The State of My Feet

The alternative title to *Inveigled* Book One was *'You Should See The State Of My Feet'* referring to the number of times that I have "shot myself in the foot" because of my honesty, my misplaced trust in others or my simple naivety and innocence. Herewith the state of my feet:



1. The State of My Feet – Buying The Flat – It was a dream come true to have a flat in Central London. To be able to stroll along the river to my office; to be able to walk to theatres; to spend time exploring London. I had a chance to achieve a dream and felt that if I did not take the chance then I would always regret it. However, the rise in interest rates turned this period of my life into a nightmare.



2. The State of My Feet – The Endowment Mortgage – To look back it might seem that this type of mortgage was a folly and I was foolish to use this means of raising funds, however, this was the flavour of the time. Seemingly reputable lenders and insurance companies were heavily promoting this method of borrowing and along with thousands of others, I did not perceive this as a risk.



3. The State of My Feet – PCSL - Without a doubt the biggest mistake of my life was to trust Buchanan as completely as I did. Unfortunately, I am of a nature to trust everybody in the same way that I expect to be trusted. His management at NCR clearly had total trust in him, so why shouldn't I.

When I realised that he was using me in order to steal funds from NCR, I was left with an impossible choice. Do I tell NCR what is going on and risk the possibility that NCR may cancel the Consultants Agreement with PSL with the knock-on impact on our customers and the UPU, or do I say nothing in order to protect my customers, and plan to reimburse NCR in some way through the business when the NCR/PSL program is more advanced. I took the second option because I could not put my customers at risk. They had put their trust in me and I could not betray this trust. Even after I realised what was happening, I still had no idea just how much money would ultimately be involved.



4. The State of My Feet - Dollar Contracts – Because we were working so closely with NCR who priced international contracts in US dollars rather than the local currency, PSL also priced our initial contracts in US dollars. This seemed reasonable, as the US dollar was the de facto international currency. The exchange rate between the US dollar and the pound sterling had been quite stable for a long time, sitting at an exchange rate of approximately 1.42. Of course I should have included some exchange rate protection in the contracts but I did not consider it. This can only be put down to my inexperience in running an international company.

Between 1998 and 2003, PSL took software contracts to the value of approximately $3,000,000. When the dollar started its long slide in 2002, it wiped off almost 30% of our project value.



5. The State of My Feet – No Corvus Agreement – In 1997, when we devised the joint marketing program called Corvus, I was working very closely with NCR and particularly Buchanan. I trusted NCR and Buchanan totally and we had a very good business arrangement through the Consultants Agreement. We became effectively inseparable once we had devised and marketed the Corvus Program, which meant that we were reliant on each other for the success of the program and, more particularly, with the success of the customer projects. The responsibilities of the two organisations should have been agreed and documented more formally such that one party could not walk away once we had signed up the Corvus projects. When NCR did walk away from the Corvus projects, they left Tanzania Post, Bermuda Post and Saudi Post at great risk. The only solution being for PSL, or more precisely, me, to continue to fill the project funding gap left by NCR.



6. The State of My Feet – The Tax Bill – It was bad enough getting myself sucked into the fraudulent activities of Buchanan; helping him to steal NCR money for his own use. Once I had borrowed the £45,000 to help in paying the large unexpected tax bill, I was totally trapped. Had I not taken this money then I may have been better able to make the decision to reveal the activities of PCSL when the sums started to become so frightening. Why does the Inland Revenue have to be so vicious and destructive in their pursuance of moneys owed?



7. The State of My Feet – The Voluntary Statement – How naïve can I be? I didn't need to write this statement; nobody asked me to write it; it was voluntary because I needed to do it. For over two years I had suffered from increasing stress due to becoming inveigled into these activities. I needed to be free of this evil secret.

Following the dawn raid, I had a mix of emotions. I was very afraid of what punishment I might receive for my reluctant involvement in the fraud. However it was like a black cloud lifting, and I felt it important that everybody, including NCR and the police knew precisely what had happened. This total honesty was to hurt me badly. Without it NCR would not have been able to start the civil case before the criminal case was completed. This one honest act has cost me dear.



