

Chapter 2

I KILLED PINK FLOYD'S PIG

“See how they run like pigs from a gun.
See how they fly, I’m crying.”

The Beatles “I Am The Walrus”

Pink Floyd was famous for its astounding live concerts. Their stage show was truly a spectacle, a three-ring circus designed for stadiums. During performances on The Wall Tour, a massive brick wall was constructed between the band and the audience. Then a fighter jet crashed into the stage, demolishing the wall. But the centerpiece of Pink Floyd’s concerts was a 40-foot inflatable pig that flew above the crowd.

Roger Waters, the band’s spiritual leader, designed the pig and named it Algie. Waters intended to fly the pig over London to celebrate the release of Pink Floyd’s breakthrough album, *Animals*. Algie did fly as planned on December 8, 1976. But its maiden voyage was cut short when strong winds snapped the lines and it broke free. Within minutes, the helium-filled pig was spotted by airline pilots, floating 30,000 feet above the English Channel. On that day, Pink Floyd’s runaway pig caused all flights in and out of London’s Heathrow Airport to be cancelled.

Algie was ultimately recovered and repaired.

Several years later, Pink Floyd's pig took flight again, this time making its American debut over the Seattle skyline. Once again, Algie found trouble.

In 1987, Pink Floyd's final tour performance was scheduled for the Kingdome in Seattle. As the manager of the city's top rock station, I wanted to celebrate this event with something memorable. I called my friend, John Bauer, Pink Floyd's concert promoter. I somehow recruited John to ask Pink Floyd if we could "borrow" their pig and fly it over our station. "Please tell the band's manager that we'd like to anchor Algie on the roof and suspend it over our studios for the week leading up to the concert."

After repeated pleas, Floyd's management company agreed to our request. Bauer cautioned, "Pink Floyd will let you borrow the pig. But there's a caveat. You must promise to deliver it in perfect condition by 12 noon on the day of the show. We'll need several hours to hang Algie from the scaffolding and do some test flights inside the Kingdome."

"That works for us," I agreed. "We promise to return Algie, in perfect shape, by 12 noon."

Several days later, the deflated pig arrived in a wooden six-foot cube. The UPS driver dumped the well-worn crate in the parking lot of our radio station and took off. The packing slip said the box weighed 320 pounds, and it was too large to fit through the front door. So, we used crowbars to unpack the pig, then wrestled it closer to the building. After someone rigged a pulley system, it took four guys to hoist Pink Floyd's pig up three stories to the roof. We spread out the pink fabric, tied down its restraint lines and plugged in the inflation machines. Voila! The pig started filling with air and slowly rose over our building, soaring seventy feet above KISW's studios. Proving that pigs *can* fly, Algie was visible for miles. Local TV cameras flocked to our station to

film Pink Floyd's pig. It was the buzz of Seattle for a week. And then my luck ran out.

On the morning of Pink Floyd's concert, I got a 6 a.m. wake-up call from my morning DJ. He only called me at home in emergencies. So I braced myself. "I apologize for calling so early," he said. Then he reluctantly added, "It's still dark outside. But I think the pig is gone."

"What? How can the pig be gone?" I snapped awake.

The DJ answered, "I dunno. I got here about thirty minutes ago, and it was still dark. But when I looked up, I didn't see anything on the roof."

"Shit. Go run outside and check again. It's getting light now." I sat on hold for five nervous minutes, considering all the things that might have happened. If it had broken free again, you'd think that somebody would report seeing a forty-foot pig. After all the media attention Algie had gotten, there was nowhere it could hide.

Our DJ came back to the phone and gasped breathlessly, "Yep, it's gone. The pig must have blown away again. Like in London."

"Damn! Don't say a thing about this on the air. I'm on my way."

I took a two-minute shower, threw on some clothes, and flew out the door. It was now 7 a.m., just five hours before Pink Floyd's stage manager would start hunting me down. My mind raced as I sped toward the radio station. How would I explain to Pink Floyd that I lost their pig?

For those who never saw Pink Floyd's 1987 concert tour, Algie made a grand entrance that drove the crowd wild. Rigging a forty-foot inflatable pig for flight was a complicated process. First, it needed to be inflated inside the concert hall using a combustible mix of oxygen and helium.

Then it was raised up to the roof with long tethers, while roadies balanced on scaffolding towers. The fully inflated pig was then connected to a motorized track that guided its flight path above the crowd.

By 7:45, I was a few blocks from the radio station and driving like a maniac. Straining to see our building up ahead, my worst nightmare was confirmed. No pig. I pulled into the parking lot, leaped out of my car, and headed straight for the back of the building. I scrambled up the ladder that led up to the roof. Sweating bullets as I reached the top, I expected to see nothing but broken straps. But alas, there lay Algie. Looking deflated and humiliated, the pig was just lying in the gravel that covered the rooftop. For the moment, I was elated that the pig was there and not submerged in Puget Sound.

