

Receptive to our Recognition

The reception to our technology continued to get better and better, be it in Sacramento or DC. But 1992 was an election year and dramatic changes were occurring in Washington. Although I remained completely focused on the company and stayed away from all political activities, the elections were especially notable due to Bill Lowery getting voted out in November after twelve years in office. Re-districting had forced a consolidation of his region into a newly formed 51st District, where he was contested and ultimately replaced by former 44th District Congressman Randy "Duke" Cunningham. I knew the loss would be a severe blow to Wilkes, but I was confident of our credibility and looking forward to meeting the man who now represented the area encompassing Audre's headquarters.

Brent was set back by Lowery's loss, but not deterred. Flying into Washington the week after the new Congress was sworn in, Brent had already made arrangements for Bill to join with us on our first day on the Hill. Bill was pleased to see me again and it seemed that his new civilian status facilitated the confirmation of our camaraderie. The afternoon hosted an auspicious occasion as we had the privilege of a meeting with Jerry Lewis. Jerry was from Redlands California and was a long serving member of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee Bill was assigned to before his election loss. Congressman Lewis was polished, intelligent, and immediately friendly with me. Most of that was attributed to the fact that Bill and Jerry were extremely close friends. It was obvious that they were very comfortable in each other's company, with Bill being the more gregarious of the two, a nice match for Lewis' more reserved demeanor. Brent was at his bubbly best and it was apparent that Wilkes was pleased with the way we were all hitting it off. Now that Bill was out of office, Jerry was his most important contact in Congress, and he was very attentive to making sure our visit went off well.

Brent had been busy since the first of the year scheduling me to perform what seemed to be an innumerable series of briefings to members of Congress and their staffs. I had gotten the pitch down to a concise and comprehensible conceptualization that took about five minutes. Working with stockbrokers over the years had helped me present the company's mission and technology in a simplified format. Relying primarily on conventional jargon, I was able to make all the former lawyers, insurance

sellers and businessmen on the hill comfortable with what I knew we could contribute to advance the automation of the military industrial complex.

I continued to get along very well with Bill Lowery and Jerry Lewis. Jerry was very gracious to allow Wilkes to use his office as a staging area between meetings with other Congressmen. This was useful because they continually went back and forth from their offices and the Capitol to vote when the Congress was in session, making it difficult to arrange appointments. Working from the Congressional offices made it very convenient for all concerned to set up meetings literally in a matter of minutes. It was also useful in that we were allowed to receive or transmit faxes, which back then was still the primary means of sharing documents and schedules. I recall a number of occasions when we would head straight to Congressman Lewis' office from the airport, filling his small reception area with our baggage and winter coats while we set up shop.

Jerry and Bill regularly dined with each other and soon they began asking me to join them for dinner. Both were making a strong case for me to hire Bill as my lobbyist and our time together was often spent probing that premise. Under any circumstances it was a tremendous opportunity to socialize with them and through it I was casually introduced to their circle of friends. I was initially surprised to find that their social sphere was comprised of as many democrats as it had republicans. They all got along famously and by way of explanation, Jerry informed me that it was critical for appropriators to act without partisan bias if anything was to get done. Although I knew the basics of our political administration, Jerry and Bill carefully walked me through the Congressional committee hierarchy, proudly pointing out that appropriators were the most powerful of all. After all, they said, nothing gets done unless someone writes the check.

Jerry's wife Arlene was an integral part of his office, serving as his Chief of Staff and confidant in chief. Arlene had a twin sister, and they added a lot to the family atmosphere and close friendships that continued outside the marbled halls of Congress. I was treated with trust, and it was interesting to hear about many of the goings on in Washington for their perspective. An especially hot topic of conversation was the continuing saga of Joe McDade's prosecution. I remember Jerry and Bill engaging one evening in a discussion about Joe's problems. Both had served for years with Congressman McDade on the Appropriations Committee, and they were very sympathetic to his plight. Joe was deeply in trouble despite the

apparent superficial nature of his discretions and Jerry and Bill thought there was a lesson there to be learned. Although they clearly made known the fact that they enjoyed the prestige and perks associated with political office, including the well selected junket or two or three, the attack on Joe appeared to dramatically lower the threshold of tolerance and acceptable conduct with regard to those activities.

