

SHLOMO.

By James Collins.

It was difficult to tell his age because he was so thin. He packed 110 pounds on a 5'3" frame and estimates of his age varied from 30 to 50. His clothes declared he was not a wealthy man as his scuffed shoes and worn heels indicated. However, he always carried himself with dignity. He perpetually smiled and bowed very slightly to any women present. Shlomo, with the unpronounceable Polish surname, was a poor Orthodox Jew from Brooklyn who was one of the nicest people I ever met. He had eight children and his religion was everything to him. His life and all the rituals circled around the core of his personality. Not the brightest person on earth, Schlomo, was a hard worker, honest, truthful, caring, and he kept his word. However, at times he would do things that would cross a Rabbi's eyes.

As a technician at Kollsman, he tested various preproduction circuits in the engineering laboratory. On one occasion, he was testing a circuit for Bulova, a major customer in Woodside Queens. Kollsman had designed a servo amplifier to meet the customer's specification and it had to undergo temperature extremes to prove its operating capability. A test chamber with a glass front door for observation held the circuit and it cycled between -55° C and +71°C. At each extreme, the servo amplifier ran and the technician recorded all the electrical properties. This continued for multiple cycles and required the better part of a day to complete the tests. A movie camera with one frame per minute focused on the door as evidence to the customer that the circuit performed as advertised. It was Shlomo's task to set the process up, run the number of cycles required and record all the information associated with the electronics. He completed the task, documented the findings, packed up the circuitry and the test results and delivered them to the engineer responsible who then sent the entire package to Bulova.

At eight o'clock the following morning, the engineering manager from Bulova contacted the project engineer at Kollsman and told him there was a problem with the data delivered with reference to the servo amplifier. Kollsman immediately sent a team to Bulova to analyze the problem. They entered a conference room with a motion picture projector and were told to watch the lower right-hand corner of the screen. Through the test chamber window, one observed that the circuitry in place went through three cycles of the temperature profile. When at cold, the chamber would frost over and the instrument dials would perform as expected. As the cycle went through room temperature and approached the higher temperature, the window cleared and again the instrument dials would perform. On the third cycle, the window cleared and an apparition appeared in the lower right-hand corner. It was a head-on view of a golden smoked fish with eyes glazed over and it was there until the test reached 160°F.

The investigation disclosed that Shlomo noted a scheduled break was approaching and he wanted to have his cold kosher smoked fish heated in time for lunch. The temperature chamber was going to go up to 160°F and reside there for a half hour while he recorded data. He could not see wasting all that heat and inserted his fish into a space in the chamber. Shlomo never imagined the customer would view his lunch in the oven. Kollsman apologized profusely to the customer and reran the tests without Shlomo's fish.

On another occasion, I was working at the factory in Syosset, Long Island. After closing time, I stepped out onto the parking lot and saw Shlomo attempting to move a Buick out of a parking space by pushing on the hood. It was like watching a puppy trying to move an elephant. I stand 6'2" foot and clear 200 pounds. I immediately went over and assisted pushing the Buick out of the space.

"What happened Shlomo? Did you run out of gas?"

"No the reverse in the transmission doesn't work."

"Did it just happen today?"

"No. About three months ago, but I do not have the money to get it fixed so I just push it out of the parking space when I head out to go home. "

"You've been doing this every day for three months?"

"Yeah but people help me every day like you just did."

"Shlomo aren't you one of the earliest people to show up in this parking lot each day?"

"Yep I am usually one of the first three people here."

"This parking lot has well over 500 spaces Shlomo. Why do you park nose to nose so you have to push the car out? Why don't you just park with the car facing out? So when you get in you can just pull straight out."

Shlomo hit himself with the flat of his hand against the side of his head and said, "I never thought of that."

Three weeks later Shlomo came up to me and asked if he could hitch a ride to the border of Queens.

"Shlomo I'll be glad to help you no problem. What happened? Is the car in the shop being repaired?"

"No last week I worked overtime on Friday and left with enough time to get home but a big accident on the Long Island Expressway held me up for two hours. It was Shabbat and the sun went down, so I left the car and walked to Brooklyn. When I went back Sunday to get the car, it was gone. I think somebody stole it"

"Shlomo, you abandoned the car in a lane on the Long Island Expressway on Friday night in traffic? Your car wasn't stolen. The police towed it. If you go to the police, they will give it back to you for \$200."

"I can't afford that kind of money. I have eight kids to feed. I can buy a used car for less than that in Brooklyn. "

Last I heard, Shlomo was planning to become a chiropractor. You may hear some outlandish stories from Brooklyn. Check and see if the first name of one of those involved is Shlomo.

THE END