

## On the Side of the Angels

Severely compounding matters was the explosive publication of an article that appeared in the San Diego Union-Tribune on Monday, December 15, 1997. It was just a little more than a week beyond the Pearl Harbor Day commemoration, but it was every bit a surprise attack with a devastating impact. Written by Dana Wilkie and entitled “Cunningham in the wings on contract for a donor”, the article pulled no punches in saying “...he helped direct \$3.2 million worth of military business to ADCS Inc. – the company of a campaign contributor – despite Pentagon assessments that others had superior products.”

“Cunningham says he merely talked up a company that he felt had the best software. Others say he pressed those in the office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense to go with Wilkes’ company...Cunningham says anyone, including a reporter, who dares paint his actions as anything but aboveboard “can go to Hell.” Unfortunately, that meant Audre, as the former executive Don Lundell “recollects that Cunningham actively promoted ADCS.” The article went on to explain that “Audre’s software was the highest rated among five products the Defense Department evaluated for the document-conversion work, beating ADCS in one report by several hundred points. Firms scored anywhere from a few hundred points to 1,424 – Audre’s total”. Cunningham admitted promoting ADCS, but said the Congressman, “I’m on the side of the angels here.” I wonder if those same angels are by his side in jail, as this article was the first indication to the public of the scheme Cunningham and Wilkes were perpetrating.

Wilkes, of course, had a smart ass reply to the reporter’s questioning of his success at Audre’s expense: “Audre won in categories I would equate with glove box and tire sizes...but in terms of cost, ease and speed, we killed them.” Truthfulness was never his strong suit, nor was his grasp of the technical aspects of data conversion. His glibness was guilty of generalizing Audre’s unparalleled abilities to recognize text, symbols, and complex geometries, the only three forms in which information is conveyed, as car accessories. Even in terms of initial process of speed, the best the German product could do was equal Audre. Even that comparison was published without Karpovich revealing his glaring and conspiratorial omission of the fact that to become as equally useful as Audre’s, the German output required additional and extensive operator editing intervention. But Brento did not bother following the facts, as his specialty was stirring the bullshit in an

attempt to spin the conclusions to be something they were not. His comments were nothing more than a clumsy attempt to conceal the essential fact that the crap his system more cheaply and easily (five vs. Audre's four rating) created contained no actionable information, just small unrelated lines inserted as replacements for actual words, objects, and structures. As such, their process completely failed to transfer knowledge from static media, paper, or microfilm, into coherent digital content.

At the time, however, I was mostly horrified that the public accusations would only serve to further entrench the Duke and Wilkes to the detriment of Audre's access to any of the appropriated funds. After my meeting in Washington with Duke had gone so badly, with my refusing to purchase his knife or contribute to his PAC, this article was now throwing dirt on top of our coffin in Cunningham's eyes. Deep in my heart I had held out hope that Cunningham's naturally competitive instincts and our "American Made" software would make him eventually acquiesce to our getting our fair share of the appropriation, but the publication date made it appear that I was behind the accusations. I knew then that his support was now out of reach and his opposition to our objectives could be assured. It turned out that I would have no contact with Duke for the next twenty months, a critical period in our attempt to turn around Audre and displace Wilkes from the windfall of the tens of millions of dollars he continued to enjoy. The last thing I needed was to further delay our software's evaluation and then lose any chance of holding Mark Adams to his promise to purchase as much product as we could find demand for, because the appropriated funds had already been committed. It was a race, and I was now forced to concede even the evaluation of our UNIX 4.0 to get our NT test results in print as quickly as possible.

1998 started on a sad note with the death of Sonny Bono January 5<sup>th</sup> from a skiing accident while he was on vacation with his family at South Lake Tahoe's appropriately named Heavenly Ski Resort. He was a very talented and personable man with an extraordinary sense of humor. Congressman Bono had joined with the Duncan's family and friends at the Hunter home just before Christmas. The Hunter's had bought their home in rural Alpine in 1994 and it was in very rough condition. Located down a dirt road and apparently not occupied or in the least, not maintained for a lengthy period of time, it was the definition of a "fixer-upper". The funniest part was that Duncan, despite his father being a builder, had little skill in the construction arena (made famously apparent by his building a log home in the

Shenandoah Mountains with the logs placed vertically, not horizontally). Although he had put a lot of energy into repairing the home, it was a hodge-podge of mismatching doors, carpets, paint, and plaster, none of which seemed to faze him at all. I had remembered that the toilet off the living room was missing a handle when I sat down with Duncan and Lynne the year before, and true to form, it was still missing when we attended the Bono event. Like his infamous Washington beater-Blazer, the most decrepit pile of junk in DC, you had to love him for his complete lack of materialism.

