

Wounded Entrepreneurs and The Forgotten Casualties

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Entrepreneurship is a world marked by the perception of success, failure, winners, and losers. The primary gist of what entrepreneurship means is to start with an idea with often with minimal resources and grow that idea into a culture-changing phenomenon. The ultimate desire is this phenomenon that will make all involved a profit and maybe even a fortune. We know some who have beaten the odds to rise to the top; Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Martha Stewart, and Oprah Winfrey. These men and women defied the odds to be the models of modern entrepreneurship.

In today's business culture and economy, starting a business is incredibly risky. So much so that the entrepreneurs' peril is to be so wrapped up in the industry that they lose themselves and their Soul. This is the shadowy dark side of a world not spoken. Working all hours, sinking every penny into it, and losing everything to a faint hope that it will all work out, in the end, becomes an enduring lifestyle cycle vacillating between obsession, compulsion, paranoia, and ecstasy. The insidious malevolence style can often destroy the health and longevity of the entrepreneur before they can reap the rewards of their efforts.



Entrepreneurship is not a modern practice. It is an ancient idea that changes hands every generation. Visionaries like Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, and Ray Kroc were inventors, creators, and innovative doers who were able to live the apparent dream, change the world, and make a fortune. These are the professed success stories, the ones everyone else is measured against. However, entrepreneurship is not a hero's journey. It is difficult and sometimes the way is paved with malicious intent and murder. These stories go beyond the dark side of entrepreneurship to expose the evil behind some of the most successful entrepreneurs in history.

Zemurray and Hubbard

The first story is about a simple man of modest means. Born in Russia and a son of a Jewish immigrant, Samuel Zemurray started in America making one dollar a week bartering tin ware for pigs. He then had an idea to be the intermediary between grocers and suppliers, buying ripe bananas off the ships docked in Alabama and transporting them to the grocers inland. This was a young man with an eye for business, specifically how to manage the supply to encourage more demand.

This intrepid businessperson joined forces with a man named Ashbell Hubbard and expanded to two steamer ships bringing bananas from Honduras to the United States. Zemurray became president of their new company, Cuyamel Fruit Company, and started developing land in Honduras at the source of his trade.

The fish that swallowed the whale

He grew the business all along the coast until he ran into some glitches with the Honduran government. It seems the government was in a deadlock with a US bank over the taxes associated with international trade. Zemurray wanted his own tax plan and was determined to get it. The Secretary of State in the Honduran government declined his requests and out of concern for any potential uprising, had the secret service keep an eye on the upstart.

Not to be averted by a country's government, Zemurray took matters into his own hands to safeguard his business's success. He hired two mercenaries who worked with the former president of Honduras to take down the Honduran resistance. They stowed weapons and ammunition on Zemurray's boats coming into Honduras from America and tricked the secret service. After the attack, which effectively overthrew the government, the former president stepped back into the leadership role enabling, Zemurray to complete his tax plans. That cutthroat decision guaranteed the success of United Fruit Company, who had purchased the Cuyamel Fruit Company sometime before. The head of United Fruit Company, Samuel Zemurray continued to grow and expand, often referred to as "the fish that swallowed the whale."



Carnegie and Frick

Another story of entrepreneurial malice and murder comes from the business partner of Andrew Carnegie, Mr. Henry Frick. Henry Frick was born in Pennsylvania to a whiskey distillery executive who struggled with his efforts and was eventually unsuccessful. Henry grew up and joined with his cousins at age 21 to use a beehive oven to make coke. No, not the breakthrough beverage! This coke is a non-melting carbon made by heating coal or oil in steel manufacturing. The process is called coking. He bought out the partnership and created the H.C. Frick Company responsible for most of the coal output in Pennsylvania.

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Fort Frick

A chance meeting with Andrew Carnegie led to the partnership that would be the stuff of industrial legend. Eventually turning the Carnegie's Steel Company into United States Steel, the biggest and most profitable company in the industry. However, this success did not come without getting rid of barriers.

During steel production at one of the plants, unionized workers initiated a labor strike. Incensed, Frick refused to negotiate and ordered Pinkertons, a private security force, to come and deal with the workers. While Pinkertons traveled to the plant, called Homestead, Frick ordered a solid fence with barbed wire to keep the workers out of the plant. Workers picketed around the perimeter and the plant became almost militarized referred to as Fort Frick.



Pinkerton's detectives arrived in force with 300 men armed with Winchester rifles at the ready. A battle followed, killing workers and detectives alike. There were over 70 injuries and the only way to resolve the confrontation was for the State to send in 8000 militia. Throughout the battle, Frick continued to refuse to speak with union representatives. There was even an assassination attempt during the battle, which would have killed most men. Frick foiled the attempt despite being shot and stabbed repeatedly; he went back to work. The strike finally ended with 2500 men losing their jobs and for those that stayed a significant decrease in wages. This historic event depicts an entrepreneur going the extra mile to avoid any reduction in production and profits.

Entrepreneurship is an exciting and risky venture that could lead a business to profitable heights or agonizing death. Most modern-day entrepreneurs are plucky folk with a great idea and the will to make it a reality. What Samuel Zemurry and Henry Frick have taught us is that entrepreneurship can also be a cutthroat endeavor, destroying the lives of others to

guarantee business success. Two very different businesses from very humble and meager beginnings demonstrate how bananas and steel can be filled with malice and murder on the way to greatness or greed.

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