

# THE ASHLAND

2006

FREE PRESS

THE SWEETHEART ISSUE

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## Jack Abramoff's House of Cards

Jack Abramoff is a Pisces, and he'll turn 47 on February 28, 2006. Depending on how things work out, he'll probably be turning 57 in a Federal prison, unless Mary Butler, the career Department of Justice prosecutor who bagged his sorry ass, is very pleased with his cooperation in her investigation of Congressional corruption. His plea agreement provides for a sentence from 108 months to 135 months, with reductions below that level only for providing "substantial assistance" to Ms. Butler's ongoing investigations.

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## *A Law Unto Itself: The Vatican Rules*

### Hey, What Wise Guy Sued The Pope?

It had to happen, sooner or later, that someone would try to sue the Pope, to try to ensnare the man at the top of the world's wealthiest religious organization in the rogue-priest pedophilia scandal. The Church has harbored abusers of the flock since its earliest days. It is however a recent development to discuss priestly sex abuse, and proportionately few victims have actually

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## *The [Former] Mayor Speaks on AFN*

*"Eliminate risk and you eliminate innovation...don't eliminate risk; knowingly take it on."* Vaughn Keller

I served as mayor of Ashland during the inception of the Ashland Fiber Network (AFN). At the time we were preparing for electric deregulation and it seemed logical to lay the infrastructure for high-speed data services and cable television while we were at it. Back then we were all on dial-up and our community, rich with graphic

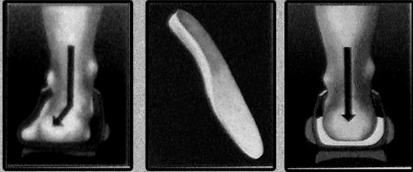
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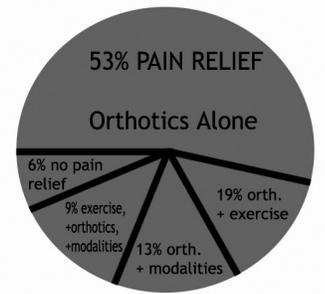
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-R. Donatelli, C. Hurlbert, D. Conaway, R. St. Pierre, "Biomechanical Foot Orthotics: A Retrospective Study," Journal of Orthopedic and Sports Therapy, 10(6):205 (1998).

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## The Sweetheart Edition

Valentines Day may be the only real holiday left in our society that hasn't been ravaged by the culture wars. Little boys and girls still give each other Valentines and candy hearts. I got a marriage proposition when I was four, from the daughter of the owner of my private school. A few days later he gave me a hell of a beating. Love hurts. St. Valentine is the Roman patron saint of imprisoned people. He was all the Amnesty International the early Christians had, but I don't think there was any equivalent of PETA to express concern for the lions.

The star of our issue is the Typhoid Mary of the Republicans, the guy in Washington everyone least wants to know, the Jack of Knaves, the King of Sleaze, Jack Abramoff. Josh Carreon created the cover art and the

illustrations for page 9, bringing some of the negative charm of the dark knight to our front page. Lo-Fi Nikita wrote an article that he claims barely penetrates the first layer of scum that has grown exponentially in the stagnant ponds of Washington, DC, where influence-trading is the only industry left, and all the honest people have packed up and left. Perhaps we here in the provinces, will have to face the reality that no one is going to treat us right as long as we remain the suckers to whom no even break shall be given. Certainly, we haven't gotten one yet.

This is also the right place to bid a sad goodbye to our Operations Manager, Jacob Hammond, who is moving to Houston to stoke the mighty engines of web commerce. Jacob has been the brawny shoulder behind the wheel that has turned out five issues of the Ashland Free Press with

ever-increasing quality. His skills and energy will be missed, but with any luck, he will return here with a big bag of loot in a few years, and teach the rest of us how to get rich.

We are rolling out our Calendar, as promised, and if your event isn't in it, then join up at [www.myAFP.com](http://www.myAFP.com) to submit an event.

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# Answering To A Higher Power: The Vatican As A Law Unto Itself

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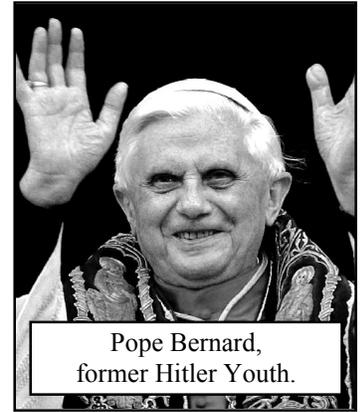
filed suits for compensation. This is the first Pope who has ever had to think about how to dodge as much financial liability as possible from this long-delayed inferno of payback. For this is a passionate issue, one that has caused state after state to extend its statute of limitations to allow claims of clergy abuse to go forward despite the lapse of decades. Legislatures have been made to understand that priestly abuse does not surface quickly, and the special position a priest holds among parishioners makes an assault upon his dignity unthinkable.

## There Were No Good Old Days

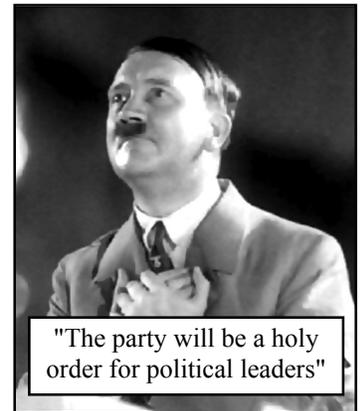
One might wonder, if one were skeptically inclined, what need anyone has for membership in a monstrously wealthy institution ruled by Italians, based in Rome, that claims, in spite of all appearances to the

contrary, that its "Pope" is the current representative on planet earth of a very unworldly man. In the middle ages, the Church served as an alternate occupation for the wealthy who didn't relish life as a soldier. There was good food, wine and reading material in the Church. Nunneries served as warehouses, clerics did the accounting for the feudal system, platoons of hymn-chanting acolytes kept the sacred batteries charged with virtue, while peasants starved or fed, as was God's will. When the Popes were based in southern France, they charged large sums to license drinking establishments, prostitution, and all manner of moral fault that could be profitably practiced by the merchant class. Today, the Church is a humorless corporate institution that protects its assets with legal

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Pope Bernard,  
former Hitler Youth.



"The party will be a holy  
order for political leaders"

## Socrates Now! How Blind Justice?

America has produced some philosophers of note, one of whom is Charles Peirce (1839-1914). He was a remarkable man, best known as a logician and mathematician. He was also an astronomer, chemist, lexicographer, historian of science, mathematical economist, and lifelong student of medicine, to give but a short list of his accomplishments. In describing the nature of thought, he offers the maxim: "We think in order to believe."

Peirce's conclusion is reminiscent of King Procrustes who, when receiving overnight guests too short for his beds, had them put to the rack and stretched. When they proved too tall, he had their legs chopped to fit.

The United States Supreme Court ruling on assisted suicide is a recent

example of how prejudice of this sort can influence judgments believed to be predicated upon pure reason alone. The case involved the right of the state of Oregon to make legal assisted suicides by physicians for terminally ill patients. The U.S. Attorney General claimed this was turning doctors into drug traffickers and, indirectly, murderers (the legal angle through which they attacked the law), and Oregon replied that the voters had spoken otherwise—twice.

Ostensibly, the Supreme Court and our legal system is governed by the principles of sound reasoning. Lady Liberty wears a blind-fold, symbolizing her refusal to be unduly influenced by forces outside of reason's constraints, and in her left hand hangs the balance through which she

evaluates the merits of the arguments presented. In her other hand she grips the sword through which she makes her judgments known. This system is designed to promote justice, and justice requires that reason prevail in the realm of law. Indeed, law and reason are nigh on to synonymous. Ask yourself: If you were accused of a crime, would you want an impassioned mob determining your fate, or the reasoned deliberations of a judge?

Given all of this, the Supreme Court ruled in favor of sustaining the Oregon law. The final tally was 6-3 in favor of doctor assisted suicide. There are two points worth noting in this decision.

The first is that following the course

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## The [Former] Mayor Speaks on AFN

*Continued from page 1*

artists, writers, publishers, and book editors needed both speed and reliability. AFN was about providing infrastructure for Ashland's homegrown businesses and creating a spark to encourage new, clean industry that would provide living-wage jobs.

The New Year's edition of the Ashland Free Press included a number of articles suggesting a nexus between conditions specific to the city-owned cable system and the revenue shortfall. Below I list few of those reasons, why they're flawed, and the real cause of the growing shortfall.

### Leadership

Between City Councilor Russ Silbiger and the Ashland Free Press, the most ink was given to management's 'failure of leadership and lack of vision' as the single biggest contributing factor for AFN not realizing its potential. And why not? Staff is an easy and believable target—and one being used with greater frequency these days. After all, it makes sense that the person at the top is to blame. Problem is, when it comes to AFN, Dick Wanderscheid is not at the top of the food chain. The city council is.

Let me explain by putting this in a different context.

When people are unhappy about how money is being appropriated in Salem – not enough for schools, human services or whatever—they call their elected officials. They blame the Republicans, the Democrats, the Senate, the House, or the governor. However, in my six years of working with Alan Bates I cannot recall one single constituent complaining about state staff not providing vision or leadership for the elected officials.

