

Introduction for London Book Launch on Thursday 25.04.2013

1) Thank you Mr Chairman, Dr Ala. Thank you the ex-ambassador Dr Qhassemi for helping me with this event.

2) Also thank you all for coming here, I am very excited to be among you here tonight. Because I am so excited, I have to stick to engineering methods to control my emotions. The best I could come up with is to welcome you all by categories. So;

- Welcome all Oil & Gas engineers
- Welcome you all office administrators
- Welcome all colleagues
- Welcome all journalists
- and Welcome all curious participants, because this is an open meeting

and let me check if I have forgotten any particular category. Oh yes, Welcome to my wife!

who does not fall into any one of these categories!.

I have to think about the dinner date afterwards!

Actually, I should correct myself to say " my family" instead.

First thing, I want to say is to state that there will be references to; nationalities, languages and people. both in my introduction and in the book. "No offence" is intended. Indeed I asked four editors who read my book, to check that I do not offend anybody "Intended or implied".

Whatever I say about nationalities is within the context of the book. It should not be extended. more than that.

I must say, that I am happy to deliver this introduction in London where English is the spoken language because in a similar launch in Norway some months ago, I had to stick to English and Norwegians were graceful enough to hear me in English even when most of them knew that I have a basic knowledge of Norwegian and if necessary I could get by in that language!

Indeed about the Norwegian language, when started to work to Norway in 1982, I used to visit my old landlady in Holland Park very often. She knew Norway as a "down and out country" coming out of the war and was not fully aware of the booming Oil & Gas industry over there. She expected me to go and work in the US, if out of UK, and was even more surprised to hear that I was learning Norwegian. She was one of those old ladies "who speak straight from the shoulder!" As soon as she heard about the Norwegian language she said in her eloquent style!

" it is awfully nice to hear that you are settling down in the civilized country of Norway and learning Norwegian. Regarding Norwegian language, do you know the proverb. I said what is the proverb?

She said, if you want to write to a friend? write in ENGLISH, if you want to speak with ladies, speak in FRENCH, if you want to speak with your dog, speak GERMAN!. However, if you want to swear, speak NORWEGIAN!

I think this connotation with swearing comes from the fact that in UK one puts Norwegian language in the same category as Danish and goes to Hamlet and Shakespeare and all that! but that is what she basically said.

What I would say, it that when I hold a seminar, it is normally about the technical stuff. What are the results of complicated formulae and what are the concrete measures to take against loss of lives and assets, but tonight I am not talking about such things at all. Instead, I am going to talk about the most important element of Oil & Gas projects, or indeed any project. I am talking about the engineers, or basically the personnel, himself or herself, who materialize projects.

The objective of the book is to show that it is "possible" to do high quality projects with a smile"

The engineers can not be considered as a "one dimensional people" who do not understand or feel anything but the technical stuff. They are typically people with humor and a lot of other talents which are waiting to be discovered! and often these are easy bring into the surface.

And for those of you who do not know me, I was born in IRAN, a country I would like to call Persia. The story is that in early seventies, the oil price went up. It was the build up to the Arab-Israeli war. The so-called "Yom Kippur" war which was followed by oil boycott by Arabs. However, the Shah was selling oil to anybody who wanted to buy it. Consequently, the oil price soared!.

Iran was selling oil at 30 dollars a barrel. It is like 300 dollar per barrel today. Suddenly, The Shah found himself with a lot of surplus Petro-dollars that sometimes he didn't know what to do with it! Among the most important things he did was to initiate a technical university in Teheran which bore his own name, **so-called "Arya Mehr"- "Loved by Aryans", renamed after revolution as "Sharif" meaning "Nobel"**. This was programmed to be at the same level of the best in the world, the likes of Imperial College in the UK or MIT in the US. I was lucky enough to be among the first uptakes for this university. Soon, I was sent to London for further studies. Primarily, I thought it was for a year, but at the successful completion of the Master's degree, I was told to stay in the University and read for PhD degree (Doctor of Philosophy). When questioned the decision and the expenses of so many years of study, I was told by no uncertain term " don't worry, we pay it, just concentrate on your study!"

Me, and many friends continued in the university and enjoyed unprecedented academic and social benefits.

Some political observers argued that the real intention of the Shah was to re-instate the old Persian Empire. He certainly had the money, but had to wait that the personnel to run his empire to be trained. The trouble is that when I finished my degree, there WAS no empire! the revolution happened and he was gone!. Like many others, I thought first to immigrate to the US. benefiting from being married to a Norwegian, I went to Oslo to work a little bit and get a visa to go to the US. because, there is no US embassy in Iran, due to "hostage situation". This way, I could have joined an score of Iranian professionals who have immigrated to the US after the revolution.

When I say, that one can find "humor" in any project. the only requirement is to have "an eye for it", and one can almost certainly find it.

Let me give you some examples:

In project execution terms, when it is said, that somebody is a PhD, it means the person is heavy, he/she has been in university at least eight years, done a lot of lab-works, a lot of computer-works, and a lot of other things, and as we all know PhD stands for "Doctor of Philosophy".

However, humorously, PhD could also stand for "Passed High School with Difficulties"!

Second to that, I have a picture here taken in Paddington, while I was stationed in London. That day, in October 2008, it started to snow. This was most unprecedented. There was naturally a complete chaos in the roads. According to Meteorological office, there has not been snow downfall in London for 60 years during October.

