

Jackie 'O' and the Jetsetters

I had become a "Friend's of Cunningham ACE" after my sponsorship of a table at Bell Gardens and my attendance at the "Skunk" Baxter event, so what the hell, I decided to attend his "ACE" award dinner and do my best to find some kind of compromise. Time was running out for eXtr@ct, and the Duke was always very gracious to his ACE donators, the group that contributed the legal maximum to his campaign. The January 12, 2001, dinner was scheduled to be a harbor cruise and I had hopes that it might even be fun, in addition to the possibility of becoming productive. With some trepidation, I headed to the docks just before sunset and hopped aboard one of the many boats that Bill Lynch maintained for dinner excursions around San Diego Harbor. I had met Bill during Pete Wilson's campaign in 1994, and he was always a gregarious host. Commander Cunningham greeted me as I came aboard and he appeared to be in good humor, which was appropriate given the ship's name was "High Spirits". The Duke was always an admirer of Loraine, and he jokingly made comment about my return to bachelorhood, something that I considered a pretty good beginning. I would not grovel about eXtr@ct, but I would accept any sympathy he was willing to send my way.

The Duke and Duchess, as Nancy was ever the more frequently being called behind her back, had a great sense of style and this occasion was no exception. The table settings were elegant as would be fitting for Duke's inner circle of supporters, but as I looked around and watched guests enter and fill the interior of the ship; it was beginning to look like this was the farm team and not the big show. Of course, Caira was nowhere to be seen, which was absolutely not surprising given the circumstances of his demise. What was unusual was that no one from Wilkes' company was present. I had not really expected the man himself to mingle with the commoners, not with the privacy of his rented jet beckoning in the big guys when it was time to talk business, but I had thought an underling or two might have been sulking around, if only to keep tabs on who was kissing up to the Duke behind Brento's back. But I guess there were no such worries back at ADCS, Inc., so we departed the dock without him on what I would come to refer to as the "Loser's cruise". As I looked around the ship at my fellow passengers, it became quickly apparent to me that I was surrounded by suckups that were looking to kiss the Duke's ring and be granted a private audience back in Washington in hopes of getting onto the appropriation committee's earmark list. Most notable to me was the attendance by my old adversaries from 4-

Ward Tech. They had unsuccessfully tried to stab me in the back with Gary Jones, a poorly executed plan that backfired on them, and for years they had been completely scalped by Caira and the Tomahawk scam, watching from the sidelines as more than \$14 M went to Tomahawk due first to the collusion of Karpovich and Barnes, and then later through the help of Intergraph.

Now that they were gone, it appeared the two owners of the beleaguered service bureau had decided to double up their donations to the Duke in an attempt to capture Cunningham's capricious fancy. Two newly minted "Aces" trying to find their place at the table of plenty. I certainly knew how they felt, and gave them an acknowledging nod. It appeared I would be having a lot of simpatico company. Choosing to find some humor in the moment, I decided to have as much fun as possible and soon found myself standing at the outside railing with Randy. Word had gotten out that the Congressman had been appointed to the Intelligence Committee and it was obvious that his comfort in speaking with me came from a sense that I was now an outsider to his game. Not only did I not participate in Intelligence programs, the funding for such programs was secret and therefore beyond the scrutiny that had caused such a ruckus at the Pentagon that the Inspector General had to be called in to count the chickens. This time Cunningham held all the cards and was in complete control. It was also known that the Duke had reached an accommodation with Senator Shelby; an important consideration given that Intergraph's champion was also the Chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee.

