of Oregon that provided residential services in typical homes and served no more than 4 adults. RAP replicated this model and those from the worst wards in Oregon's institutions moved into two homes in Bend. One would become home to four women and the other to four men.

The Director of RAP and I travelled to Fairview Training Center and Eastern Oregon State Hospital to meet prospective employees. Both institutions were established during the eugenics era. With the support of institutional staff, we would be introduced to men and women being subjected inhumane atrocities. Nothing had changed in the 5 years since I visited Lakeland Village. The moans and cries of the "residents" coupled with the smell of feces, urine and Clorox. We met Dorna a middle age women who on occasion would scream and tear at her hair, the top of her head bald from her hair pulling. Then there was Ed a tall lanky fellow who stood rocking and flicking his fingers close to his right eye. Later we learned that Ed loved to fight. When we met Kay, she was laying her head down on a table top in a pool of her own nasal mucus. When a orderly demanded that she look at us, she lifted her head and began weeping. No paint, new furnishing or

potted plants could disguise this atrocity. The system could not be tweaked. It needed to be destroyed and replaced with a humane one. This is just what Judge Johnson had done in the Wyatt v Stickney case when he judged in favor of patients demanding: human psychological and physical conditions, individualized treatment plans and sufficient qualified staff to administer the treatment plans.

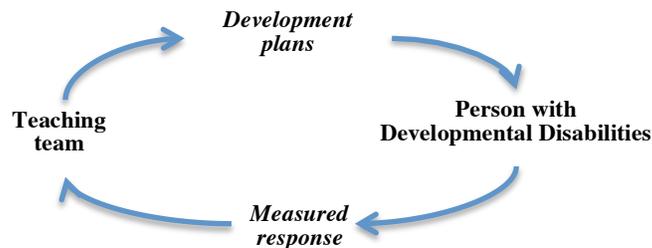
It is still true today. We must judicate social justice, legislate social care and all contribute to conserving our social wellbeing.

Back at the shop, I was on a sales call at Hewlett Packard's Vancouver Division. Back then they were manufacturing dot matrix printers. Yes, I know- Google it. Rob, a production engineer met me in the lobby and placed a large circuit board on the table. "What do you think?" "I'm sorry Mr Cortery. I have no idea how to go about building this thing. I apologize for wasting your time." It was time to leave, avoiding any more embarrassment. "No, wait minute. I'll be right back." He returned with a cable about 18" long with two sensors on each side, and a socket in the middle. "Now what do you think?" "I like it. We can build this." "Good. Stay here and I'll get parts enough for 25 and a blueprint. Build me 10 perfect cables and if they pass our quality inspections, I'll come out to your shop in Bend and certify you as a vendor." The business was in business. Yahhooo!

Over the years, we built wire and cable harness assemblies, circuit boards, key board assemblies, local area network cables and sub-components for printers, computers and kidney dialysis machines. The business took off. There we were in the middle of Bend Oregon, so we had easy access to other businesses our employees could visit. Our services were person centered. Each person had an annual plan with goals and objectives. The objectives were broken down into task analysis. Each task analysis broke an assembly down into tiny steps that we used for training. Every day we collected data on the task analysis and at a glance, we could see the trend line – a line graph showing task acquisition. If the line went down, we knew we needed to improve upon our training. If it went up, we knew we were making progress and that our employee would soon be able to complete the assembly independently and move into production. Once in production, we would log in the employees task number, the time they started the task, how many units they built and the time they stopped building. This was straight out of Frederick Taylor's motion time management practice for measuring productivity and I would use productivity measures for the next 10 years. There was our evidence-based approach and I was discovering how the approach resulted in collaboration. When we came together to review the data, it didn't matter what the rank, role or job description one had. The only thing that mattered was whether, or not, we were accomplishing the purpose of our business.