The McDade discussion resulted in their conclusion that they needed to be especially careful about how they went about perusing the privileges of elected office. Not only was the receipt of gifts difficult to handle, but even the public record of visits by lobbyists and petitioners to the Congressman's office could be used circumstantially to build a case for collusion. This segued into another reason I should hire Bill as my lobbyist since Bill maintained Congressional rights of access to the floor and other facilities, and he could interact discretely with Jerry and others on my behalf without the accumulation of a record of visits as would otherwise result if we continued in our prior pattern of interaction. It made a lot of sense and certainly consolidated Jerry's time, especially if Bill's practice specialized in working on behalf of multiple companies through the defense appropriation process.

As part of this education, it also became apparent that there were real rivalries between committees and members. That of course would come as no surprise to anyone in a political environment, but I must admit that I did not expect so much of the animosity to be directed against members of the same party. My first object lesson to some of the often-longstanding hostilities came about when I learned Duncan Hunter was not very popular with either Bill Lowery or Jerry Lewis. Duncan described himself as a Reagan conservative, while Bill and Jerry held much more liberal leanings. That caused them to conflict on many issues, leading them to characterize Duncan's ideological inflexibility as akin to being a "bomb thrower". That meant that he would rather stop a measure from passing that he did not absolutely believe in, rather than seek middle ground and compromise to a consensus of his colleagues' wishes. They also smugly said that was the reason he would never be accepted as an appropriator, since compromise was the hallmark of the budgetary process.

Bill deeply resented Duncan, especially for his strong support of Duke Cunningham's campaign to contest his Congressional seat. Lowery's District was the envy of many, a secure bastion of relatively affluent

republican voters. It was unimaginable to Bill that Duncan and Duke had successfully moved in on his district, bringing to an abrupt end what had been a spectacular political career. And it was apparent from every aspect that Bill was far from over it. He was still knowingly driving around Washington with his Congressional plates on his car, parking wherever he wanted. He visited the Congressional gym and frequented the floor of the House, as was his privilege, but with an attitude that despite his loss, no one could force him to leave. Bill had become such a Washington insider that there was no question that he intended to stay in DC and make his living as a lobbyist rather than return the San Diego he now seemed to somewhat resent. It was clear that he had a way to go to adjust to his citizen status, but he was very hospitable to me, and I appreciated his support.

Lewis was also deeply resentful of Hunter due to Duncan's active participation in thwarting Jerry's attempt to become part of the party's House leadership. Jerry was well on his way to becoming the Chairman of the Republican Conference in 1992, the party's number three position, holding a majority of votes until Hunter joined forces with Gingrich to push Dick Armey to the top. Dick Armey won by just a four-vote margin in an 88 – 84 count, a placement that put him in position to soon become the Republican Majority Leader. Apparently in both elections Duncan thought that Bill and Jerry were too "liberal" and he opposed their candidacies with damaging consequences.

I am personally a very liberal republican, strongly in support of individual liberties that include a woman's right to choose, sexual tolerance and stem-cell research. I emphatically believe citizens have a right to make their own lifestyle decisions so long as they do no harm to others, and we all have a responsibility to support science in restructuring our medieval mentality towards health and medicine. Rather than furthering the financially unsustainable support for putting salve on symptoms, we need to propagate processes that predict and prevent the onset of illness. Unfortunately, not all of those opinions are shared by some in the Republican Party, but we can usually find common ground within the party's strong stands on defense and fiscal responsibility. The Party also used to represent a belief in the philosophy that the smaller the federal government was the better, but much to its recent demise, that simple guideline has been lost on many in the leadership.

Despite Duncan's arch-conservative opposition to many of the beliefs I personally held, I continued to be impressed with his sincerity and the fact that he was a real man's man. When I had originally made the acquaintance of one of his law school classmates, I was told that Duncan was always up for a party and less than entirely dutiful to his legal studies. When I had occasion to ask him about the genesis of his beliefs, Hunter relayed to me that his dedication to Christ came about during his first campaign for Congress when he promised, if elected, that he would devote himself to the teachings of Jesus. It became crystal clear after he won his election that he was a man of his word and that there was no middle ground to his sincerity. I greatly respected him for the honesty of his convictions.