8. The State of My Feet – Meeting Without Legal Support – Mr Naïve again. On 31st August 1999 I met with TJG (NCR's solicitors) in order to review my voluntary statement. I was alone without any legal support. I spent some hours answering questions from TJG and then clarifying the financials with Alun Long of NCR. I imagine that Nick Burkill and David de Ferrars of TJG must have left the room occasionally so that they could have a good laugh. I could imagine them telling their fellow TJG friends, "we've got a right one here, he's actually telling the truth, what a complete idiot." During this meeting we agreed a financial settlement. However, this was not honoured later. The so-called "minutes" of this meeting arrived by post from David de Ferrars some time during November; two and a half months after the meeting. The minutes were a complete invention and bore no relation to what was actually said at the meeting. I was simply taken advantage of because of my honesty.



9. The State of My Feet - Not Hiding the Evidence – When I started to raise invoices for PCSL, I had no idea that there was anything wrong or illegal about it and so I simply kept them on my computer, filed under "invoices," albeit held in a different subdirectory to the PSL invoices. When I started to maintain the accounts for PCSL, I simply set up another company in my Quicken accounts.

Even when I started to realise that the activities of PCSL were not legitimate, I continued to keep the invoices on my computer in the same place and keep the accounts in the same place. All of these files formed a part of the backup that I took or sent on a weekly

basis to PSL's office at Lower Farm Barns. I never thought about hiding any references to PCSL because I do not think like a criminal.

Had I been of a criminal mind, I would have taken steps to hide these files. I certainly would not have copied such "evidence" onto the computer at another PSL office. It was these files that Mark Durbin found that led to him going to the police.



10. The State of My Feet – The Voluntary Statement Again – I appreciate that I have shot myself in the foot already for being so honest in admitting my part in this affair. I didn't have to produce the voluntary statement. The police didn't ask for it. This honesty has hurt me so much that I have decided that this faux pas is worth two bullets.



11. The State of My Feet – Revealing My Assets – There was no court ruling insisting that I declare my assets. There was reason why I couldn't sell my assets before the civil action. I did, however, volunteer to NCR/TJG all of the information regarding my properties, as well as the progress towards selling them. This made it easy for them to gain the necessary legal charges and take them from me.



12. The State of My Feet - Not Selling 18 Rennie Court Sooner – I put the flat on the market immediately after the dawn raid in July 1999. For the next 18 months there was one abortive sale, when a buyer pulled out, there were also a number of offers at less than I felt the flat was worth. Eventually it was sold some 21 months after it was put on the market.

In August 1999, NCR /TJG put in place a legal freezing order which froze all of Mike Buchanan's assets, meaning that he was not allowed to sell any asset. In my case all of my assets were frozen that "had been obtained from the proceeds of the theft," which in effect was none. So, had I sold the flat before 24th November 2000, I would have been able to manage the proceeds myself, in which case I would have shared the funds out such that some went to PSL in order to protect my customers, some paid off critical personal debts which were costing huge interest, and some would have gone the NCR.

As I held out to get a good price, which was in everybody's interests, the sale went through some four months after the civil hearing, enabling NCR/TJG to take out a charge on the property and directly take every penny of the proceeds, leaving me and PSL in a dire financial situation.



13. The State of My Feet – Contract Renegotiations – After the significant fall in the value of the US dollar against the pound, I should have requested formal contract re-negotiations with our customers in order to find some way to share the financial burden of this unexpected event. Instead I continued to absorb the losses personally, expecting the dollar to strengthen; but it didn't; it fell and fell. Had I found a way of re-negotiating the contracts then I could have secured the future of PSL.



14. The State of My Feet – Contract Renegotiations Again – With too many of our customers totally ignoring the project timescales within the contract, again, I should have requested re-negotiation as the project delays were immensely damaging to PSL. The unreasonable project delays in Uganda, Ghana and Swaziland were, in part, ultimately responsible, together with the fall in the dollar, for the collapse of PSL.



15. The State of My Feet – Did the Customers Know – Whilst I had informed our African customers at the User Group meeting and on the telephone about PSL's cash flow problems, I never spelt it out clearly enough. I'm sure they felt that the impact of our cash flow problems meant that we weren't earning as much as we would have liked. I didn't tell them that there was such a serious threat to our survival and that the end was imminent if indeed we did not resolve the cash flow problems with some urgency.