For social entrepreneurs, leadership disappears in collaboration because everyone can see that the top executive keeps the mission of the social cause above all else, including their own rank. Leadership disappears as the executive releases their own ego and joins the collective in a open, transparent and measured approach to performance.

But, one more data source was missing. Our employees had been living in institutions that wouldn't meet the standards of today's animal shelters. Some of them would abuse themselves, (a favorite pastime shared by most institutions was to teach people to be self-injurious). Some would strip off their clothes. Others would pee their pants while sitting at their production bench. And, tall lanky Ed was a master. He needed constant supervision. Even then, he would begin his self-abuse and when a staff member tried to intervene Ed would punch and bite them. After 35 years, my Ed tattoo – the imprint of his incisors bitten into my arm, finally has faded away. Using a positive approach to behavior change, we would identify the behavior to be changed, collect baseline data measuring the frequency or duration of the behavior, brainstorm our intervention and then collect data on a daily basis. This constituted a process of continuous quality improvement:



Every employee had their own workbench, stool and tools and on their bench was a clipboard with pages for task analysis, production and positive behavior change. At any point in time, we could pick up the clipboard and know exactly where our employee was in terms of the person-centered plan we were committed to. On the walls of Dynatron, we posted aggregated monthly data with trend line graphs of total wages earned, total productivity and total time in training.

This was an evidenced-based and person centered approach, and it maximized accountability. This was before the notion of social entrepreneur was invented. That being said, the approach is as valid today as it was in 1979. What is needed is a means for social entrepreneurs to use an evidence-based approach to the problems they are committed to solving and a public posting of their results so they can achieve openness and transparency.

Data is language- the coordination of consensual action. It must be: timely, actionable, relevant

This was very hard work, but, our spirits were lifted by the data we collected indicating that it could work. People with developmental disabilities subject to atrocious treatment in institutions could earn wages and live in communities like Bend for a fraction of the cost of institutional care. I cannot praise the staff of Dynatron enough. Diane was our production manager, and recently graduated from Bend High

School. She was the best in any manufacturing business. Remember that continuous improvement cycle we applied to our training? Diane applied to production. While many in manufacturing were using statistical analysis to measure quality conformance, Diane, ran the shop at zero or close to zero defect rates. This level of performance gave HP great confidence and the business grew. Diane made sales easy for me. When I first met

Deborah, she came into the shop looking for work. I told her we didn't have the resources available to hire anyone. *“That’s ok. I’ll volunteer until you do.”* Deborah was a geography major in college, smart as they come, compassionate and a joy to be around. She teamed up with Paul, who you’ll soon meet, and organized our person-centered planning, did training and positive behavior management. She also set us straight by softening our notion of applied behavior analysis thereby letting us all be more loving beings. Paul rolled into the shop one day in his wheel chair. Like Deborah, Paul was very bright and quickly took to the person-centered planning process, training and behavior management. He kept the care of people in the center of our purpose and was an indefatigable advocate for those we served. Our daughter, Sela who was 3 years old, loved Paul. I remember him, wheeling her around on his lap. We worked and played hard. Competence offsets deviance was a popular motto then and we lived it to the max. Diane, Deborah and Paul never knew it, but, I cried whenever they decided that it was time for them to leave the business.

This is a vital lesson for social entrepreneurs today. Decide your social cause, the purpose you exist. Decide what you need to accomplish to achieve the purpose. Define measures for your accomplishments and collect daily data. Whenever you make significant progress, raise your freak flag and party!