When Social Security shows unprecedented debt, we don't call the Social Security Administrator demanding an explanation as to why he failed to re-invent the organization so it runs in the black. Nope: We blame President Bush or Congress.

Yet in Ashland we blame staff.

Isn't it true that voters don't want staff setting the vision or policy? That's why we have elected officials. What's ironic about this finger-pointing is that it's coming from the very people who should be providing leadership and vision. I guess as long as fingers are pointing at staff,

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# The [Former] Mayor Speaks on AFN

*Continued from page 4*

voters won't place blame where it really belongs. So far, so good.

## Marketing

The suggestion that inadequate marketing factors into AFN's revenue shortfall seems logical. However, there are different forces at play in the AFN/ Charter scenario that tend to neutralize marketing.

Marketing typically works best where two 'similar' businesses are competing for the same market. And while AFN and Charter appear to be similar they're fundamentally different in an important way: AFN is community-owned and Charter is corporate-owned. This fact drives subscribers in spite of marketing and creates blocks of users who cannot be persuaded.

For example, there are those who subscribe to AFN because they believe in community. They're the same people who contribute to JPR, Britt, KSOR, and political causes. They're the people who shop at the Ashland Community Food Co-op and Ashland Hardware. And they're the same people who vote for libraries and schools. These subscribers came to AFN simply because they believe in community-owned cable and will remain for the same reasons no matter how many slick mailers they receive from Charter.

Similarly, there are those who oppose government competing with private enterprise. These subscribers will remain with Charter no matter what we say or how we say it.

In addition to these locked customers, there are also those who subscribe to AFN because their livelihood or business depends on a rock-solid system that won't crash. Yes, there are some who don't want cheap: They want 100% certified American steel. These subscribers are immune to "specials" designed to lure them away from AFN because reliability is driving their decision, not cost.

Finally, there are those who are strictly driven by rates and don't care who owns the system. These subscribers are with Charter and will remain there because, although neither AFN nor Charter are charging what it costs, Charter is willing to go further into debt than the city is. Ironically, if these subscribers all moved to AFN, our community-owned cable rates would go down because industry

rates are driven by the customer base.

## Central Services

Central Services is the portion of city government that doesn't generate its own revenue, such as administration, finance, the city attorney, and personnel. Because these services support all the city departments, all departments share in the cost of these services.

The suggestion by the Ashland Free Press that getting out from under the city's Central Service equals a solvent system, is logical. After all, AFN's Central Service Charge is the difference between the community-owned cable running in the black vs. in the red.

While getting out from under the city does indeed remove the central-service charge, it also removes AFN from the great resources of the city. I was on the Hospital Board when it divested from the city and I assure you, AFN and Ashland Community Hospital are very different.

Prior to divesting from the city, Ashland Community Hospital was independent from the city in nearly every aspect. AFN, on the other hand, is intricately woven into the city fabric and divestment would undoubtedly trigger significant start-up dollars for the spin-off.

We should think carefully before implementing this plan of attack.

## Prevailing Wage

Divesting AFN from the city in order to remove prevailing-wage requirements is one of the more insidious solutions to our revenue shortfall. After all, isn't this the community that passed a resolution supporting a living wage? Isn't this the city that said if non-profits wanted to receive City of Ashland grant money they would need to pay a living wage and provide benefits to their employees? And yet we want to reduce our overhead by hiding behind a company that will pay less and not provide benefits? It might be time to walk the talk. "We cannot insure success, but we can deserve it." John Adams

So what's the real reason behind AFN's revenue shortfall?

The reality is that AFN is running behind schedule on debt retirement because we're fighting the third largest cable company in America. By holding the Ashland market 46% below their national average, Charter holds

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## The [Former] Mayor Speaks on AFN

*Continued from page 5*

AFN below market as well. Make no mistake: Charter wants a monopoly in this market before dumping their bankrupt system and they're aggressively going after it.

There's an amazing corporate battle going on right here in our backyard. This is what a take-over looks like. This is what predatory pricing looks like. This is what corporate bullying looks like. If Ashland voters truly believe in closing corporate loopholes and holding corporations accountable, this is what the fight looks like. We should all be concerned that our nation is close to having just two cable companies determine 90% of our nation's programming. It's time to put our money where our values are.

Given the importance of this struggle, a \$7.50/ month fee seems like a small price to pay. However, the hue and cry against this 25-cent/day subsidy, led by those who oppose government competing with private industry, culminated in a speedy retreat by the council. Further,

the importance of AFN infrastructure was marginalized by anti-television rhetoric which conveniently ignored how government subsidizes all infrastructure—with the largest subsidization going to the automobile.

For example, on top of state and local transportation dollars, Ashland charges \$6.00/ month/ household to generate additional road-repair dollars—and has done so for 20 years. In all that time no one has complained. No editorial about it being regressive. Not one word about the poor who can't drive and yet still pay. So, why shouldn't we subsidize infrastructure for data services that enables people to make a living wage working at home?

AFN has done exactly what we hoped it would do: It diversified and strengthened our economy while minimizing the impact of this economic growth through home offices. Indeed, since AFN launched, the number of Ashland businesses have doubled while our population grew only two percent per year.

AFN isn't about teaching a man to fish vs. giving him a fish; AFN is about providing the tackle.

*Cathy Shaw*

## Books: The Unauthorized Biography of George Bush

In *The Unauthorized Biography of George Bush*, authors Webster Tarpley and Anton Chaitkin chronicled the intricate maneuverings that landed the first Bush in the Oval Office after years as the head of the CIA, and helped us to understand what it means for a nation when you promote the top "spook" to the role of Chief Executive. This book studies Bush the First's rise to power in Texas, then in Washington, and explains how he adopted his father Prescott's technique of recruiting weak Democrats to run against him, thus assuring victory despite his lackluster character. Interestingly, Bush II has enjoyed two Presidential runs against the worst Democratic candidates since Dukakis, a fact that Tarpley shows us may have more to do with Republican strategy than many would suspect. Digging into the crypt of Bush family secrets, *The Unauthorized Biography* summarizes US government documents establishing that Brown, Harriman, the New York investment bank in which Prescott Bush was a partner, financed Hitler's huge private armies during his rise to power. Similarly, since year 2000, Bush II has funneled billions of dollars to the private security industry, even amending

the law to make it possible to contract out core government security functions to foreign companies, while making a job as a mercenary one of the highest paying opportunities for a red blooded American hankering to wear body armor and play Rambo. *The Unauthorized Biography* also explains how Brown, Harriman probably incited, or at the very least eagerly profited from, Hitler's takeover of Poland that promptly put an end to a troublesome strike at a Polish steel mill that the bankers owned. Once the Nazis controlled Poland, Brown, Harriman dedicated their mill to producing a vast tonnage of Nazi war materiel to throw against the Allies. When this came to light during the course of World War II, the US government seized the Hamburg-America Company, a Brown, Harriman front company, and all of its assets, for the crime of Trading With the Enemy. However, the law didn't prosecute the traitors at Brown, Harriman who had fattened themselves on a meal of American blood. Again in our current time period, we find that the vast supplies of high-explosives that were sold to the Iraqi military during the reign of Saddam Hussein, have been thrown back at American soldiers

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## Books: The Unauthorized Biography of George Bush

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and Iraqi citizens by the Iraqi rebels, whose cell-phone bombs are charged with ordnance manufactured right here in the USA. Additionally, it is unquestionable that United Defense Industries, which "went public" in year 2002, was a corporate spinoff of The Carlyle Group, in which both the Bush and Bin Laden families owned very large interests. United Defense Industries is now fifth from the top in US defense spending, a meteoric rise to the top of a tough business, but one that fits a pattern of success that the Bush family seems to enjoy. Because of the many correspondences between Bush I and Bush II, this book is particularly enlightening, and comes highly recommended for those who enjoy good research on an issue of unquestioned importance – the character of the people who are running our country.

