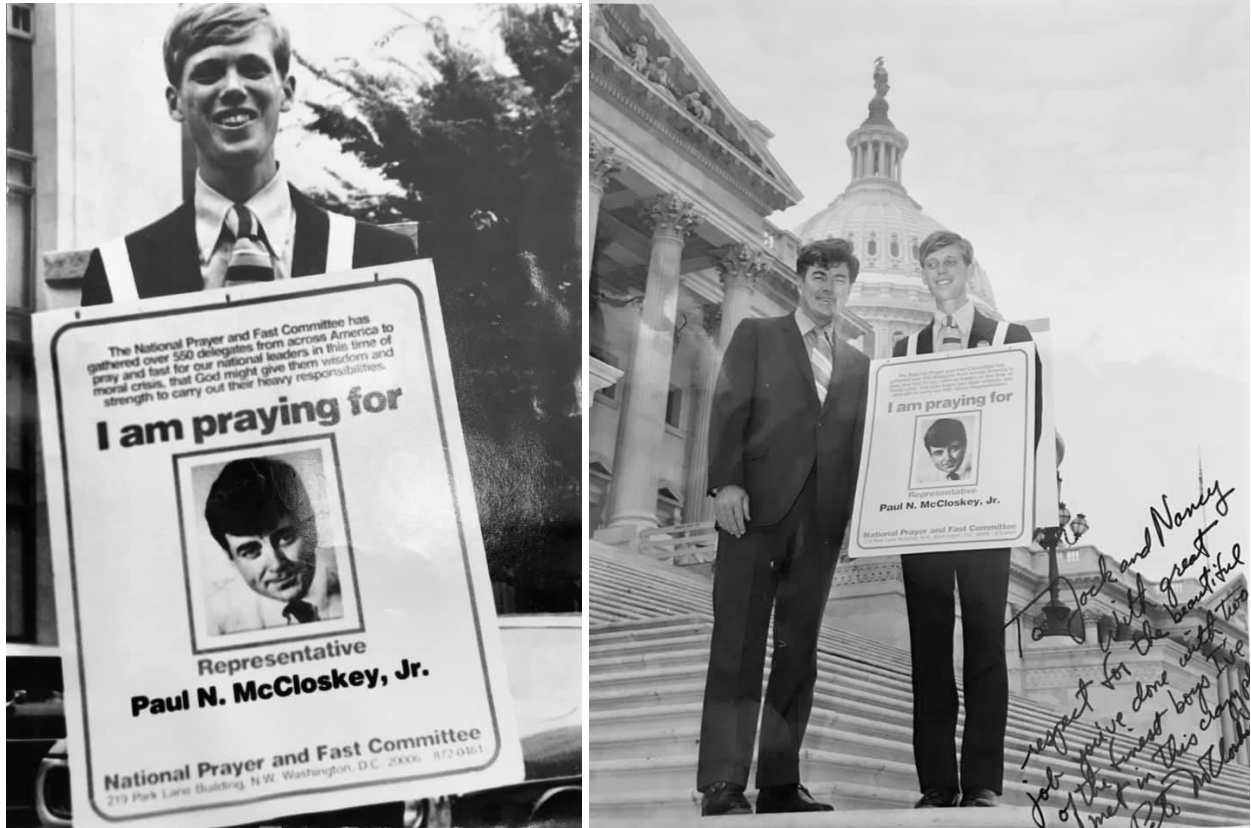


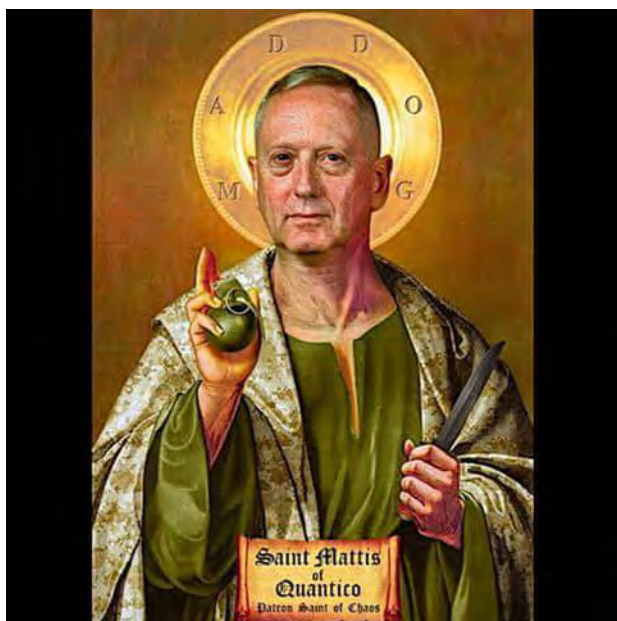
My Unificationist Memoirs Chapter 56

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MFT opened my heart to America and its people, teaching me once again how to love my country.

Growing up on military bases throughout my life, I had been nurtured on the traditions, stories, and the rhythms of Marine Corps life. The ceremony and ritual that defined everything from the structure of authority to the passing of time, shaped my deepest feelings and attachments. The earliest of my memories include the ship's bell on the Navy Yard parade ground, ringing out the hours of the watch, a vigil as sacred to the Naval services as monastic hours. The raising and lowering of the flag, stopped all activity, as heads turned in the direction of the Stars and Stripes, creating the psychological space for recollection, much as the bells of a Catholic church do when ringing out the Angelus. The notes of the "Washington Post March" or "Stars and Stripes Forever," still inspire me to the heights of devotion and call me to service like an Ave Maria sung at Midnight Mass.