Dynatron was just a node in a much larger system. We were connected to the University of Oregon’s Specialized Training Program that provided excellent training to us all. We also had sister shops that were replicating the employment model as well. The Specialized Training Program had one nested in the Human Development Center. Olympus was in Seattle and other shops were located in Nevada, California, Virginia and Massachusetts. Every summer we General Managers would meet at Silver Falls, Oregon for a week. Joining us was the University of Oregon team – Tom, Rob, Shawn and Larry. They gave us as much as they could when it came to technical assistance. They were the best. We used an open space process developed for leaders in self-organizing systems. During the days we had intense conversations around the status of our collective mission and our methods. Because we were all committed to evidence-based programs we compared our aggregated data. The exemplary performer would lead training sessions so the rest of us could learn how they were able to reach extraordinary levels of performance. Any competition between us was friendly and we freely exchanged proven practices. When Dynatron first opened we discovered there was no one living in Deschutes County matching the profile of those we were designed to serve. Joyce laid her concerns on the table at Silver Falls and I added a task to my list- offer jobs to the most vulnerable in Oregon institutions and find a way to create a home for them. Joyce was and, still is, the heart and mastermind of Silver Falls. We wouldn't stay in the intensity. The day was punctuated with baseball games, volleyball games and walks in the woods. The food was sublime and after dinner, the party exploded. Bear Patrols in the dark night were hilarious and our Thursday night amateur hour unleashed the talent hidden in the group.

For today’s social entrepreneurs - don't go it alone. Network with like minds. Fiercely go after your social cause. Use data base decision making to level the

playing field and avoid development by opinion and judgment. Have intense debates and love each other intensely. Play, play, play and support each other because you are all you have and you need the respite.

In the final Silver Falls session we would discuss our new collective goals and write them down in the form of a checklist review. During the next year we would visit each others business and evaluate the business against the checklist. Starred items were not negotiable. If the business did not meet the starred items- our defining criteria- it was put on probation. Shops on probation would receive support from sister shops and the University of Oregon. If the criteria was still not met after sufficient time and support the shop would become disaffiliated. I think often and fondly about my Silver Falls peers. They were always there for me and were the only ones who knew what running a shop was really like.

Most of my Board of Directors were very respected citizens of Bend. They were supportive, patient, and understanding. State representative Tom Throop came by the shop one day and looked over our performance data. He wrote the Director of Oregon's Department of Human Resources and copied the Governor. Using wage data from Dynatron and the Specialized Training Program, he called for deinstitutionalization. The response was silence. Six months later, Tom introduced a bill to the Oregon legislature calling for the closure of Eastern Oregon Hospital. Game on. Tom had surprised the status quo. The bill was locked in committee and our support began to grow. The Oregon ARC joined us along with other advocacy organizations. In an attempt to bridge the legislative impasse, both sides on the issue decided to tour the institution. Once there we could smell the freshly painted walls, a meager attempt to hide the horror. We split up. Anastasia's group encountered a man with developmental disabilities who had broken his arm. Flailing on the hospital bed, as the doctor (one didn't need a license back then to practice in institutions) strapped him down announcing to the visitors "*Sometimes you have to restrain these folks in order to help them.*" Some in the tour group spoke out, "*Shouldn't you use anesthesia or a sedative when setting a broken bone?*" Oops. My group was in the basement of the beast, being led on a tour of the physical plant. As we walked across a two small gauge rails, someone asked to see where the rails began and ended. Innocently, our tour guide opened two doors. One led to the crematorium and the other to a very large room half way filled with ashes. "*Whose remains are these?*" Silence was the answer. We understood.

Back in Salem the negotiations began. If we dropped the bill to close Eastern the other side would adopt a bill to begin closure of both institutions by dis-investing in the institutions and investing the monies into community based services. The age of institutionalization was dawning.

Another lesson for the social entrepreneurs of today, use your outcome data to legislate social action.

I was in for another lesson. I was addicted to the cause. I was working long hours and remember feeling proud when I worked a 20-hour day. It was taking its toll on Anastasia

and the kids, especially my relationship with Anastasia. On December 24, 1984 my mother passed of cancer in our care. One week later, my father passed from a massive heart attack. His heart literally broke from losing the love of his life. I was to be the executor of their estate and at the same time was needed to be back at the shop. I felt that it had to be one or the other. I tried to hang on to Dynatron but I couldn't. I left to take a job at the University and many months later Dynatron closed.

