

My Unificationist Memoirs Chapter 18

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July 11, 2021



Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North testifying at the Iran-Contra hearings in Washington, D.C., 1987

Heaven has a way of moving in our lives by preparing a specific environment in advance, and then prompting our hearts forward. I have often wondered though, if our Heavenly Parent doesn't give us a taste of various opportunities, to see if we might like them, to allow our more hidden inclinations to surface into our conscious awareness. Or, on the other hand, God may give us varied experiences to erode firmly held self-concepts and attachments. Our lives with God unfold in ways that are much more dynamic than we usually imagine. Ownership of our lives can only emerge as we become our true selves.

This pattern continues into married life. As husband and wife, a couple creates a new level of existence, the Image of God. Just as each person possesses a unique identity, so too does each couple. The married dance with God evolves with greater complexity, with more moving parts and dynamic creativity as the relationship bears fruit in children. Many times, our personal concepts and ambitions need to be surrendered, in order to allow the higher entity of our couple and family to unfold and flourish.

I practiced law with Lovitt and Hannan in San Francisco, beginning from my days as a law student. We were a "litigation boutique," a small firm that other, larger firms or corporations would engage to handle their lawsuits. We practiced in the areas of commercial, corporate, and government contract law, with an emphasis on fraud and misrepresentation. From the beginning of my career, I was fortunate to have Ron Lovitt and Tom Hannan as my mentors. Never, for a moment, did I have any concerns about the ethics of our practice or the cases we filed. As Cindy's residency drew to a close, she wanted to be closer to her family in San Diego, so she accepted a job offer from a radiation oncology practice there. I informed my mentors of our intentions to leave, and immediately two opportunities surfaced. The first was with Milberg, Weiss, a large plaintiff's firm that specialized in security fraud class action litigation. The partners had strong ties to President Bill Clinton and Hillary Clinton.

In the corporate world, the firm Milberg Weiss was infamous. They were known for keeping a "stable" of representative plaintiffs, who each owned single shares of stock in a variety of corporations, so that when the market dipped, they could quickly file a canned class action brief with a plaintiff from their stable, and win the "race to the courthouse" that ensued with similar plaintiff's firms. Entrepreneurs and businesses viewed this practice as a "litigation tax" akin to the robber barons who built castles on European rivers in the Middle Ages and taxed all the river traffic that wanted to pass, simply because they had the power to do so. Though Ron and Tom were friends with a number of the Milberg Weiss partners, they had never adopted their practice model. I told them I could never in good conscience work for the robber barons. They understood. Little did I know what lay ahead.

The other offer I received was from the US Attorney in Los Angeles. I had worked closely with their government contract fraud attorneys on the Teledyne litigation for more than three years. This offer was more tempting. I got along well with the Deputy US Attorneys in the office and they respected my work product. I had a natural sense for the military contracting process and through the fortunate network of my family and our Virginia neighbor, Admiral Mike Michaelis, I had been able to gain access to the Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR), whose contracts were central to the Teledyne case. On the surface,

the job appeared to be a good personal and professional fit.

However, the devil was in the details... literally. The first three years of our marriage, I traveled extensively. I would spend weeks at a time in depositions either in New York, Washington, D.C. or Los Angeles. Our daughter, Misa, would cry every time she saw me go down the stairs of our apartment with a briefcase and travel bag in hand. Cindy had become pregnant with our second child, James, in the final months of her residency. If I took the job in Los Angeles, the US Attorney wanted me to begin immediately and I would need to live apart from my family and reside in Los Angeles. Moreover, once Cindy began her new job in San Diego, my job in LA would involve long hours and commuting would be impossible. We would need to continue living apart. Finally, though I got along well with the deputy US attorneys, their personal lives were deeply flawed and I felt the moral environment would not be a healthy one for me, particularly because I would be living in my own place, apart from my wife. My contact in the US Attorney's office was incredulous, but I turned down the job.

The professional path seemed ideal. The job of a deputy US attorney would unlock many other doors for me down the road, both in law and politics. Didn't our True Father want our members to pursue government service? To ultimately place members in Congress? The position would also garner the respect of my extended family. From my youth, my father sacrificed our family for the sake of the nation and for, what I now understand to be, the providential struggle against communism. Thus, the ethic of sacrifice for the public good strongly resonates with me. And yet... No false humility here, I am selfishly ambitious and I love breathing the rarified air of Washington, D.C. Power draws me like the proverbial moth to flame. Monastic tradition and spirituality, which emphasize a renunciation of worldly forms of power, spoke to me precisely because political power exercises such a magnetic pull over my heart. One of the earliest Cistercian monks was a young nobleman who left his title and lands in the 12th Century to join a small foundation of reformist monks struggling to survive in the swamps of Cîteaux, while living out the Rule of St. Benedict. Bernard's sacrifice changed history, enabling the small monastic experiment to survive and flourish as the Cistercian Order. Marriage and family were my small providential foundation and deserved my presence. Moreover, because of my complicated history with the Blessing, I felt I had to absolutely succeed in this course of restoration.

As soon as I set my sights on San Diego, two events occurred in quick succession: a job opened for me at a mid-sized law firm, Sullivan Hill Lewis and Markham and I became president of the San Diego County Chapter of the California Republican Assembly. Ironically, at Sullivan Hill, I soon found myself representing Bill Lerach and his firm Milberg Weiss, in the Imperial Savings and Loan case. After determining never to associate with their practice, they now were my clients. I will return to the issues that eventually arose in the representation later.

Our family friend, Lt. General Ed Bronars had retired from the Marine Corps and become the Director of the Freedom Alliance, founded by Oliver North. Following his spectacular performance before Congress in the Iran Contra Hearings, Lt. Col. North had remarkable pull in Republican circles. During one of my business trips back East, I told Ed Bronars of my planned move to San Diego. He told Oliver North, who placed a phone call on my behalf, as much as a favor to my younger brother as to me. And that, dear reader, is how I inadvertently became one of San Diego's leading Republicans. Indeed, Heaven had prepared the environment.