## Books: What a Real President Would Have Said After 9/11

Excerpted from *9/11 Synthetic Terrorism Made In USA*, by Webster Griffin Tarpley, © 2004

Webster Tarpley's new book, *Synthetic Terrorism*, deals with the long-established practice, on the part of the US intelligence establishment, of sponsoring terrorist activity in other nations, and, he inevitably concludes, here at home on 9/11. First, the US government made the attacks on the World Trade Center possible through cozy relations with the Saudis that granted entry visas to Saudi passport-bearers regardless of their prior terrorist activities; second, the administration deliberately destroyed all forensic evidence from the WTC ruins, thwarting any analysis of why the towers inexplicably collapsed; third, the administration stymied Congressional investigation of the attacks; and fourth, the President's handlers have used terrorism to create an atmosphere of permanent fear, the perfect climate in which to nurture an overawing President who manipulates both Congress and the Courts in the interests of a strong foreign policy. Perhaps this is indeed the "New World Order" that the First Bush carelessly mentioned. Maybe history just had to wait for the Second Bush to mature into his role, or maybe the towers had to fall, before the world could realize that its Messiah, or its Manchurian Candidate, was already in the White House. Yes, Tarpley's vision is that grim. But in

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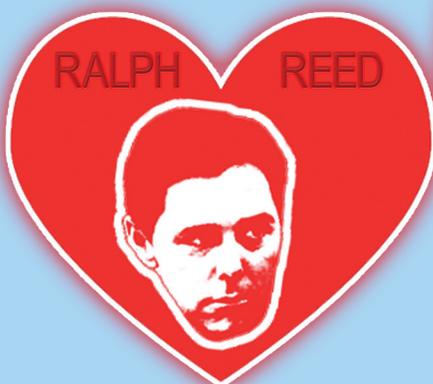
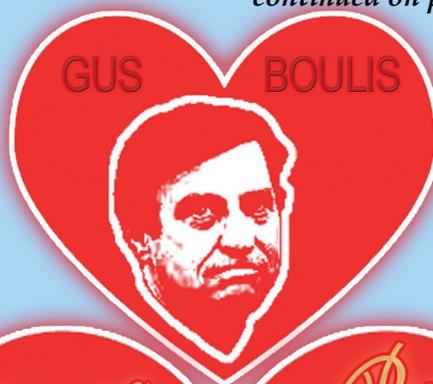
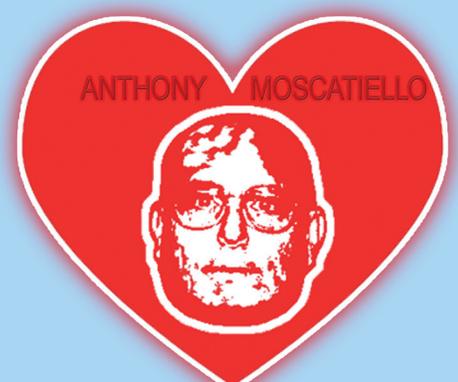
# Jack's Royal Flush

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## Meet The (Unindicted) Lawyers

Abramoff, a lawyer himself, chose Abbe Lowell, a well-known Democrat-defender from the Washington legal shark-tank, to negotiate with Butler. Lowell helped Democratic Congressman Gary Condit dodge a bullet after his intern Chandra Levy disappeared, got Democratic Senator Robert Torricelli out of hot water over illegal campaign donations from Buddhist nuns, and served as Chief Investigative Counsel for the Democrats during Clinton's impeachment proceedings. His lawfirm's website proudly announces that Lowell "has represented more than 35 elected officials or their campaign committees, providing advice ... concerning rules and regulations governing campaign contributions, filing of election forms, filing of financial disclosure information and gifts." It is worth noting at the outset that Abramoff hired a Democratic fixer rather than an established Republican sleaze-defender. Perhaps he wanted a lawyer who wouldn't

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## Books: What a Real President Would Have Said After 9/11

*Continued from page 6*

addition to formulating and documenting his accusations, Tarpley is good enough to imagine a truly kinder, gentler world, in which a President with a genuinely democratic and public-spirited agenda took the bullhorn in his hands while standing in the wreckage that lay at the heart of our greatest city. If the nation had been governed by such a President, here is what he might have said.

My fellow citizens:

Today our country and our political system have been targeted by large-scale acts of terrorism. These are monstrous crimes against humanity, and they will not go unpunished. We send our solidarity to the brave firemen, policemen, military people, and office workers who have borne the brunt of this assault. We promise an equitable and equal compensation for the human losses of this day. Insistent and irresponsible voices have been raised in my own White House and in the intelligence agencies, and have inspired media reports attributing these attacks to Arab or Islamic terrorists of the al Qaeda Bin Laden organization. But this is no time for snap decisions or a rush to judgment when we are dealing with the present and future peace of the world. It is true that we have bitter enemies around the world, but the capabilities displayed today appear to go far beyond the technical and physical means available to al Qaeda. We must also recall that, under the reckless and irresponsible policies of my predecessors, the CIA had been one of the main sponsors of Bin Laden and al Qaeda. If we think back to the attack on the federal building in Oklahoma City in 1995, we remember that media voices attempted in the first hours to attribute that tragedy to the Arab world. Although I am convinced that we still do not know the full story of Oklahoma City, it is clear that the Arab world was not involved.

There are too many unanswered questions at this point. How were the terrorists who seem to have been involved allowed to enter the United States and operate freely in this country? Why was there no air defense over a period of one hour and fifteen minutes? I have ordered an immediate inquiry into this question, and in the meantime I have accepted the resignations of Gen. Myers of the Air Force, the deputy chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff,

and of Gen. Bernhard of NORAD, whose agency failed the people today. There is also evident reason to believe that the CIA, the FBI, the NSA, and the Immigration and Naturalization Service have not performed satisfactorily, based on the fragmentary accounts available so far. I have therefore accepted the resignations of the leaders of those agencies, and of their principal deputies. I have furthermore accepted the resignation of the Secretary of Defense and his deputy, the Attorney General, the Secretary of Transportation, and of my National Security Adviser, since it is evident to me that they could not continue to serve the nation effectively because of the immense tragedy which has occurred on their watch. We rightly demand accountability from teachers, from railroad engineers, and from physicians. We therefore have all the more reason to demand accountability and responsibility from those who have been entrusted with the management of the executive departments, several of which have not served us well today.

Another question involves the collapse of the World Trade Center towers many minutes after they had been impacted by the airplanes. These events, as you know, represent an absolute anomaly in the history of skyscrapers. In particular, there is no explanation whatsoever for the collapse of building seven at five o'clock in the afternoon.

Accordingly, and consistent with our urgent measures to save any victims remaining in the rubble, I am ordering the Seventh Mountain Division of Fort Drum, New York, to seize control of the site of the World Trade Center, cordoning it off as a crime scene and taking immediate measures for preserving the evidence we must have to determine what really happened. Not one scrap of metal will be removed before a full forensic survey has been carried out. Contrary to media accounts, we have not been able to identify the flying object which apparently hit the Pentagon, although it seems likely that it was not a Boeing 757, and thus could hardly have been United flight 73. As for the tragedy over Shanksville, we are investigating whether this aircraft was shot down by our own forces, and why. All crash sites are being secured by military units, acting under my direct orders, whose loyalty to the Constitution is beyond question.

The overriding question is whether the criminals who acted today enjoyed support or collaboration from within our own country and even within our own government. I have created a special unit of federal investigators which will act under my direct orders and which will report to

me and to me alone. The first task of that unit will be to determine why there was no air defense, in violation of the standard operating procedures of NORAD and the FAA. Another task will be to examine the entire roster of FBI and CIA double agents presently infiltrating terrorist groups and how they are managed, with a view to identifying possible factors of collusion. Another task will be to determine why our watch list procedures and other forms of vigilance were not effective in screening the criminals out.

As far as the FBI is concerned, I urge the Congress to join me in breaking up this tragically dysfunctional agency. After Ruby Ridge, Waco, the FBI crime lab, Wen Ho Lee, the Atlanta Olympics and Richard Jewel, the withheld documents in the McVeigh case, we now have September 11, 2001. The FBI has never recovered from the corruption and mismanagement instilled during the fifty year reign of J. Edgar Hoover, a man whom we know today to have been unfit for public office. The FBI has many dedicated public servants, but they are trapped today in a structure of incompetence, corruption, and worse. Accordingly, I am placing the FBI into receivership by executive order with immediate effect; this agency will operate for the time being under the direction of my special assistant for internal security.

In determining the full scope of what happened today, I need the help of all our citizens. If you know something important about what happened today, I want to hear it. Call the White House and talk with one of my staff, who are mobilized to take your calls. If you see anyone, including especially federal agents, attempting to tamper with evidence, or if a federal agent attempts to intimidate you into saying you saw or heard something you did not see, I want to know about that, too.

I am also determined to find out if foreign intelligence agencies or foreign citizens were involved in today's events. I am appointing myself as temporary Director of the CIA, and in that capacity I will undertake a comprehensive review of foreign operations on American soil. No foreign agency will be exempted, and I promise you a full initial progress report.

In addition to the immediate investigations I have mentioned so far, I am also empanelling a board of inquiry to study today's events and offer a second opinion on what may have gone wrong. I am asking Senator Byrd to be the chairman of this body, and Lawrence Walsh, a Republican, the former Iran-contra prosecutor, to be the vice chairman. I have invited former Secretary of the Treasury

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## Books: What a Real President Would Have Said After 9/11

*Continued from page 11*

O'Neill, former President Carter, General Zinni, former Governor Ryan of Illinois to serve. I am also actively soliciting participation by outsiders and academics who have been critics of our government policies of recent years. I am inviting Susan Sontag, Eric Foner, Noam Chomsky, Chalmers Johnson, Howard Zinn, and Seymour Hersh to become members of the board of inquiry. Let them play the devil's advocates, if they will, so long as we obtain truth and justice. They will all receive the necessary security clearances directly from me personally, if necessary. I will personally supervise the rapid declassification of documents as recommended by the board of inquiry in order to educate the public about the board's findings. We all remember the failure of the Warren Commission; that failure will not be repeated during my presidency.