16. The State of My Feet – Believing the Customers Promises – From February through to June 2004 I received so many promises of payment, particularly from Brightwell in SwaziPost and David from Posta Uganda, all of which I believed. It is a theme of this story that I suffer from a gross over trust in people. This means that even when I get the 20th promise of payment, I still foolishly and naively believe it.



17. The State of My Feet – Not Planning for Prison – Had I been advised that I would certainly go to prison, I would obviously have told people and prepared my life accordingly. I could have pre-empted the

situation by telling my customers what was going to happen and why. I would have also asked for their support for Mark and the rest of PSL as they soldier on without me for a while.

Having been told by my solicitor, my barrister and the police, that their expectation was for a suspended sentence, I felt that even if they were wrong, any likely prison sentence would be relatively short.

Receiving such a lengthy sentence and not preparing for it was a major mistake that cost me dearly. Very simply, had I expected to go to prison, I could have acted accordingly and saved PSL from it's demise and saved my customers from such huge losses and protected my family better.



18. The State of My Feet – Trying To Reduce My Insurance Premiums – After suffering from subsidence their appears to be an obligation on the insurance company to continue to insure the property. However, it is impossible to move the insurance to another company. After release from prison, under financial pressure, I tried to reduce our insurance costs. During the discussion with my insurers, they went through all of the usual questions that I now know are common to all insurers. One of these questions is about criminal convictions and custodial sentences. Once they knew that I had been in prison that gave them the reason they needed to walk away from their obligation to insure my home. If the property cannot be insured then it must drop in value immensely. Owning my house is now a huge risk to anybody.



19. The State of My Feet – Moving My Mortgage – I moved my mortgage from Abbey to Barclays in 2000 as a gesture of loyalty to Barclays. Had I kept my mortgage with Abbey, I could have received help with my mortgage interest payments after my wife had been on Income Support for 8 weeks. Simply because I moved my mortgage to Barclays in 2000 I did not qualify for any help from the DWP for 40 weeks. This represented a loss of over £4,000.



20. The State of My Feet – Too Chatty – I told Tony Rowland of Barclays Bank that my family (my brothers) would help me pay my debt if indeed I was unable to pay it by the end of the year. When I told him that my mother was coming to live with me and that my mother's home may then be put on the market, this was to demonstrate how my brothers might be repaid for helping me. I didn't need to tell him that I was just a bit too chatty and, yes, too friendly towards this horrid creature.



21. Trusting Ex-Cons – You would have thought that I'd learned something from the events of this story. You would have thought that maybe I would have become a little more wary of people; maybe a little less trusting. Not a bit of it. Now I place my future in the relationship with Alan and Hash, two fraudsters that I met in prison. Maybe I felt that there were more like me; honest and trustworthy people for whom circumstances had brought them to prison. If ever there was proof that I am an inherent truster, then this is it. I'm made that way and it will surely be the death of me.



22. Trusting Fiona with Bill – There are people that read this story and tell me what a fool I am. Despite all of the pain I have already suffered due to my naïve trust in Buchanan, Durbin, NCR, the police, the justice system, etc., this was my wife; the wife I loved and was totally devoted to. Surely you have to trust your wife, if not, whom can you trust. Of course I now know that trust, as a concept, is dead and buried in this world that we now live in.

To me, trust or any lack of trust, did not enter my mind; I was happy that Fiona was doing something that she enjoyed, something that would take her away from our day-today battles. My devotion and love for her rebounded on me in the most destructive manner.



23. Those Damnable Anti-Depressants – I've always hated them. The first time I was prescribed anti-depressants, in 1993, they gave me awful side effects. Doctors and psychiatrists seem to love prescribing them. They convince you that they will give you the mental lift that you need to rebuild your life. I had succumbed to taking anti-depressants because of Fiona's coldness towards me. When she left me I forgot to take them and one month later when she came back, I was a wreck, suffering from the most agonising

withdrawal symptoms. My head, my chest and my stomach were all out of control. It was undoubtedly the withdrawal symptoms that made it impossible for me to handle Fiona's return and subsequently my suicide attempt. Those damnable anti-depressants.