Things were not looking good for the newly named eXtr@ct, as it was becoming very clear that the playing field had moved to the black ops end of the court and we were left standing there in the lighted end with our hands being held out to an empty arena. With that as the context from which Cunningham was now calling the shots, our conversation gently glided into the good old days. The Duke always loved my ranch, bringing it up every time we met and now with Shamrock, he started to make the connotation that us tough guy Irishmen should return to sticking together. Duke knew well of Audre's metamorphosis into eXtr@ct, and it was clear that he presumed that I had not only cleaned up but had cashed in while taking back control. Nothing could have been further from the truth, but it was becoming apparent that he was setting the groundwork for my colluding with him by constructing the framework that I was now in position to take part in his grand plan. Shades of Shatner, he was back on his agenda for America, all of which sadly took a lot of money. ACE contributions were nice, but those

donations were constricted by unrealistic election regulations, and therefore chump change in the big scheme of things on Capitol Hill.

Joining the rat-PAC race was where it was at, and he point blank asked me to step up and re-join with him in implementing his ideas by contributing to his "American Prosperity PAC". I told him once again that I had never paid into a PAC but would give it some consideration the next time he had something going. With that the Duke said that he would let his people know to contact me, and walked off. I soon found myself back at a table drinking and dining while the award ceremony commenced. Randy winked as I stepped up to get my third "ACE" highball glass in eight years. The highlight of the evening was the live music provided by saxophonist Jeff Kashiwa and his band. It was soft and sultry, just the right touch for a nice harbor tour with the city of San Diego's lights shimmering off the surface of the water. After a very cordial cruise, we all departed at the dock with our ACE awards, and the gift of Kashiwa's latest CD "Another door opens". It seemed a very fitting and optimistic title; one that I hoped would come true.

Everything was coming fast and furiously to a head, so I decided to stay with my Cunningham strategy to suck up as long as I could stomach it. We needed all the help we could get as eXtr@ct was once again getting desperate for money, and SPAWAR was not helping much. Although our demonstration went well and everyone was impressed, we were having difficulty getting paid. As if I needed another reason to feel bad about changing the company's name, it seemed as if the switch was beyond SPAWAR's comprehension. Because the contract was originally issued to Audre, and we were now legally eXtr@ct, they spent months stymied as to how to cut us our check. On November 13, 2000, we had finally gotten the Defense Logistics agency to issue us our Central Contractor Registration (CCR) Change Notification updating our name to eXtr@ct, but SPAWAR was not responding in kind. I wrote a series of letters to Ken Simonsen, our Program Manager, asking that he please intervene and with his help their accounting department finally started to get their files coordinated with the change of our corporate name.

Our difficulties underscored the unfortunate fact that a Program Manager's influence was critical to triggering a series of what should be ordinary actions like updating contracts and issuing checks. The sad fact was that if the Program Manager did not care about the contractor, neither did anyone else even though the contract was a legally binding document. In the case of

working with Ken, he was a positive factor when we could focus his attention on our project. In the past, Karpovich and Barnes made our life at the DoD miserable. We could only hope as we looked for new business that those two were the anomaly. The new number and all of the legal documentation underlying our name change finally did the trick and we got our meager money, albeit none too quickly. It was a real pain in the ass, but the CCR modifications needed to be done anyway for a number of reasons. First and foremost was the fact that we were still chasing Kratz's promise to Cato that he would fund us \$5M for the Army Corps project. To help make it happen, on January 22nd Cato asked that I write a formal letter to Duncan pressing our case:

"Dear Duncan,

During the past eighteen months, eXtr@ct Incorporated has been working with your District office and local minority and disadvantaged groups to earn the opportunity to assist the Army achieve the critical data conversion objectives of their Corps of Engineers Electronic Document Management System (CEEDMS) initiative. Although the company and its partners had qualified the project through extensive field efforts during FY 2000, and had earned the support of the ADCS Program Office and contracting community, funding was externally re-directed and the program was unable to be implemented.

Now that FY 2001 has begun, we are asking for your support in empowering this program. We believe that this CEEDMS initiative is unique in that it offers an opportunity to employ in its implementation, individuals, who for a variety of reasons have not yet been beneficiaries of our new economy.