I walked around the rooftop, circling the collapsed pile of pink canvas. Why was it lying here on the roof and not soaring majestically above my station? There had to be some clue as to why it deflated. I lifted up some fabric near Algie's neck and noticed a long shiny object poking out from underneath. I kneeled down to pick it up and discovered a hunting arrow. It looked professional, with a carbon shaft and gold tip. I lifted up the pig a bit higher and saw the problem. The arrow had ripped a gaping hole in the pig's chest. Somebody had shot Algie right in the heart, the bastard.

"Oh shit!" I swore from the rooftop. Someone with serious archery skills had killed Pink Floyd's forty-foot pig, an impressive trophy in any hunter's case. The arrow had torn an L-shaped gash that extended about three feet in each direction. When the air escaped through the nasty hole in its torso, Algie dropped like a sack of wet sand.

It was now 8:30 a.m. My staff scoured the phone book and called a dozen companies, desperate for someone to

repair Pink Floyd's pig. But no luck. Time was running out and the pig needed to be stitched up, pronto. Mercifully, we found one parachute maker who agreed to perform immediate surgery. We stuffed the pitiful pig into the station van and quickly slammed the door. Algie completely filled the interior of the van, leaving just enough room for me to drive it. Three guys hopped into another car and followed behind me to the parachute repair shop.

At 9:30, four of us carried the huge, pink pig into the parachute shop, a dimly lit warehouse. We unfolded it on the floor as the owner inspected the large gash. He was concerned that the edges of the fabric had been shredded, but promised to do his best. To the untrained eye, it wasn't obvious what this mountain of cloth was, and I didn't volunteer any details. Mister Parachute only knew that this was a rush job - no questions asked.

It was now 10:30 and my palms were sweating. While Algie was getting stitched, I called the radio station to retrieve my messages. My assistant told me that Pink Floyd's stage manager had just called to remind me that he needed the pig by noon, if not earlier.

By 11:15, the damage was repaired. But upon close inspection, it was obvious that the parachute maker had covered

I suspected that the shooter must have come from KZOK-FM, our archrival rock station. Just months before, we defaced their "Not Too Hard. Not Too Soft." billboard. When I say we, it was *me* who added the words "Not Too Good" in spray paint. Was that wrong? After all the grief that we'd caused KZOK, I deserved some retribution. But this time, the timing couldn't be worse.

the gash with a patch, but the colors didn't quite match. The patch was a slightly darker shade of pink. But I was out of time and options. We jammed the mended pig back in the van and thanked the perplexed owner for fixing the hole. I paid him \$100 in cash. No, I didn't want a receipt.

We were about forty-five minutes away from the Kingdome. It was raining lightly, which always caused a traffic snarl. This was going to be close. Driving frantically through the wet streets of Seattle, we finally arrived at the backstage gates and were waved through. As our van approached the loading dock, I saw a man standing there with his arms folded, looking pissed. The clock inside the van read 11:59.

I pulled up to the loading dock as the stage manager admonished, "That's cutting it close, man. We'll take it from here."

Pink Floyd's road crew helped us extract the 320 pounds of pig fabric. They were working so quickly that nobody seemed to notice the patch job. As they carted Algie inside the Kingdome, I hopped back in the van and looked back through the rearview mirror. I half expected to see someone chasing after me and yelling about a hole in the pig's chest. But the coast was clear. So, I heaved a sigh of relief and got the hell out of there.

That night, I was excited to see Pink Floyd's concert, but dreaded hearing their song "Pigs." I knew that was Algie's cue to enter the arena and fly over the crowd. Once the spotlight hit the pig, the patch would be clearly visible to 50,000 adoring fans. Would they notice? Would the patch hold under pressure? Or would Algie come crashing down? Moments later, the lights went out and the Kingdome was pitch dark. I knew what was coming next when I heard the opening chords of "Pigs". I tensed as the bright lights illuminated Algie and bathed it in a pink glow. Pink Floyd's

famous pig soared over the audience to thunderous applause. The crowd was ecstatic and seemingly too wasted to notice the dark pink patch on Algie's chest.

All the next day I waited nervously for a call from Pink Floyd's manager. I'd spent a sleepless night, dreaming about the tongue lashing that I would get for destroying their precious pig. But the call never came.

In the end, Pink Floyd's pig got shot by an arrow - and I dodged a bullet.



*Pink Floyd's pig being raised above our radio station...
before it got punctured*