As a young boy, I often listened to Taps echo from the ramparts of 8th and I Barracks after an evening of Marines passing in review. The haunting notes seemed to mysteriously resurrect the generations of men and women who paid the ultimate price for our freedom, while we sat in reverent silence, acknowledging and savoring their presence. Tun's Tavern, Bladensburg, Belleau Wood, Chateau Thierry, Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Iwo Jima, Inchon, and the Chosin Reservoir, became the touchstones of my historical understanding. When other kids were reading the Hardy Boys, I immersed myself in military history, convinced that at the very center of that narrative stood the Marine Corps, by God's choice and design. We may have been Catholics, but first and foremost, we were a Marine Corps Family.

In my years of adolescent rebellion, when I sought to slip from the bonds of parental authority, it is not surprising that I also revolted against the claim exercised by patriotism over my heart. In my young mind, my father and my country were closely identified, possibly, inseparable.

In the summer of 1967, the Vietnam War raged half a world away when we were transferred to Rome, Italy. One evening, as I wandered the streets near the Via Veneto, I stumbled across an anti-war

demonstration in front of the American Embassy. Crowds chanting "Ho! Ho! Ho Chi Minh!" gathered in the streets and swept me along with them. The experience proved nothing short of intoxicating. Five minutes earlier, if asked about my support for the war, my 15 year old self would have unequivocally given it. Suddenly, the passion of the crowd, the feeling of camaraderie, and the moral certainty of their anti-war position, operated to disarm my sentiments and turn the direction of my loyalties, at least for the evening. Like many adolescents, I was trying out a new identity. Rebellious youth seemed to fit.



I snagged a North Vietnamese flag and a poster of Ho Chi Minh that night and hung them on my wall. Just a year earlier, one of my father's best friends had been killed in Vietnam and I cannot imagine what my father felt when he came across my newest expressions of self. In an amazing act of self-restraint and parental wisdom, he let them hang. Rather than further stoke the fires of revolt, my parents decided to let these passions play out. They chose to engage me in conversation, respecting my developing intellect and my nascent efforts at constructing an ethical framework for my thought.

Initially, I fluctuated between opposition and support of the war, as conflicting sentiments tugged me back and forth. However, the Zeitgeist of the Sixties finally triumphed and launched me into full scale rebellion. Though I did not recognize it at first, by the time we moved to Stuttgart, Germany, an emotional element of this radical left virus I had contracted was anti-Americanism. The European left's disdain for American power continuously fed my rebellion.

The cultural and political air we breathed suffused this cynicism. It was omnipresent. Its assumptions were Marxist and in fact, many of the left wing "peace" movements were infiltrated and funded by East German and Russian operatives. Thus, by the time I returned to the states for college, and even though I had an NROTC appointment, I was an anti-American by sentiment, a cynic without faith, though I never would have seen myself as such, much less conceded the truth of my feelings. I no longer loved America; patriotism had been buried under my new found self-righteousness.



I have written elsewhere about my college years, Liberation Theology, and burning my draft card on the steps of the Pentagon. The renewal of my love for America began when I met the Unification Church. Although I had recoiled from the hypocrisy of the left, I had not yet recovered my patriotic affections or sense of gratitude for my country. Slowly, as I involved myself in the Forgive, Love, and Unite

Campaign, and discussed the political implications of the Divine Principle with my new found brothers and sisters, I began to identify accretions on my heart that, like barnacles on a hull, prevented my smooth spiritual sailing. At first, I reacted with self-righteous umbrage when the suggestion was made that the war in Southeast Asia was not essentially immoral. However, after taking a deep dive into "Master Speaks," I came up with a different frame of reference and a renewed understanding of the threat of communism. I felt True Father's love for America in the marrow of my bones. Gradually, my thoughts began to shift more to the center.

Then, I went on MFT, first for the Washington D.C. center, later, after our World Day Competition, on Father's MFT. Each day that I fundraised, I encountered Americans with deep and generous hearts. I worked in small towns from New England, down through New York, New Jersey, Virginia and West Virginia, North and South Carolina, across Tennessee and into the Deep South, over to Texas. Americans gave from their hearts, sometimes when they could not really afford to give. As I reversed the course of my personal selfishness and sin, my love for the people I met deepened, and my love of the country of my birth renewed. Even the persecution we experienced affected me in a positive manner: rather than being symptomatic of an intrinsic American evil, I felt it to be an anomaly, a departure from the true American character, which in essence was Judeo-Christian.

At one point, the sight of an American flag had triggered anger in me as a symbol of imperialism and oppression. As I traveled the country and fell back in love with its mountains and seashores, its vast plains and open skies, its local cultures with quaint traditions, rustic towns and quiet streets, I became convinced of America's exceptionalism, intrinsic goodness, and providential role. I soon was wearing an American Flag pin above my Unification Church ID.

When Vietnam fell to the communists, I called my father and repented. I had come full circle. MFT restored my love of country, my love for my parents, and my love for my Marine Corps roots. Having left and returned, I more than ever value what might have escaped me forever.

Below is a link the Friday Night Parade, Marine Barracks, 8th and I, Washington D.C.



www.facebook.com/marines/videos/1227702521007090/