As you know, eXtr@ct (formally Audre) has trained hundreds of people to become skilled in digital conversion technologies, and has successfully implemented and managed programs of this type for over seventeen years. It was during the summer of 1999 that we undertook the responsibility to train and equip Native Americans, working with Ahmium Education, Inc. in the Southern California American Indian Resource Center (SCAIR), to become competitive members of the conversion community.

Despite last year's disappointment, eXtr@ct has employed and manages Ahmium in a project with the San Diego County Credit Union, which invokes the exact processes called for in the CEEDMS (Corps of Engineers

Electronic Document Management System) program. Currently we are converting 25,000 documents a week at the SCAIR offices in Alpine. Additionally, eXtr@ct has been working with your District office to broaden the available workforce to extend opportunities to other groups, including disabled veterans and the handicapped.

Duncan, it is our belief, that with your participation and support, we can establish a model program that will benefit of the Corps of Engineers, while crossing the digital divide that exists for many people in our country. We are asking for your help in funding \$ 10 million to initiate the Army Corps of Engineer's project. This is a project to scan and index 484,000,000 documents. They understand that this pilot will not fulfill the total Corps requirement, but if successful, would justify follow-on funding, enabling the employment of up to 300 people to bring the multi-year project to completion.

I am convinced that this business endeavor would bring into your District a clean and relevant means of employment. I look forward to working with you to make this opportunity a success.

Sincerely, Tom Casey"

While my letter and Kratz supposed support allowed Cato to continue to work on our behalf with the USACE, we were also in the middle of negotiations with our former Vice President of Engineering, Rajesh Alla, to use our about to be issued Government Services Administration (GSA) contract to subcontract to him a project the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) was preparing to issue. It was nice after eighteen years of doing business with the federal government to be finally in position to earn our own contract with the GSA. The GD purchase was the reinvigorating factor and one of Audre's best former employees, Diane Wagner, had re-joined the company and was working hard to bring it all together. Raj had joined Audre immediately after he earned his graduate degree from Carnegie-Mellon University in 1984, quickly working his way up from programmer to Vice President before leaving to return to India in 1989 to run his family's company after the death of his father. Raj and Diane had worked together in the good old days, and it was definitely looking like we were going to get the chance to all team up again. Raj had developed a specialty expertise in nautical chart conversions, becoming the best in the world at creating electronic versions of paper charts, a skill which had attracted the attention of NOAA.

In 1998 international standards were established for electronic commercial navigation charts. They were classified into an ENC-57 technical designation and each participating country was to update and convert all of the charts to the standard for all shipping lanes and ports that were used for commercial ship-based commerce. Most participating countries like Great Britain, Holland, Norway, Italy and even India were well on their way to complying by the time the United States formed a budget to do its part. True to form, the US was lagging behind and under-funded, a scenario that made a compelling case for offshore conversion. Unlike the Tomahawk situation, the charts were for commercial use and designated for unrestricted distribution to any maritime entity or civilian use. Raj was very familiar with Audre making its software and services available to customers through third-party subcontracts and that was now the route NOAA was advising him to take in order for them to avail themselves of his services. Diane informed him of her efforts to secure our prime contractor status and since we were still in the process, we made sure to include some of his specific work classifications into what seemed to be the GSA's never concluding contracting procedures.

The feathers were flying as we were rushing to retain our momentum. A number of service bureau projects were beginning to line up, potentially amounting to many millions of much needed dollars. Although our bankruptcy reorganization and company audit was crawling along and a small credit union scanning project we had was keeping the Native Americans busy and contributed a little money every month, our cash was almost gone, adding urgency to an already frantic situation. We needed all the friends we could find and with Duncan moving at a glacial pace in support of our USACOE project, I continued to hold out some hope that Cunningham might actually come to his senses and start supporting our cause. My biggest opportunity of the year to consummate his collaboration was coming up on Monday, February 26th, as he was hosting the Speaker of the House, Dennis Hastert, at a luncheon in downtown San Diego's US Grant Hotel. Although my attendance was going to cost me another precious \$1,000 at a time when I was not taking any salary, I had to make the most of the situation. Stepping up as strongly as I could, I set into motion what I thought would be an irresistible plan that would forever ingratiate me to the Duke. Or at least so I hoped.