I recall the words of President Eisenhower in the wake of the Kennedy assassination: the American people, he commented, will not be stampeded. I ask you to support your government and its constitutional institutions, and not to give way to the voices of hatred, fear, aggression, and paranoia. I promise that swift justice will be rendered for those who have struck us today, no matter who they turn out to be.

These dastardly attacks will not force this great nation off course; they will not force us to become something we are not. We will remain ourselves. We will go forward in the great American tradition of the Monroe Doctrine, the Good Neighbor Policy, the Bretton Woods system, the Marshall Plan, and the Four Freedoms of the Atlantic Charter, starting with the freedom from fear.

Further attacks cannot be ruled out in the coming days and weeks. Because of the office I hold, and because of the constitutional responsibilities I must meet, I ask for your support -- no matter what may happen during the coming days and weeks.

Good night.

*The full text of 9/11 Synthetic Terrorism Made In USA is available online at <http://www.american-buddha.com/syntheticterrortarpley.pdf>.*

## Socrates Now!: How Blind Justice?

*Continued from page 3*

of reason does not necessarily lead all of us to the same destination. We must presume that each of the nine judges heard exactly the same arguments for and against the Oregon law, and yet they differed in their final judgments. I realize that I may be commenting on the obvious, but I do find it fascinating that reasonable people can disagree over the same set of facts. Logic, after all, follows proscribed procedures, and the method for determining a valid, logical conclusion is almost automatic: plug the subjects and predicates into the existing formulas, and then calculate your final deduction.

The problem is that being reasonable is a much broader affair than being logical. For example, reason must account for the human condition, the emotional elements of a case, even though emotional factors are not supposed to be the determining elements for a final adjudication. If a person were to speak passionately about the agony a loved one endured during the final months of terminal cancer, a reasonable person listening to this account is necessarily moved. Despite the fact that pure logic would dismiss all of this as irrelevant, reason is not without heart. Indeed, the truth is that the most reasonable of arguments is actually a sophisticated process of personal interpretation. Reasonable people can come to different conclusions about the same event because their interpretations and evaluations of that event inevitably differ: one experience, two explanations. Exactly how this comes to be is too complex to address in this short article.

The second point I find interesting about the Supreme Court's decision is who decided what. When we look at the dissenting votes we see that all three justices are Catholics. On the affirmative side we see only one Catholic, with the others being a mix of Jewish, Episcopalian, and Protestant. When we examine Catholic doctrine it becomes obvious that we are not dealing with a moral system that is open to variations upon its theme. This is an absolute system, and the values promulgated therein do not shift with the times. Thou shalt not kill is not open to interpretation, (war notwithstanding). Nor is there a way in which the Church doctrine can be bent so as to allow for a person to kill his/herself. According to the Catholic religion suicide is a sin, and therefore a transgression against the will of God. This is what is meant, in part at least, when we speak of absolute

moral codes.

So, it is not surprising that the dissenting opinions in the case of physician-assisted suicide came from Catholic Justices, men who implied by their decisions that assisted suicide was a legalized form of killing and therefore wrong. It was upon this implicit premise that the U.S. Attorney General initiated the case in the first place, or at least this was the emotional backdrop that initiated the legal argument. So the question arises: Should the religious beliefs of these justices have any influence on the case at all?

Ideally, reasoned discourse is not supposed to promote belief systems. In fact, the business of reason is most often quite the opposite: Let's discriminate between reasoned actions and moral compulsions. If a man claims he has the right to kill his sister because she has dishonored the family (the so-called "honor killing" that is practiced in many countries to this day), then reason must step in and provide guidance. What is customary, what is deemed moral by a particular culture or religion, is not necessarily the same thing as truth. After all, it was thought for centuries that the earth was flat. This was the belief, a view based upon common sense: Take a look at the ground, and you too will be convinced. But, in this instance reason has shown both belief and common sense to be wrong.

Given all this, it becomes obvious that when examining our thinking critically, it is important to distinguish between what we have logically determined to be a valid judgment and the actual nature of truth. Is a reasonable claim, or even a logically deduced claim, necessarily a TRUE claim? Have we really sifted the chaff of belief from the kernel of fact? This is the conundrum into which rational thought devolves.

To a large extent the answer depends upon our original assumptions, i.e. even in logic we must necessarily begin with those statements (premises) that we believe to be true. Determining whether they are fact or fiction becomes yet another problem to solve. And so I constantly find myself returning to Mr. Peirce's maxim, wondering if all of our reasoned debates are little more than a sophisticated way of justifying our private convictions. I am forced to ask myself: Am I really a reasonable person, or am I simply hoping to justify those beliefs I deem sacred?

*Socrates Now! is a regular column authored by Mitch Frangadakis, local philosopher who is also found at [www.socatesnow.com](http://www.socatesnow.com).*

## Jack Abramoff's House of Cards

*Continued from page 9*

have any scruples about deploying Abramoff's damaging recollections against Republicans. Abbe Lowell would, presumably, be free of pro-Republican scruples.

Abramoff certainly needed a good lawyer, because Butler is considered one of the best anti-corruption lawyers in the DOJ's Public Integrity Division. Profiled in a recent National Law Journal article, one of Butler's colleagues observed: "She's one of the special ones who will turn over every piece of paper, look at every credit card receipt and phone bill." Butler spent her first twelve years prosecuting corrupt officials in the South Florida US Attorney's Office. She convicted a DEA chief of stealing a million dollars in "buy money," convicted a banker for lying about bribes he paid to the mayor of Miami Beach, and after a year of investigating corruption in Miami and Dade County in "Operation Greenpalm," took down Miami's city manager, a lobbyist, and a clutch of crooked local commissioners. After achieving that career capstone, like a number of other Florida prosecutors, she moved north to Washington when Janet Reno got the top law-enforcement job under Clinton, and led investigations into Secretary Bruce Babbitt's management of the Department of the Interior, after he blocked establishment of a gambling casino that was opposed by another Indian gambling tribe that had donated over \$350,000 to Democratic campaigns.

Butler's experience investigating Babbitt no doubt aided her investigation of Abramoff, who developed a niche-market in fleecing Indian tribes out of *beau-coup* bucks in exchange for pulling strings with Republican lawmakers. Abramoff developed his bribery skills while at the Seattle-based megafirm of Preston, Gates & Ellis ("Preston"), where he worked from 1997 until 2001, getting Congressmen like Tom DeLay to back his clients' legislative interests.

### Keeping Down The Cost of Making Shirts In The USA

The Northern Marianas (also known as Saipan) depends primarily on Japanese tourists and garment factories for income, and receives development assistance from the United States government. Clothing manufacturers in the Northern Marianas are in a US free-trade zone, but enjoy a lower minimum wage and provide fewer worker protections, which lowers the cost of production. As an

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## Jack Abramoff's House of Cards

Continued from page 13

additional bonus, clothing made in the Northern Marianas is lawfully labeled "Made in USA," and produced under sweatshop conditions. That's a free economy that Tom DeLay could love, and love it he did.

During New Years, 1997, at Abramoff's invitation, DeLay and dozens of other congressmen and aides toured the Northern Marianas, an occasion that found DeLay effusive about the man who made the whole trip possible: "When one of my closest and dearest friends, Jack Abramoff, your most able representative in Washington, D.C. invited me to the islands, I wanted to see firsthand the free-market success and the progress and reform you have made." Although many Northern Marianas garment-workers are procured through the human-trafficking network, and all live in virtual slavery, working 84-hour weeks, for miniscule wages, DeLay pledged to block any legislation harmful to the \$1 billion garment industry, and at a banquet hosted by Saipan's rag trade magnates, urged the beleaguered island capitalists to "Stand firm. Resist evil." Stand firm they did, and DeLay, eager to reward industry, got them the exemptions from US immigration and labor laws that they need to keep us in

cheap shirts. Preston Gates earned \$6.7 million in Marianas lobbying fees, of which \$3.1 million were paid improperly, without the contract required by law, according to the Seattle Weekly.

## Gamblers Fix Congress

Preston clients represented by Abramoff could look forward to having DeLay support legislation they favored. *The Wall Street Journal* reported in 2000 that DeLay had received over \$50,000 from Abramoff and the Choctaw tribe, and that he and his staffers had visited the Choctaw reservation four times. The Choctaws paid Preston over \$1 million annually. On May 25, 2000, the Choctaw tribe and eLottery, another Abramoff client, each contributed \$25,000 to the National Center for Public Policy Research ("NCPPr"). In a coincidence that will stick in one's memory, on the same day the Choctaw and eLottery donations were made, Abramoff, DeLay, his wife, and four others left for a trip to Britain, allegedly sponsored by the NCPPr. In fact, Abramoff laundered the gambling donations through NCPPr to pay part of the trip expense, and DeLay broke the law by getting on the plane. A couple of months later, eLottery and the Choctaws got their payoff, when DeLay helped defeat the Internet Gambling Prohibition Act, which would have

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criminalized Internet betting.

