

Mercedes Benz burns up one night in Red Hook

by Matt Graber



When firefighters left the scene, the black Mercedes Benz looked and smelled like a charred hunk of meat. Under the hood, what had been an engine an hour earlier was literally melted. But perhaps most impressive was the placement of the car, on the Southwest corner of Dikeman and Conover Street outside of a nearly empty lot - it couldn't have been placed more tactfully to avoid injury or damage to property.

Pat Weber Sones lives near the Northwest corner of the intersection and called 911 when the fire broke out on the evening of Wednesday, April 18th. Sones had just stepped out into her backyard to let her cat out when she heard an explosion, followed by "several booms."

"It was amazing," she said. "I mean the fire was way up by the telephone wires, shooting high up."

According to FDNY Spokesperson Frank Dwyer, the call came in reporting a car fire at 9:21 p.m. Red Hook Raiders Engine 202 arrived three minutes and eight seconds later. "Within less than a half hour the situation was brought under control," Dwyer said.

The Fire Department's Bureau of Fire Investigation is still looking into the possible causes of the auto blaze. "I think somebody blew the car up," Sones said. "They don't just spontaneously combust."

OPINION:

Too Corrupt To Fail

by Michael Racioppo

A problem that manifests itself in the media and throughout society is a need to personalize things and a refusal to look at structural issues and causes. For the media it literally costs more, and often too much money, to dig deep into an issue. For society and the general citizenry it may be far too emotionally and intellectually exhausting to face up to the harsh truths.

Americans know corruption occurs at many levels of our most important institutions but see it as more of an individual occurrence as opposed to a widespread and structural problem. This has led to these institutions becoming "too big to fail." Take for instance that Bovis Lend Leasing admitted to routinely over-billing clients for millions of dollars, as reported in the NY Daily News just this week. It also evaded government rules regarding the hiring of women and minority-owned firms. The company has been involved with projects such as Citi Field, Grand Central Station and locally the Cadman Plaza Post Office. Such crimes occurred for over ten years.

What was the penalty for these crimes? A \$54 million fine and a non-prosecution deal. In the scheme of things for a company like this, \$54 million is little more than the usual cost of doing business. Bovis keeps its record clean and will continue to qualify for government work. According to the News article this was done to protect the thousands of jobs? But with this outcome, what is the preventing this kind of corruption from continuing throughout the industry. The reason for the overbilling was to give their top foreman extra pay, which probably under the terms of the contract that they won through low-bid, they wouldn't have been able to afford.

Examples like this encourage companies and people to get as successful as possible by any means necessary. Because once you reach that level, we won't penalize you for wrongdoing anyway. Heck, look back at the frauds perpetrated in recent history.

Fortune magazine named Enron as America's Most Innovative Company six years in a row. Over 70 percent of people accepted one, or both, of the two illusions marketed to us on the way to Iraq — that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction and some link to Al Qaeda. Too big to fail is why Citibank and Bank of America are still doing business, not to mention General Motors. We don't want to see big job providing corporations to fail. But the capitalist system has got to do better in making sure that good paying jobs can exist for the great majority of citizens without having to resort to fraud.

Michael Racioppo teaches Political Science at Brooklyn College.



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