My first call was to Karolyn Dorsee, a good friend who is San Diego's premiere political fundraiser. Karolyn got her start working for Gerald Ford's Presidential campaign, and Pete Wilson's first mayoral race, becoming a force for every leading politician since, including Reagan. Karolyn even helped raise funds for Project Head Start by hosting sailboat races in the bay three decades earlier, an organization I worked for as a chemistry tutor while attending college. Karolyn was running the show when I co-chaired Pete Wilson's San Diego finance committee, and she was assisting Brian Bilbray when I did what I could to raise money for him by hosting the fundraiser at my ranch. I knew Gary Hoey should not have ended his show by dedicating the hallowed surf tune "Wipeout" to Brian's re-election. And wipeout he did, going on to narrowly lose the election. But the event was memorable, and it allowed for Karolyn to meet Ken, the person who would be critical to my Cunningham plans. I asked Karolyn if she would be so kind as to comp Ken's attendance at Duke's luncheon, and she graciously agreed to do so. She also allowed Ken to join with me in the private photo session with the Duke and Dennis that was exclusively provided only to the large donors before the formal event commenced. My next call was to big Ernie Salgado of Ahmium Education and Soboba fame. Ernie was not generally politically solicitous, nor free with his money, but we had a lot at stake, and he readily agreed to make a \$1,000 donation to the Duke and attend. Cunningham seemed to like Ernie, best remembering Salgado's scheme to sell gas during one of the fuel crisis. Or at least that was the most I could figure out, as Cunningham thought whatever Ernie had done was so funny he kept laughing so hard after I informed him that Salgado and I were teaming up that I could not entirely make out what he was saying. Ernie had the same reaction when I asked him about it, so I never really got the story straight.

The event would also let me fulfill the last part of the promise I made to Ken to introduce him to the political powers that held sway over professional fighting. Having Shamrock meet Hastert was made even more exciting due to the fact that the Speaker used to be a High School Wrestling coach before he entered politics, and I thought he would especially appreciate Ken's skill and accomplishments. I certainly knew Cunningham did, and it appeared to be the perfect set-up for a great solidification of our friendship and his soon to be support of eXtr@ct's best interests. Everything was lined up when true to form, on Friday, I get what becomes a fateful call. One of my friends from Washington is on the line to warn me that Wilkes would be all over Cunningham and Hastert, and was even hosting their trip on his private Jet. I had already hated the fact that the guy who used to carpool to Audre was

now time-sharing a jet through his “Group W Transport” tax dodge, a luxury paid for at the expense of Audre’s hard work and stolen contracts. Now it appeared he was pressing that advantage to the maximum by making his jet available to squire the travels of the Speaker and the Duke during their weekend of campaigning, culminating in the San Diego event on Monday.

I could only imagine that there was nothing like sitting in the closed confines of a private jet for hours at end with a captured audience. Housing Hastert and as it turned out his wife, along with the Duke and Duchess, made it an especially sweet scenario for Brento to set up the IOUs he needed to support more of his seemingly endless scams. It was a joke that a private jet could be made available to politicians in return for a commercial seat’s reimbursement, something that no one in Washington seemed ready to address or rectify. Getting the jet was one of Wilkes’ first orders of business and it was consistently paying him dividends while probably earning him an enormous tax deduction. I could even envision the Duke occasionally taking over the controls, an indebtedness that I could not even come close to constructing. Even when I had an extraordinary net worth, I had never squandered my money by traveling by private jet. It was probably a throwback to my aversion to riding in limousines, a residue of my class-consciousness and the fact that I had worked hard to earn my cash. Jets, like limos, seemed to be a waste of money. It also did not help that because of my size, I found them both to be confining and uncomfortable. But Wilkes was not small, and neither was his ego or ambitions and jets, limos, whatever all appeared to be part and parcel of his Nuevo rich persona. The problem was, politicians not only come to feel empowered by both, then eventually think they are entitled to them and guys like Wilkes that put up the goods are considered genteel compatriots to their cause.