## **The Revolving Door Between Government And Business Flies Off Its Hinges Altogether**

Preston has been good to DeLay, and DeLay attracts talented staffers. Those talented staffers are mostly lawyers, and need jobs where they can make lots of money after they finish with being Congressional staffers, so sometimes they go to Preston and get a job. Michael Scanlon and William Jarrell were both DeLay aides who moved over to Preston to work for the Choctaw tribe after they left Federal employment. Sometimes it goes the other way, and Preston employees want to go into government so they can garner more influence. This easy interflow between positions of government influence and positions that influence government was deliberately encouraged by the Republican leadership through what they called "the K Street Project."

The K Street Project is why David Safavian, who lobbied for the terrorist organization Hamas at Preston, became the top procurement officer for the Government Services Administration, and why Patrick Pizzella, who worked at Preston lobbying on behalf of the Saipan sweatshop bosses, became Bush's Assistant Secretary of Labor. It's why Tony Rudy, former Deputy Chief of Staff to DeLay, and Neil Volz, former Chief of Staff for Congressman Bob Ney of Ohio, just got big jobs at lobbying firms on K Street. It's why Karl Rove hired Susan Ralston to be his secretary. Previously, she had been Abramoff's secretary at another lobbying firm, Greenberg Traurig. When you've worked for one master criminal, it makes it a lot easier to work for the next one.

Congress has done a tremendous job of ignoring its own moral defects. Abramoff's influence peddling has befouled the halls of government since the Republicans took the White House and the Congressional majority. The naked rule of power under DeLay's regime silenced what ethical qualms might have disturbed the conscience of our lawmakers, and the budget has exploded as every representative roots in the trough for some nugget of value to deliver to their corporate sponsors. In the race for campaign cash, our representatives may as well abandon their pin-striped suits and don racing attire, complete with corporate logos. For today's Congress, it has turned out to be easiest to privately relax and enjoy the looting of the country, while publicly standing tall as they sign one bloated spending bill after another, endow-

ing more government boondoggles with rubber dollars, while wrapping themselves in the safety of a patriotic soundbite.

The roots of Abramoff's political influence go deeper than simple political palm-greasing. Abramoff's career has been obscenely presumptuous, and in retrospect, his persona was preposterous. Even as an admitted felon, swathed in a black overcoat, his face cast in a mask of implacable determination, his confidence is undimmed. That confidence must have been magnetic and overwhelming before the fall. Like a Pied Piper for fat cats, he played a tune that none could resist, ensnaring them with the lure of illicit influence, destroying dozens of careers and the last of the trust the American people had in their Congress. If someone had planned a sting operation to reveal the avarice and arrogance of our national political elite, they could not have done as well. Abramoff knows people's weak points, and the weakest point of every greedy bastard is his desire to like himself. This desire to feel like a good guy accounts for the grandiose, self-congratulatory boosterism of Republican politics these days, and Abramoff was ready-made for this political climate.

## **What Would An Omnipotent Deity Do?**

In his college years, Abramoff got right in tune with the coming age of smug, judgmental religiosity sitting comfortably next to naked, brutal militarism. Making a big deal out of his religion held Abramoff in good stead with DeLay, who has often proclaimed his belief that God guides his steps and has directed him to smite the unrighteous. Abramoff wears a yarmulke and blew about \$4 million on a school with a Judaic name in California that educated his two children and then folded, leaving bill collectors with matzo crumbs to cover the school's debts. Abramoff maintained Rabbi Daniel Lapin, who has alliances with Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, on a \$20,000 per month stipend paid by the Capital Athletic Foundation, a phony nonprofit Abramoff organized to dodge taxes and raise money by promising to provide programs for inner-city youth. Abramoff's emails with Lapin show that Lapin happily forged scholarly Jewish credentials for Abramoff to fatten his resume with religious virtue. Beware the pious man.

## **Seizing The Moral High Ground With the Christians**

Like attracts like, and so the smell of refined bullshit emanating from Abramoff attracted his fellow-hypocrite,

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# Prevaricators Perched to Pounce

by *Truc Scales*

Unable to understand just how our country got cleaved and divided into Red vs. Blue, patriots vs. traitors, muscular militarists vs. weak weenies, I decided to get right down to it and sniff out the malodourously putrid stench wafting in Washington, emanating from lies, bribes, malicious gossip and a general disregard for truth, dignity or anything given to integrity. My work was cut out for me, so I took a break and began working on a Big Chill.

I was laying around the house the other evening, doing what I do best when left alone with cable TV, AM/FM reception, boundless bandwidth, some bookmarked titillating websites, a bottle of this or that, a box of sequestered chocolates, silk sheets, a mouth watering book, a loyal pet, a shoebox full of taboo toys, an auto-dialer with a willing list encoded and a mind full of throbbing, decadent thoughts. Not bad, for starters.

All this was to run cover for my swan dive into the digital soup, there to, hopefully, home in the root of all this evil and cast it out of our collective minds, tilted windmills aside.

Hey, it was Friday night and I was gearing up to let off a little steam. Well, perhaps enough to paddlewheel backwards up Horseshoe Falls in a floating casino, then scoot through some canals and waterways and down the Mississippi like an unlimited hydroplane on steroids. At the same time I was sucking in data like a black hole, holding on to everything until ALL the dots connected.

While simultaneously talking on two land and three cellular lines, I wrapped up my podcast, posted the latest on my blog, clicked into a video conference call using VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol), this while putting a salmon filet into the broiler just before I tip-toed to the fridge to check on the chilled nigiri sushi that was just 5 minutes old and begging to be consumed before dying of old age 20 minutes later. I have to eat well in order to sleuth succinctly.

Pushing all this aside, I browsed to and through my favorite irreverent sites, gaining a perspective that evades our populace as a whole. I was confronted with the fact that to be a good, God-fearing, patriotic lad one has to swear to abide by the decisions made by some perpetually juvenile armadillo-brained, brush-clearing wacko from Waco.

We've been asked to swallow some pretty weird tasting

koolaid in the form of no WMD's, no link between Saddam and Al Quaeda, no yellowcake from Niger, no drones capable of cruising over the Atlantic and doing 360's around the Statue of Liberty, no plans to attack us ... no nothing. All the while "Kenny Boy" bounds about, Rove and Cheney do all the thinking, Condi spends weekends with the boss, a few enlisted personnel take the fall for all the torture at Abu Ghraib, secret prisons around the world keep the car battery and rubber hose business in the black, Halliburton keeps getting paid and continues to cut checks to Cheney, New Orleans is left to rot like a damp rag, no one at the White House can remember Abramoff, Fitzgerald slips under a rock while Plame is let go, all this while Representative Murtha (a true patriot and hero) is keelhailed and swiftboated by the same nutcases who maintained that Kerry was a comie and coward.

I've been trying to get to the bottom of this world-class hallucination, only to slip on a new banana peel every news cycle. The new rant against Iran seems the same as the one used against Iraq. We're sitting atop 12,000 nuclear weapons and Russia is astride some 22,000. It is widely believed that Israel has a couple hundred of these little devils, though mum's the word ... Iran wants some

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## Jack Abramoff's House of Cards

Continued from page 15

Ralph Reed, another man of God. Together with Grover Norquist, the tax-cut fiend, Abramoff and Reed created the College Republicans National Committee, with Reed as its Executive Director. With the turn of the Millennium heralding not the return of the Messiah but rather the dawn of a new, vice-driven economy, Reed and Abramoff started a protection racket for gambling enterprises. For a fee, Reed would oppose any gambling project or pro-gambling legislation that you might designate. He was an anti-gambling crusader, and could credibly rustle up a lynch mob to hang gamblers of any stripe – riverboat gamblers, casino gamblers, lotto players, you name it. On the other hand, for a fee, he could just go interfere with someone else's livelihood.

The most brazen swindle was worked

upon the Texas-based Tigua Indian tribe, that had put its campaign contribution eggs in the wrong (Democratic) basket. In 1999, triumphant Texas Republicans, enjoying the results of DeLay's extensive vote-manipulation, were busy punishing them by closing their casino. Abramoff, working for the Louisiana Coushatta Tribe, hired Reed to rile up religious support to close the Tigua casino. Regarding the Tigua casino, Abramoff told Reed in an email, "We should continue to pile on until the place is shuttered," and later, "I wish those moronic Tiguas were smarter in their political contributions. I'd love us to get our mitts on that moolah!! Oh well, stupid folks get wiped out." A week after bemoaning the "moronic" attitude of the Tiguas, Abramoff and Scanlon offered to help the Tiguas reopen, concealing of course, the fact that they'd just shut them down. Tigua Tribal Governor Arturo Senclair testified before Congress that Abramoff and Scanlon "came in as knights in shining armor [and we] had not an inkling that they were doing anything against us." Desperate to reopen, the Tiguas paid Abramoff \$4.2 million in fees, and \$300,000 more for Republican and Democratic candidates, including \$32,000 the Tiguas paid to Congressman Bob Ney's political action committee. Ney duly supported an amendment to a House bill that would have aided the Tigua in their efforts to reopen, but ultimately the casino remained shuttered. The sin of supporting Democrats is not lightly forgiven in today's Texas. Bound together with their competition in a spiral of financial self-exploitation, the Tiguas, Coushattas, Saginaw Chippewas and Agua Cali-

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ente tribes jointly contributed \$30,000 to the Missouri Millennium Fund established by Sen. Kit Bond, a Missouri Republican, and attended several of the PAC's fund-raisers.

