

RELOCATION

BY JAMES COLLINS

In 1975, the company was moving from New York City to Nashua, New Hampshire. This move was initiated after significant problems with a union contract. The company had been in business for over 50 years and had several thousand employees. Unfortunately, they could get less than 100 people who would consider moving to New England. To encourage key employees to come on the relocation the terms and conditions were rather generous. The company would assist with buying a house with supplying realtors and carrying all closing costs on a new house. Furthermore, they would pack and move all of the contents of the house at the company's expense.

Wilbur was in his late 50s and had been with the company for in excess of 30 years. Wilbur was quite wealthy and reluctant to move. With much encouragement, he finally agreed to move out of his elaborate home in Garden City, Long Island. The company supplied movers who came over for a full day to pack the contents of his 10-room house. The next day the huge moving truck with a team of movers showed up at his house. Wilbur panicked; decided he was not going to move and asked them to leave. The movers notified management and they had a discussion with Wilbur. It took another week of convincing to get Wilbur to agree again to move. For a second time, he went to the packing and panicked again at the last minute. Wilbur's manager then brought them into the office and told him the next move was to be paid by Wilbur himself. In the meantime, Wilbur came up to New Hampshire and lived in a hotel while he tried to make up his mind. Each day Wilbur would come into the office at seven o'clock and get on the phone to his mother back in Garden City. Except for a lunch break, he spent the majority of the day conversing with his mother'

Sitting at the desk immediately in front of Wilbur was a new employee named Richie C. He was in his early 20s very brash and outspoken. To him, Wilbur was an alien from New York with a major problem. Richie took it upon himself to use sarcasm to straighten Wilbur out. His comments started with calling Wilbur, a mama's boy, a waste of time, an old fart, and a baby. As the days went on the insults increased in vehemence and repetition. The director of engineering to whom all of these people reported called Richard into his office and warned him that Wilbur was not wrapped too tight; was under a great deal of stress and needed to be babied. He explained that Wilbur was a valued employee that they really wanted to relocate to the area. Richie was told clearly to tone down the insults. He was directed to do

his job and not to turn around and aggravate Wilbur. Richie immediately apologized for his behavior and said it would not happen again. He lied.

Another manager who also reported to director attempted to assist in solving the problem. He had work with Wilbur for 10 or 15 years and knew his personality. He told Richie that Wilbur was very important to the company but that Wilbur was unusual. He was a little paranoid and very independent since he was quite wealthy. He did not take criticism well. The manager advised Richie to ignore Wilbur's phone calls and patiently wait until Wilbur made a decision. Again Richie apologized, said it would not happen again and again he lied.

About a week later on Monday, Wilbur had just finished his drive up from New York. He came into the office quite harried, complaining about the distance of the trip, the traffic, the poor food on the road and a number of other imaginary problems. He reached for the phone and using speed dial he reached his mother. Wilbur replayed his litany of complaints. He was looking for comfort from his mother. He wanted someone who understood his personality to feel sorry for him. Wilbur wanted reinforcement. He was really feeling sorry for self. Then Richie started.

"Wilbur is that Dr. Mom, or is that your kindergarten teacher?"

"Richie, knock it off!"

"Wilbur did mommy forget to give you your binky when you left this morning? Haven't you had your nap yet? You are getting cranky."

In a very loud voice, Wilbur yelled, "Richie, this is my mother I'm talking to!" Then he lurched up out of the seat with both hands holding onto the desk and knocked the expensive briefcase off the desk onto the floor. As it hit the floor, the catch released; the cover opened and out rolled a 38-caliber revolver. Everybody in the office had stopped what he or she was doing to watch the altercation. When the revolver rolled out there were a couple a gasps, but overall, the office was silent.

The manager asked, "Wilbur is the gun loaded?"

"Of course it is who would carry an empty gun? However, it's all right. I have a permit to carry both here and in New York."

"Wilbur, you know this is a defense plant. You know the security rules. You know you are not allowed to have a gun in here at all."

"Mr. Jarvis told me I could carry a gun here many years ago."

"Jarvis is gone 20 years and that verbal permission holds no water. Get rid of the gun now."

Wilbur, reached down, picked up the gun, put in the briefcase and walked out of the office.

Richie C literally ran into the director's office, "You've got to move my desk. I'm sitting in front of a crazy man. My life is at risk. You've got to move me now!"

"Richie, you were warned! You said you would stop. You lied and now you must live with the consequences. Your desk will not be moved! Learn to get along with Wilbur. My recommendation is, don't turn around in your seat and look at him. If you must talk to him, try using the phone. Be very quiet; be very patient and most importantly be very nice to Wilbur. Now get out of my office!"

Richie C was a chastened man. For the next two weeks, he barely uttered a word. Wilbur spoke to his mother every day and between the two of them, they came to an agreement. Wilbur gave his official notice and move back to his house in Garden City for an early retirement. Relocation was not for Wilbur.

THE END