All I knew was that I was pissed at the news and was going to confirm the truth of it come Monday. When the big day arrived, figuring out the jet arrangements was not all that I had to worry about. After dispatching Ian to Jim’s Air, downtown San Diego’s private jet airport, I get a call from Shamrock that he was unsure if he could make it. As luck would have it, Alicia had gotten into a minor accident that morning and although she was thankfully unhurt, Ken had to pick her up and then attend to getting her BMW to a repair shop. Not the most on-time person you had ever met to begin with, it was not looking good that Ken was going to pull it together to make the photo session. Since the rule about fundraisers was that you could not talk business at the same time that you were writing checks, and the protocol

I adhered to dictating that to mean in any way shape or form, the best I could hope for was a few friendly words during the photo shoot, and a follow on meeting at a later date to discuss business. It was well known that many people abused the letter of the law, either by stepping outside a meeting room to pocket the checks, only to then walk back in arm in arm with the donator, or by traveling between fundraisers in the concealed confines of a private jet or limo, but I would never do so. At this point, I was hanging out at the front door of the hotel waiting for the World's Most Dangerous Man to drive up and capture some of the limelight for both of our causes. As time was running out and it was not looking too good, Shamrock's Bronco drives up with Alicia at the wheel and Ken jumps out.

We race up to the conference room just in time, taking up our position for greeting the congressman and his guest of honor as they would enter the room, only to find out that they are running a little behind schedule. With that said, Ken quickly becomes the most popular man in the room. In short order, the line for the photos forms in front of him and he does not hesitate, shaking hands and posing for pictures taken by every pocket camera in the place. As would be expected, almost everyone who was anyone was in attendance, and it gave me an opportunity to stand at Ken's side and greet a lot of familiar faces. One of the most talented photographers on the political scene in San Diego was a friend of mine named Patrick Lawler. Pat attended almost all of the events, knew almost everyone and over the years by default we became acquaintances. Pat lived in Duncan's District and was his official photographer for quite a long time, but in recent years he had gotten away from providing the service because he felt no one gave him enough appreciation for all the work that it entailed. Having your picture taken with the politician or special guest was a ritual reserved for only the most generous campaign contributors. Time was always set aside before the main event to host an invitation only reception that was inevitably centered on taking photographs.

Over the years I amassed a large collection and of the many photographs that were taken, Pat's were usually the most professionally produced. Despite his determination not to have his talent continually taken for granted, Pat would invariably bring his Nikon with him to most events even if he was not the official photographer. I appreciated it when he donated his abilities to my fundraiser for Brian Bilbray, and to make the most of Ken's appearance at Cunningham's Hastert fundraiser, he once again stepped up, formed an orderly line and started snapping pictures. Of the many people that posed