However, in Norwegian terms a 2" snow is nothing to write home about, when one thinks about sometimes a two feet snow in Oslo. But, as soon as I saw the snow, I asked a friend to take this picture and sent it to my boss in Oslo with a note that effectively Read:

" please note the evidence of drastic deterioration of weather in my assignment location. According to the rules of assignment, one is titled to "Weather hardship benefits" when this happens, so kindly initiate the extra payments as from this month!.

Yours truly, a snow-ridden employee"

My boss, had quickly replied:

" I have to disappoint you in this case. Company is not in the habit of hardship payments during mild weather conditions".

We all had a good laugh at our offices in Paddington. Something which brought near-chaos in London was regarded as "mild weather" in Oslo!

Last thing before I read my Introduction is to explain why have I called myself "Alexander Pushkar"?

I know that there are certain people who are not keen to be written about. also, if I write the real name of platforms and Oil& Gas installations, there can be legal problems. I know that oil companies have a lot of lawyers who do not have very much to do! so people like me can be a target. I am not saying they will do it, because the things I write about are perhaps after the comma. however, I did not risk it. In my work, if there is one credible risk among ten thousand possibilities, one has to avoid it. I avoided the risk, I changed the name of everybody and some locations. Then I said to myself, I have to change my own name also. I found Alexander who came to Persia, so many years back, as the first name. For the second name, I chose Puskar which is the name of a village in India which I visited and liked it very much, so I chose the pen-name ALEXANDER PUSHKAR.

This pen name comes with both Advantage and Disadvantage.

The advantage is that I could avoid legal problems, but this is also a disadvantage:

I remember, my company's Vice President asking me:

"Why did you write this book?"

I replied:

One writes a book for two reasons: FAME and FORTUNE.

With the name Alexander Pushkar, fame goes away, because he becomes rich if he becomes!

But Fortune, I don't mind, I hope there are bankers in the audience.

If there are HALLELUJAH!!

Now, I have prepared an Introduction which hopefully comes:

INTRODUCTION:

This book is a roman-memoir of an immigrant who became an offshore engineer in Norway. I believe a typical offshore engineer is:

An OVERWORKED, OVERLOOKED, OVERDRAWN, but basically a fun person.

Before starting to work in Norway, I knew very little about Norway. I knew "thick and thin" about Edvard Grieg, Henrik Ibsen, and Roald Dahl. The latter was, and still is, my favorite writer for the style of story writing. His stories seem to be mostly in plain language, but do surprise and delight reader at the end.

When I faced the realities on the ground in Norway, which was way beyond the Anglo-Saxon England and Latin France, with peculiar habits and behaviors, there was no other option but to learn how to behave like a Norwegian. At this juncture, I remembered a book that I read with joy in London. The book is called "How to be an Alien" by a Hungarian called George Mikes.

This is tiny pocket size book of 86 pages with no photos, yet it is written with so much humor and explains beautifully how the writer has tried to behave like his new fellow country men and where he succeeded or failed!

Thanks to my Imperial College education, and experiences in the rest of Europe, I have been holding a leading position in many Offshore Oil & Gas projects internationally and in Norway, Statfjord C (1983) onward. Due to project assignments, I had to be out-posted in many countries; US, Europe (UK included), Middle East (including representing Statoil in Iran for South Pars 6/7/8 at Bandar Abbas).

Nearly all of these projects have included two distinctive types of gatherings; Technical and Social. On every occasion, the information material distributed among the team members were stiff technical stuff, things such as how expensive (or cheap) the project was, and how many barrels of oil (or tonnes of gas) were going to be extracted. Distribution of technical stuff was repeated even for purely social occasions, such as; Team-buildings, Milestone Meetings, Project Completion, Start-up, etc. Following traditions of Oil companies such as Exxon Mobil and others, there has always been necessary to hold a talk on behalf of the project leadership during these gatherings. As Norwegians are not the world champion orators in English, I had to step in and save the day in many occasions; in Oslo, London, Paris, to name a few. My talks were often based on what was "interesting and funny" during execution of that particular project. To my utter surprise, these little stories became popular among various project members, so much that most of those who were part of the principal engineering Company (where I was employed) requested to hear me talking on such social occasions.

In 2010 when I spoke on one of such events, I was advised to assemble these in a book. The argument was that; although one should be a "professional writer" to turn an everyday event into an interesting story, nevertheless the strength and sheer creativity of events during execution of some Offshore oil/gas projects are so "interesting and funny" which can transform an engineer to "become" a writer.

Soon, I found myself looking at my CV and recalling these occasions. In the end, I selected 54 events and categorized them in twelve chapters, benefiting the geographical locations where each and every one of these have occurred.

Having immigrated to Norway and worked so interlinked with UK, instead of going to the US, I often compare my thoughts with some of my friends who had immigrated over there.

While I think that peoples' homes can be improved by IKEA (the hands-on furniture products), some American friends think peoples' countries can be improved by EKIA (Enemy Killed In Action)!

Thanks Heaven that there are cooler heads in the US who lead the free world which gives us all a choice to "Do it our way". So with the words from the song of SINATRA, this roman-memoir is to state:

I did it this way,

and thanks to Norway and the UK for letting me do it.

EPILOGUE

Since publication of the book last year, I have been bombarded by colleagues from Oil companies as well as Contractors who enthusiastically bought the book and read it from cover to cover, partly to see if I have written anything about their shared stories with me. I am afraid that very many were disappointed as the size of the book did not allow mentioning anything but a certain number of events. Satirically, I have half-promised them that I may embark upon Vol. II which will be titled "What I left out"!

The book is written in English. However a few pages consisting of; Preface, Introduction, Epilogue, and Back-cover, are in Norwegian (for International/English readers, an English translation of these pages accompany the book.