A consequence of Duncan's Christian beliefs was that he would not allow alcohol at his fundraisers. I and most others thought that his exceptional sense of humor more than made up for the absence of liquor. Wilkes, however, thought they were so dull that out of frustration he once brought a case of beer to an event to liven things up. The beer was popular, but Duncan was anything but pleased, to put it mildly. It took a long time for Wilkes to rehabilitate himself in Hunter's eyes, to the point that I often left him out of the mix when having meetings with the Congressman. When I later asked Duncan why he was so against alcohol given that even Jesus reportedly drank wine, he replied by saying he would like him a whole lot better if he hadn't. Wow, no middle ground at all and God forbid if anyone cussed. Cussing in general and speaking poorly of women under any circumstances were instant grounds for expulsion from his circle.

I believe that there must be a God and I consider myself to be very spiritual but having been raised a Catholic and not being too fond of fish, I began to question early on the tenants of my church's doctrine. I came to have no doubts that the only reason I had to eat fish on Friday was because those guys in Galilee were fishermen and they were forcing it on us. When the church finally relaxed the rules to make it no longer mandatory to serve fish, I became convinced all of the church's doctrines were suspect. That was the start of a lifelong quest to question anything and everything relating to religion. In fact, the more I looked, the more I saw the hand of man and not the hand of God shaping most of our traditions and beliefs. My curiosity in the subject remains at the top of my mind even today and I especially enjoy engaging in theological debates. I must admit, however, that for some strange reason many people are threatened by questioning the reasoning behind religious rituals and that my enthusiasm in broaching the subject often

antagonizes many of my acquaintances. It is also a fact that more often than not the arguments underlying many beliefs do not bear out when evaluated under the haze of history, man's selfish motives and in the context of empirical evidence. God is real, but I think we need to have more respect for the complexity of existence than just narcissistically looking in the mirror and proclaiming voila!

I was very proud of Audre's multi-cultural composition. Our employees were literally a cross-section of our global society and virtually every age, gender and continent was represented. Given my interest in the subject, religious debates were regularly discoursed inside of our doors. Everyone politely respected the opinions and beliefs of others, but it sure made for some very interesting conversations. The Hindus, Buddhists, Orthodox Jews, and Mormons have some really mystical foundations to the genesis of their respective religions, or so it seemed from my perspective. It was really interesting to realize that the Koran delves deeply into their interpretation of the life of Jesus.

My ancestors, like 90% of the Irish, the Spanish and a majority of the French and British were once known as Aryans as they migrated north along the Hindu Kush and steppes on their eventual way to Europe 35,000 years ago. An interesting example of how small our world really is can be found in the belief that it was Vedic Aryans who brought Hinduism to India. It becomes a very inclusive family indeed when we accept that our genes give evidence to the fact that we all originated from Africa. Prejudices are pathetic when placed into the context of our commonality. Even the name Iran is a cognate of Aryan and means "Land of the Aryans". And yet the Nazi's demagoguery of that identity was used by them to even designate the Japanese as "honorary Aryans" while they simultaneously prosecuted the Gypsies (the Roma people who are true Aryans), in what amounted to nothing more than the prostitution of the past to promulgate a contrived religious justification for a pathetic political philosophy.

It is human nature to want or use divine guidance to lead our lives, but I become somewhat nervous when faith that is too often based upon fiction becomes absolutism. There is no way that someone living thousands of years ago had a greater insight into what is real than we do today. We may not hold all the answers, but we continue to learn more every day. I have enormous respect for the fact that we will know more tomorrow than we knew today and I look forward to each and every bit of enlightenment. We can use

as much as we can get. Unfortunately, our Capitol is stuffed full of politicians that cynically use religion to achieve their ambitions and suffice it to say that I kept my theology to myself, and my mouth shut while standing on government property. I was only trying to make better a little aspect of the automation problem and we were making really fast progress. Everything was almost going too well. The appropriation was secured, our software was up to the challenge, the stock was doing well, we had money in the bank and my personal life was excellent. As the saying goes, if it is too good to be true, then it probably isn't. The difficulties I would soon encounter sort of sneaked up on me.