From 2000 – 2004, Abramoff and Reed played these good-cop-bad-cop games with the Indian tribes mentioned above, and others, ratcheting up the cost of influence peddling for the sin industry. Nowadays, thanks to negative campaigning by his opponent, Reed is taking a hiding in his campaign for Governor of Georgia, and has said he was assured he wouldn't be paid with gambling money. As if Abramoff had access to anything else! Memory loss is common for those who hold government office, though, and Reed has been Georgia's Lieutenant Governor for several years, so it's not surprising he can't remember those delicious years of squeezing the tribes for excess funds.

### What? Those Indians Want An Investigation?

According to the first public statement of The House Committee on Indian Affairs, that revealed some of its findings on September 29, 2004 after reviewing thousands of pages of emails and other documents, Abramoff

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## Jack Abramoff's House of Cards

*Continued from page 19*

garnered over \$66 million from Native American tribes by engaging in unlawful activities like backing tribal elections to put their pals in power so they could pay Abramoff more money, overcharging for services and products. Abramoff and Scanlon fleeced the gambling tribes as dynamically as the first generation of lawyers stole the entire West, using the same tools: firewater, manipulable chiefs, bogus agreements, and promises to make sure everything went all right with "The Great White Father." No less than their forebears, Abramoff and Scanlon were equipped with forked tongues, gold watches, and fountain pens. Plus, they had cell phones and Blackberries, with which they could refer to their Native American clients as "monkeys," "troglodytes," and "idiots." Thus, Abramoff arranged for the descendants of the original inhabitants of America to reconnect with their roots by playing the fools at the National Greed Olympics, duping the tribes into funding their abuse at the hands of people who hate and revile them, and take joy in bilking them out of what remains of their self-respect. Talk about "Manifest Destiny!"

### David Safavian Applies the Abramoff Method

David Safavian learned a few tricks about swindling Indians from Abramoff at Preston, and put them to work building the fortunes of his new lobbying shop, "Janus Merritt" with skinflint Grover Norquist. (Please note that Janus is the two-faced god of the Romans, an oddly appropriate description of how the Indian-swindling gambit worked.) Janus and Safavian took on a slew of Internet gambling clients, bringing in \$2.5 million from those accounts. But in 2000, Safavian apparently wanted to build his influence more than he wanted bags of cash. In Utah Republican Congressman Chris Cannon, who had been elected in 1996 on an anti-gambling platform, Safavian had found his bad cop.

Safavian seeded the relationship by donating, and arranging for two other Janus employees to donate a total of \$2,750 for Cannon's 2000 campaign. After getting Cannon elected, Safavian joined Cannon's staff in 2001, but kept both oars in the water, playing both staffer and lobbyist. He set up a soft-money fund for Cannon, but listed his Janus email address as the contact: [merittdc@aol.com](mailto:merittdc@aol.com). The email address remained on IRS filings while Safavian served as the congressman's chief of staff.

In an interview with the Federal Times Register, Safavian admitted: "In Congressman [Chris] Cannon's office, I was a chief of staff ... I was a lobbyist. Very much behind the scenes." From this two-faced position, Safavian was able to pay Janus the occasional disbursement. A short time after Safavian signed on with Cannon's staff, the Congressman paid \$7,500 to Janus, and the next year sent Janus another \$5,960.

Safavian's goal wasn't just swindling Indians, though. He had a slew of gambling clients who shared a simple agenda –keep the Net safe for losers to gamble their wages away in the privacy of their own home, garage, office, or nursing home. Nationally, the average online gambler is an elderly southerner on disability. These are the same people who chain-smoke and generate huge public health expenses due to their ignorance, while complaining about huge verdicts against Philip Morris and insisting on their right to smoke cancer sticks. Safavian had an idea that he put to work. Let the old, chain-smoking gamblers aid in their own destruction! So with the help of the online gambling entrepreneurs, he started a website called "Logon4choice.com" where visitors could contact their Congressional representatives and "urge them to preserve ... your rights to gamble online."

Eager to demonstrate his zeal, Safavian wrote one client the following breathless description of his lobbying activities on their behalf: "Our entire team has been essentially camped out on Capitol Hill and at the White House for the past two weeks ... urging the negotiators to reject any Internet gambling rider that might come up." On May 14, 2002, Safavian's efforts produced a valuable victory for Janus' gambling clients, when Cannon burdened two Internet-gambling bills with "virtuous riders" that would make horse and dog betting illegal. This was a for-sure deal-killer, because horse and dog betting is ubiquitous throughout the nation, and many Congress people represent constituencies that enjoy this form of gambling, including Illinois Republican and Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert. If the bill reached the floor, it would probably die. Cannon's virtuous insistence on taking on the dog and horse tracks torpedoed the legislation, allowing the Mormon Congressman to claim the moral high ground, while actually accomplishing what Safavian's clients wanted – the freedom to keep skimming about \$6 Billion per year in online gambling revenue from sick, poor, old, bored Americans. Safavian took credit for the achievement, telling his alumni magazine

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## Those Were The Days

Once upon a time there was this thing called acid rock, the pre-eminent practioners of which were not the Grateful Dead, but rather the spare, efficient power trio, Cream. For those of you looking for authorities to guide your search, Timothy Leary liked Cream, I'm quite sure, though I can't find a quote, so you can take it on faith or miss the show. For your baptism by fire in the fine work of this eminently gifted band, listen to the tunes on the double album *Wheels of Fire*.

Personnel on this exercise in deafening virtuosity were Eric Clapton, Jack Bruce, and Ginger Baker. These folks played so fast by the standards of those days, that rumor had it they sometimes consumed crystal meth, but I don't think so. Baker, the drummer, had an early career as a competitive bicyclist, and backed into drumming as a way to channel his endless tendency to bang rhythmically on everything in sight. His first audition was also his first time sitting at a drum kit, and the band, which hadn't wanted to audition him at all originally, replaced their old drummer with Baker after one listen. Jack Bruce, a bass player whose exploits are legend, made sure this band always walked with a strut, and never limped along with a lame beat, so several songs give vastly more scope to the rock bass than your average boogie riff. Aspiring bassists, take heed. Clapton, for my money, has never rocked this hard before or since. I loved him on *Derek and the Dominoes*, but nothing, repeat nothing, compares with the sizzling licks he jams into *Crossroads*, bringing out the dark spirits to ferry one more guitarist to play for their lord. And we all got to watch and listen. Those, indeed, were the days.

Here's a quick rundown of a few of my favorite tracks, though it hardly matters how you approach them – the album is a solid masterpiece, and genius has a way of



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making its own points:

*White Room* – Just as magnificently confused and visually highlighted as the look of the world about an hour after the listener consumes a hit of Orange Sunshine, this song casts its spell with exquisite, entrancing lyrics – “Silver horses ran down moonbeams in her dark eyes,” alternating with disconcerting rhymes like “Golden tigers crouched in jungles in her dark eyes,” sharing obscure, half-formed sorrows – “you swore that you would be there at the station,” and leaving the listener with nostalgia for an unknowable, unrecapturable world, glimpsed once, and lost forever.

*Sitting On Top of the World* – Constructed from gleaming, spiraling blue scales reflecting in the twisted mirrors of self-pity, this song of repentance takes a few sad lyrics and hangs them from the gallows to blow in the wind, a reminder that love will take its toll if we fail to take its measure.

*Passing the Time* – Introducing itself stupendously with blasts of bass and rhythm guitar resonant as a huge cathedral bell tolling the hour of doom, this song first segues into a contemplative canticle gentle as candlelight, then kicks into a rhythmic bridge as pumped up as a subway car rattling through station after station, a process that continues until Baker

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## A Law Unto Itself: The Vatican Rules

*Continued from page 3*

stratagems, such as the one that the Pope used when he finally did get served with a summons and complaint alleging priestly abuse by one of his robed band of spiritual warriors.

### A New Kind of Nation

The Pope got dismissed out of the lawsuit *tout suite*, because he is the Head of A Sovereign Nation – The Vatican. Okay, now I bet you thought it was cute the way the Romans let the Pope pretend to have his own government right in the middle of Rome. I always thought it was, even when I was a kid. It was like Disneyland, I thought, because a real country had like, an economy, and citizens, and principal exports, traditional cuisine, childrearing traditions, romantic cinema, and other things that the Vatican, a unisex institution, just will never have. As far as I could tell, the only thing the Church exports is incense smoke and papal encyclicals that tell women not to impede their reproductive cycle, and that no, they still can't perform the exalted ritual known as "the Mass." The Vatican is indeed a very different type of nation. It doesn't have, or need, pre-schools, grade schools, or high schools, but it's very big on college degrees. It doesn't have, or need, democracy, voting by its citizens, or a research and development budget to make sure the next generation will be economically competitive with the rest of the world's population. Apparently, however, in the eyes of the American courts, when an American sues the Vatican, all that matters is the paper certificate. The Vatican has what it needs -- stocks, bonds, real estate, enormous buildings full of hard assets, and millions of believers all across the United States. Four of those believers sit on the United States Supreme Court, and when Judge Alito is elevated, there will be five.