with Ken, included in the group was the apparently not coincidental comingling of three of Cunningham's Washington Chiefs of Staff. First up was Frank Collins, a great guy who started as Duncan's Chief, only to switch to the Duke upon his election to office. I had known Frank since his days with Duncan and we had always gotten along well. The son of an Admiral, Frank had always been interested in government, especially military affairs. With a background in both defense and politics, it came naturally to him to have a love for fighting. I was happy to introduce Ken to Frank, the start of what I had hoped would be one of many future encounters. Next up for a photo was the very same Patrick Mc Swain who cold-shouldered me in Cunningham's office in 1997. After working for Cunningham to ensure that millions of the ADCS Program funds went to Wilkes, it was no surprise to later find out that Mc Swain's first lobbying client after leaving government in 1999 was Wilkes. Pay back or pay off, it seemed to smack of both, and I was not particularly happy to see him again. But he was hanging with Frank, so I decided to make the best of it, not so humorously interjecting that Ken's original name before being adopted by Bob Shamrock was Kilpatrick, as in kill-Patrick. I detected that he did not share my amusement. Third in line was Cunningham's then Chief, Dewitt "Trey" Hardin III, another person whose allegiance to Wilkes' schemes seemed deeply founded. I had heard that Hardin had gone to Panama with Wilkes to check out the program that the Army determined to be a billing scam, not that those conclusions or that of the Inspector General's report deterred them any. Hardin had hardly been friendly to me when I had met him at the Bell Gardens picnic, although he appeared to be suddenly regarding me in a better light, at least while posing with Ken.

And so it went until the big moment when Cunningham and Hastert entered the room...preceded by none other than Brento himself. With classic Wilkes chutzpah, he immediately spots Ken and me, walks right up with a grin to stand by Ken, calling for someone to take his photograph with the champ. Mission accomplished in stealing the moment, he slaps me on the back with a "good to see ya" and then takes his place next to the Duke and Dennis. Ernie didn't miss the irony of that moment, commenting that they guy steals not only our contracts, but also steps up to shine on Shamrock. We laugh with Ken while waiting in line to meet and greet the congressmen, that any opportunity he finds to choke Wilkes would go over well with us. When our big moment arrives, I introduce Ken to Hastert as the World's Most Dangerous Man and Ultimate Fighting Superfight Champion, titles that seem to completely confuse him. I quickly add that Ken is a no-holds barred

wrestler and by way of tying them to a common cause, I inform Ken of what he already knew, that the Speaker used to be a wrestling coach. I don't think Hastert ever got what the hell I was talking about, but whatever it was, Cunningham appeared none too happy that it was taking so long.

I was glad to see that Ken got a good photograph standing in between the Speaker and Duke. It was also opportune that Ken and Hastert were facing each other, kind of leaving Duke to himself, which worked out well when I later cropped the image to dispense with the Duke entirely. Dispensing with me was what seemed to be on Cunningham's mind as Ernie and I stepped up to stand together with the Congressmen for our photo. Ernie is so wide that to take our photo he had to step back, which was too bad because he was not tall enough to catch enough light to be properly posed. The Duke was clearly not interested in even appearing gracious as he did not even smile as he looked past me and motioned for the next person in line to step up. I was not getting the impression that the day was going to go as well as I had hoped, a feeling that was further confirmed when we went down to the luncheon hall, and joined with Ian and Russ at our table. Ian immediately confirmed that Wilkes and his wife had flown in on a Lear Jet with the Hasterts and Cunninghams. Ian had cleverly checked their flight log and they were arriving from Palm Springs, and were scheduled to depart together after lunch to Santa Barbra. It was a nice tight arrangement, made all the more obvious when they collectively entered the room to greet the assembled crowd.

Once again heralded in by Brento onto the dais and then shown their seats by the obviously self-appointed master of ceremonies, Mr. and Mrs. Hastert, followed by the Duke and Duchess, and then Gina Wilkes, each took up their places. It was interesting to note that Nancy and Gina appeared to be having the time of their lives, touching, and whispering back and forth. Nancy would later equate her time with the Duke to Jackie O's life, and my impression from that day was that she was indeed enjoying an Onassis occasion. I even thought I caught the Duchess and Gina comparing jewelry, something that should have come as no surprise. After a round of shaking hands touring the tables, of which the Duke all but ignored our group, the obligatory speeches were followed by apologies that they were behind schedule and would have to leave for their next event. As if called into service, Brento bounces up and once again leads the procession off the podium, and behind the curtain at the end of the stairs. With that they were gone, and so was any slim hope

that Cunningham would ever show even the slightest measure of balance between Wilkes and eXtr@ct.