My last lesson to the social entrepreneurs comes from a dear friend of mine. Work only 80% and take care of your body, mind and spirit. Yes, we had created large-scale systems change. Oregon's institutions are closed and the US Congress has passed new employment legislation for people with developmental disabilities called supported employment. But large scale social change cannot be sustained by martyrs.

Part of entrepreneurship is seeing the future. The future is the North Star you set your course to. One of our employees, Cecilia, pointed to mine one day. Cecilia was a middle age woman. She had no verbal skills. When she was happy she sang out in a beautiful singsong - "*la ti da*". When she was not happy she let out with a piercing scream that I swear could shatter a wine glass. We tried to keep her happy. Folks living in institutions obviously had no freedom. They were pushed around, beaten if they were slow to respond and made to do horrible things to themselves. It wasn't like we walked to them and said, "*Your hired.*" and they happily obliged us.

We had to teach that working would lead to independence. So as they learned new tasks we would pay them. After they accumulated enough money, we would sit down with them in our break room and leaf through a Sears catalog. Inevitably, they would excitedly point to an item they wanted and out we would go on a shopping excursion in beautiful downtown Bend.

Cecilia was a 50-year-old woman who, like many of our employees, communicated non-verbally. Browsing the catalog with me, she stopped on a page featuring women's brassieres. Pointing to them with great excitement it became very clear that she wanted a new bra. We used a simple rule of positive behavior change. In order for a reward to be effective, reinforcement needs to immediately follow the desired behavior. In this case, the desired behavior was Cecilia's newly learned electronic assembly skills. So, we put on our winter coats and off we went to go shopping at a local dress shop. Our business was located in the middle of Bend's downtown so our walk was short.

Once in the shop and to my horror, Cecilia began to undress and started grabbing bras. I panicked. Suddenly, a young saleswoman walked up to her and respectfully asked if she would like to try on the many bras she held tightly to. "*Very wise.*" I thought knowing that if the saleswoman even tried to pry the bra's from Cecilia's hands, the small shop would be the scene of an uprising the likes of which it had never known. She asked Cecilia if she could help her and gently ushered her into a dressing room. Soon Cecilia was dressed, smiling and tapping on her blouse, as if to proudly show me her new bra.

She was so happy as we walked back to work that her vocalizations sounded like a song to me. Now we were both feeling happy and rewarded.

Back at work, Cecilia had learned the “reinforcement” lesson and was becoming an excellent electronics assembler. Her money began to stack up quickly. Soon we were back in the break room and to the catalog, and, the page on bras. I asked our Production Manager, Diane, if she might want to escort Cecilia, (Diane being a woman and all). “*No, I think I’ll pass. But you have a good time.*”, Diane said with the tiniest sinister smile. She had heard the story of our first trip.

This time I thought I’d call ahead and ask the saleswoman if she remembered Cecilia and I. “*Yes*”, of course she did. In the short time it took us to walk back to the dress shop, the saleswoman had laid out a half dozen bras, all in Cecilia’s size on the front counter. When we arrived, Cecilia went straight to the bras and headed back to the dressing room with the support of this loving young woman. I questioned my role in the matter as I sat waiting for them, my reflections taking me deeper than before. Out from the dressing room they came with Cecilia in the lead. With a big grin, she was tapping on the front of her blouse with that beautiful sing-song vocalization that only she knew the words to. “*How wonderful! You have a new bra*”, I replied as we walked to the cash register so she could pay for her new undergarment.

Something was emerging for me as I waited outside the dressing room that day. It was the realization of what can be accomplished in social support networks. Amazing things. But, I was learning that these are very subtle relations and very sensitive to the control efforts of others. What started in the dress shop that day was a new professional practice for me. It consisted of knowing when to stop acting like a professional and do nothing other than admire the emergence of love and compassion from people who saw through the differences of others. This practice would expand the outcomes and quality of life for people we intended to serve beyond our professional capabilities.