The Jesuits are great lawyers, having had to survive and drive the Inquisition by their wits alone. Any good Jesuit would agree that where there are valid distinctions between groups, there must be differences in the rules that apply to them. A "nation" that doesn't contribute to production by keeping the world in goods, or contributing to the job of keeping the species alive, doesn't qualify as a nation. And if no one considers a place to be their "homeland," as in "I was born there," then wherefore is it anyone's nation? The last Pope's homeland was Poland, and the current Pope's homeland is Germany. Neither of

them spoke Italian as their native language, and the current Pope no doubt prefers bratwurst and beer to pasta and wine. The Church teaches that reproduction of the species is God's will, but the Vatican produces no children, so as a nation, is it not violating God's will? Others might say that when the leaders of a nation assists its citizens to injure people under the guise of giving them spiritual education, then it is a fraudulent and degenerate nation. That would seem to be the case with the Catholic Church.

### The Philadelphia Grand Jury Findings

As we have learned through the sex abuse scandal, Church leaders across our nation aided and abetted serial sex criminals by maintaining their community status as venerated individuals and moving them to new parishes where their past conduct was unknown, where they could silently destroy the lives of another community of parishioners, then often enough, escape again with some money and a new place to go, when things once again got too hot. The Church was not just careless of letting abuse happen – it cloaked pedophile priests in secrecy, silenced accusations with a wall of denial, and fought legal claims tooth and nail. On September 15, 2005, a Philadelphia Grand Jury empaneled by District Attorney Lynne Abraham issued its report after three years spent studying a pattern of criminal conduct within the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. The report concluded that at least 63 priests – and likely a large number more -- sexually abused hundreds of minors over decades, aided by a coverup kept in place by the last two archbishops, Cardinals John Krol and Anthony J. Bevilacqua. Not mincing words, the report makes clear, "When we say abuse, we don't just mean 'inappropriate touching,' we mean rape. Boys who were raped orally, boys who were raped anally, girls who were raped vaginally." The report notes bitterly in its first pages that none of the abusers it had identified could be prosecuted, because "by choosing children as targets ... abuser priests ... were able to prevent or delay reports [and] statutes of limitations expired ... As a result, these priests and officials will necessarily escape criminal prosecution." Not only did the delay and secrecy erect successful legal defenses to criminal prosecution, it increased the number of victims and the severity of the abuse they suffered. The report stated, "Prompt action and a climate of compassion for the child victims could have significantly limited the damage done. But the Archdiocese chose a different path. Those choices

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# Jack Abramoff's House of Cards

*Continued from page 20*

that he managed the “minutiae of the legislative process,” from his ambiguous position as a lobbyist on Cannon’s staff. Two days after the fix was in, and the Internet gambling bills were dead, Safavian moved to a new job – Chief Procurement Officer for the General Services Administration (“GSA”). However, Cannon has developed a permanent addiction to gambling money, as the Kansas City Star reported in its August, 28, 2005 edition: “Along with the Viejas and the Choctaws, Cannon also enjoyed donations from ... the Agua Caliente tribe in California, the Saginaw Chippewa Indian tribe of Michigan and the Tigua Indian Reservation, the Morongo Band of Mission Indians and the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation.” Donations to Cannon from Indian gambling tribes increased from zero to over \$38,000 during the period of Safavian’s influence. The cost to the nation for this paltry sum was, of course, far higher.

## A Trip Most Wish They Had Missed

With it clear to all that the vice economy was treating them very well, Abramoff threw an international party trip to St. Andrew’s golfing range in Scotland for his posse. All of those who made the trip have lived to regret it, among them Tom DeLay, Abramoff himself, Bob Ney, Ralph Reed, and Safavian. Safavian told the Washington Post he’d paid back \$3,100 for his expenses, saying the trip was “primarily for golfing,” and “had no business orientation to it.” Unfortunately for him, this was a documentable lie. In emails months before the trip, Abramoff had lobbied Safavian extensively to get something that he thought Safavian had it in his power to grant – sweetheart lease deals on two tasty pieces of Federal real estate – the Old Post Office in Washington, D.C., and a rural estate of several hundred acres. Abramoff had even sent Safavian some draft letters that he could have some Congressmen sign to support the idea of leasing the properties to Abramoff’s front groups. As the incriminating emails sat in his inbox, however, Safavian solicited an opinion from a government “ethics lawyer” about whether he could fly to Scotland with Abramoff and his crew. Safavian lied to the ethics lawyer, however, saying he had no pending business with Abramoff, and would pay for his own expenses. The ethics lawyer said he could take the trip.

When the Indian Affairs committee started sniffing

around, Safavian stuck by his lie, and showed them the receipt for \$3,100 that he said had covered the costs of the trip. He of course did not produce copies of his emails with Abramoff about the Old Post Office and the other federal property they were trying to hijack. Further, the \$3,100 number is too low, because Safavian’s expenses for lodging alone on this luxury trip, which included a stopover in London and golfing at several top-knotch golf courses in the British Isles, certainly far exceeded that expense. These small concealments were revealed when Greenberg, Traurig, the lobbying firm where Abramoff went after he left Preston, kicked Abramoff out, and gave all of his emails to the FBI.

## Loot, Loot, Who Gives A Hoot?

Greenberg donned a white hat with alacrity once its partners saw that a wind had begun to blow, threatening Abramoff’s house of cards, but telling that story requires introducing you to yet another Republican lawyer with less scruples than an old meth head has teeth. This one’s name is Timothy Flanigan, and despite his Irish name, he’s a Mormon who got his undergraduate degree from BYU, his law degree from University of Virginia, has fourteen kids, and until November 21, 2004, worked in the White House directly under Alberto Gonzales. He left the West Wing for a trip through the revolving door the White House shares with Tyco Corporation, which had been hammered by the markets for allowing Dennis Kozlowski to loot it, and needed to improve its corporate governance procedures to nudge its stock price back into the double-digits. What better way to burnish your bonafides than to tap the personnel of the most scandal-ridden administration since Andrew Jackson’s?

Once in the top lawyer spot at Tyco, what did Flanigan do? He gave Greenberg, Traurig \$2 Million of Tyco’s money for lobbying services to thwart the enactment of laws then pending in Congress that would deprive Tyco of a huge tax loophole it was exploiting by offshoring paper assets in Bermuda. After accomplishing this important private-sector task of thwarting the enactment of legislation hazardous to tax loopholes, Flanigan’s former boss Alberto Gonzales beckoned Flanigan to hop back into bed with government, offering him the position of Assistant Attorney General, the nation’s Number Two Prosecutor, reporting directly to Gonzales. However, coming fast on the heels of the Katrina disaster, the Mike Brown cronyism flap, the indictment of Scooter Libby,

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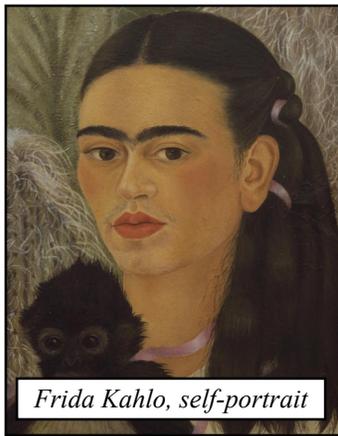
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Frida Kahlo, self-portrait

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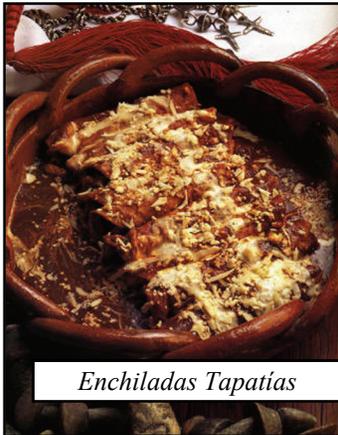
- 24 small tortillas
- Oil
- 8 to 10 ancho chiles, roasted and devined
- 2 cups boiling water
- 1/2 large onion, chopped
- 2 small garlic cloves
- 2 tablespoons oil
- Salt

- 1 1/2 chicken breasts, cooked and shredded
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1/2 pound añejo cheese, crumbled (or parmesan)

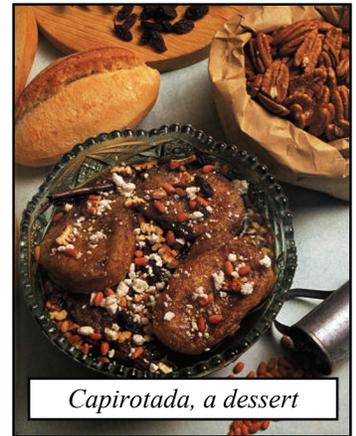
Fry the tortillas very briefly in hot oil. Dip in sauce, fill with chicken, and roll up. Arrange on a serving platter, top with more sauce, then with sour cream. Sprinkle with crumbled cheese.

To make the sauce, soak the chiles in the boiling water for about 10 minutes. Puree and drain. Sauté the onion and garlic in hot oil until translucent. Add the puree and salt to taste. Cook for about 10 minutes to blend the flavors.