Loraine and I attended, and we laughed heartily at Sonny's stories and self-deprecating wit. Congressman Bono entertained everyone with his show business stories, but it was his re-telling of his many frustrating encounters with the City of Palm Springs, which led him to originally run for Mayor, that got the guests rolling on the floor. Sonny certainly had a dramatically different personality from Cher, whom I briefly met at Steven Sanford's home in Beverly Hills, and again when Steven took us backstage to speak with her when she performed in concert in San Diego. Cher was pretty intense to say the least, which also greatly contrasted with her son Elijah Blue Allman, who would sometimes hang around Steven's home. By the time I met Sonny at the Hunter's home, he was married to Mary and seemingly light years away from Hollywood, with the exception of his many accounts of his days there, all rendered with exquisite comedic timing. Duncan and Sonny spoke about their mutual agenda in Washington, especially with regard to restoring the Salton Sea, a huge mass of salt water slowly evaporating in the desert heat of Sonny's District.

It is startling to hear the news that someone you had just seen and who appeared to be so full of life had suddenly left this earth. Michael Kennedy had just died a couple of days earlier under similar circumstances, and it just seemed unreal to read about both tragedies. But life must go on, as represented by Mary Bono's decision to take her husband's place in Washington and Audre's need to start moving the evaluation process along to an actionable conclusion. I tried once more to make nice to Ann Barnes, sending her a long letter on March 5, 1998. The letter was mostly an attempt to condition the battlefield we expected to compete upon and partly a treatise on the interplay between the dynamic of Moore's Law and the elements that comprised successful document conversion. I started by pointing out that we had reached a milestone where both Congress and the Pentagon were finally in alignment behind data conversion, and the importance of meeting their expectations.

Within the basic framework of computer processing power doubling every eighteen months, I noted that we had realized a quantum increase in our ability to rapidly convert documents since the inception of our program. While the constant need for recognizing all three data types remained essential (text, symbols, and geometries), increasing computer power allowed images to be ever more quickly processed at higher scan resolutions, directly resulting in substantially improved accuracy. I also noted that by way of comparison, humans always worked at a fixed rate of speed regardless of the processor they were utilizing, so accurate automatic recognition abilities were the key to improving productivity. I reiterated my often-made point of utilizing standardized data formats that would allow information to be universally shared by all application requirements and then made her the greatest offer to ever get turned down: the ability to rent our software. Essentially, the military's fundamental problem was that demand for conversion requirements constantly varied within programs and individual installations. Much like trying to find a seat in a marching band, the DoD was purchasing and positioning permanent conversion systems at sites to be used if and when the demand arose. With limited funding, widespread needs, and a huge procurement lag, it was a hit and usually miss proposition.

I offered Barnes the ability to install our software everywhere it could be possibly needed, at no cost. All the Department of Defense would have to pay for was the rental of the software only as they used it and for just the time it was in service. It made them perfectly efficient and allowed for the standardization of training on a system that had been proven to be unique in its ability to meet all of their needs. The rent was set at \$0.15 per minute, a price that would allow them to convert most of their documents for \$5 – \$10, making it more than ten to twenty times less expensive than they were on average paying at that time. I even offered to waive the new version upgrade expense by making it Audre's responsibility to maintain our latest software at every site. What do you do when your vendor empowers you to be universally responsive, infinitely scalable, and yet perfectly efficient with your expenditures? Absolutely nothing! Barnes never even responded to my willingness to establish a new procurement paradigm. It was treated like the offer never existed. Instead, she was apparently too busy to reply because she had to find a place to hide all the software she continued to purchase from Wilkes without any customer requests for it. The good news for her was that at least hundreds of unwanted CDs can be stuffed in your office file

cabinet, or eventually placed in a warehouse in West Virginia when you had the need to make room for Wilkes' next shipment.