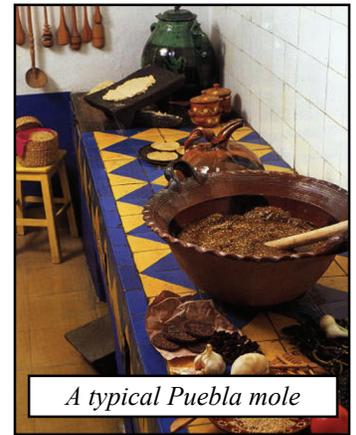
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Enchiladas Tapatías



Capirotada, a dessert



A typical Puebla mole

## A Law Unto Itself: The Vatican Rules

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went all the way to the top – to Cardinal Bevilacqua and Cardinal Krol personally.” “Even those victims whose physical abuse did not include actual rape – those who were subjected to fondling, to masturbation, to pornography – suffered psychological abuse that scarred their lives and sapped the faith in which they had been raised.” The Grand Jury concluded that although “the behavior of Archdiocese officials was perhaps not so lurid as that of the individual priest sex abusers ... in its callous, calculating manner, the Archdiocese's 'handling' of the abuse scandal was at least as immoral as the abuse itself.”

### Organized Crime or Random Perverts?

One thing is clear from observing the movements of the Catholic Bishops – they listen to Rome. There are occasionally some disagreements, but Catholics are expected to march in line or get out of the Church. So since it is in fact the case that the truth was hidden in Philadelphia, and in Boston, and in Chicago, Los Angeles, Portland, Phoenix, and every other big city with a Catholic pedophile lawsuit in progress, perhaps those orders

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## Those Were The Days

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takes us all the way home in a drum solo that just fades away, bringing us back once more to Windwood's soft melodic lullaby, which puts us sweetly to bed. What a way to pass the time – try it and you'll see what we hip-pies were so hipped about.

*Pressed Rat and Warthog* – Is this song, many have asked themselves, Mere Nonsense, doggerel, the product of hash brownies and an aimless wander through the stacks of odd nomenclature? Perhaps, but meaning isn't everything. By the end of this musical vignette, we truly feel for Pressed Rat and his partner Warthog, and are absolutely certain that the world will be the poorer for the lack of their admittedly idiosyncratic wares: "atonal apples and amplified heat, and Pressed Rat's collection of dog's legs and feet." Musically, the song reminds me of a rock fugue, with guitar, drum, and bass weaving counterpoint themes, occasionally punctuated by a stately, respectful trumpet.

*Politician* – Lugubrious, luxurious, unctuous, and crass, the lyrics in this song are unabashedly male – "Baby, get into my big black car, Just wanna show ya' what my politics are." Bruce's bass rhythm wanders like a fat man trying to choose between chocolates, cheesecake, power, and sex. Clapton's guitar expresses a confusion of emotions, wandering in the privileged jungle of temptation, a magnificent web of tones stretching and bending each other into sweeter and sweeter distortion, until the song thunders to a conclusion with Baker escorting the motorcade along like a whole squad of Harley-riding cops, vanishing into the clefts of the skyscraper-scarred horizon.

*Those Were The Days* – If you like majestic songs, you'll like this one, which opens with the ringing of stately bells. Windwood tunes his voice to a soft, reflective timbre to sing an anthem glorifying the golden days of Atlantis, firmly backed by Baker working the tom-toms and his double-bass bass drums gently, softly, perhaps to avoid waking the spirits who might hear.

*Crossroads* – Ah if only boogie could be like this all the time. Clapton doesn't really need a lot of help as he renders a great guitarist's homage to this blues classic by Robert Johnson. Legend has it that if a bluesman goes alone to the crossroads with his guitar on a moonless night, he'll meet the devil, and the devil will take his soul in exchange for the magic power to master the instrument. This song seems to express a corollary belief that the only way to come out right on the deal is to play so fucking fast that even the hellhound is left in the dust, howling "unfair!"

*Spoonful* – Willie Dixon rests easy in his grave when he hears this tune. With Bruce and Clapton thumbing the fat strings, the opening bars stomp towards us like a hoodlum, only to reveal a beautiful lyric like a diamond necklace offered to his girl: "Night spilled spoonful of diamonds, Night spilled spoonful of gold, Just a little touch of your precious love, Will satisfy my soul." The jamming on this song is extended, but you know, joints were rolled fatter, and burned longer, back in those days. *Carlos Ramone*

## Prevaricators Perched to Pounce

*Continued from page 18*

action and it looks like it might just get some, in the form of another pre-emptive strike from the US or Israel. Sitting back in the armchair of my mind, it seems strange that the country with the largest or second largest stockpile of WMD's, the USA, was in such an urgent froth to invade and occupy Iraq, which, as it turns out, had none. We've managed to kill 100,000+ Iraqis, while suffering too many casualties of our own. Those who swore to us that this invasion was a matter of urgent national security have all been promoted or showered with medals. When it turns out that the reasons were bogus, we restated that our goal was really to deliver Democracy to the Middle East, whether they want it or not. Though the results of the latest "elections" are weeks overdue, it would appear that the "duly elected" government will be dominated by an Iranian look-alike theocracy. In terms that make it more readily comprehensible, it would be like Pat Robertson being elected Pope.

Not to worry, folks. The Cheney/Rove machine will soon have half the country waving flags and spitting at television screens as we are again told that death is at the door and only a shoot first, ask questions very much later cowboy can save us from certain destruction. In the background please notice that Iraq has the second largest oil reserves in the world and Iran is astride 10% of the total. Looks like our military bases in Iraq will soon be touted as Lighthouses of Liberty in these dark times of terror, there to enlighten the distracted masses as to the manifold benefits of Jeffersonian Democracy, this while they are engaged in a Civil War. In the background Halliburton will be patriotically extracting every drop of crude possible for the enrichment of America's most wealthy.

For the rest of us: Get a skateboard, you losers!

Stay tuned as I employ a slew of notions and potions to arrive at the doorsteps of those who deceive us most.

## A Law Unto Itself: The Vatican Rules

*Continued from page 25*

from the top. Perhaps Cardinals Krol and Bevilacqua in Philadelphia “were just following orders.” Perhaps Cardinal Law, who was virtually run out of Boston by a lynch mob outraged that he had hidden pedophiles in the archdiocese for decades, was also just following orders. Right after he lit out of Boston, he landed in Rome, where the previous Pope gave him a cushy position as a Church diplomat.

So did the prior Pope tell his Archbishops to stall this thing? Our current Pope could answer this question. Formerly Cardinal Ratzinger, the new Pope knows at least as much as he could learn from reading every report of priestly sexual impropriety for the last several years. That was his job under the former Pope, and the word is, he didn’t advise anyone to start writing settlement checks. At this time, not many Catholic lawyers are proposing settlement. The Vatican has been around two-thousand years, and it’s not about to lay down its arms over a little hanky-panky in the sacristy. Consider how the faithful, with sheeplike docility, are still dropping money in the pot, wondering if it will be used to pay lawyers to silence the claims of people who got a nasty dose of bad religion, and deserve compensation. More than anything, the scandal needs a thorough airing, and the chips need to start falling.

### Grooming Victims In Sunday School

The usual belief is that, since religions do more good on balance than harm, we can tolerate a little pedophilia in the ranks of the virtuous. That seems to be the rule that explains why we tolerate hypocritical exploiters who wear robes. They talk about the meek inheriting the earth, as if that seems likely to happen; they promise

## Jack Abramoff's House of Cards

*Continued from page 23*

and the nomination of Harriet Miers to the Supreme Court, Flanigan’s nomination came up looking like something the cat dragged in.

Flanigan did poorly under the lights of a Congressional inquiry, and had a particularly hard time explaining why, as soon as he switched over from his job in the White House, he hired Abramoff to rig legislation for Tyco, a company that had just packed its last CEO off to prison, and had been hoping for an ethics makeover, not a fur-

peace in the afterlife, which is like selling insurance no one can ever collect; they preach patience during life, and acquiescence to authority. But all of these nice characteristics won’t keep your average pedophile out of jail. Experience shows that pedophiles do develop a pleasant exterior that is attractive to children. They listen to children, and respond to what they say. They groom their victims for victimhood by building a relationship of trust. Priests have much of this work done for them by parents and Sunday school.

### From Hitler Youth To St. Peter’s

Ordinary perverts don’t enjoy priestly immunity for a simple reason – they haven’t earned it. To get people to overlook your faults, you must give them something in return. It’s not easy to go to seminary, study all that theology, and pay all that tuition. The current Pope, for example, actually had to pretend to be a member of the Hitler Youth to keep his scholarship for theological seminary. He explained that last year when he was being made into the first German Pope in centuries, and some people worried about the Germans getting too excited about it. Because Cardinal Ratzinger had been in Hitler Youth, he wanted people to understand that he got out of the organization officially as soon as he could, and thereafter just pretended to be a Nazi. This evoked some dubious looks among people who remember how upset the Nazis would get when they found out that one of their number wasn’t really a good German at heart. Pretending to be a Nazi could be very dangerous. So perhaps the new Pope was a specially brave man, pretending to be a Nazi so he could become a priest and someday, Pope.

### That Crazy Thing Called Faith

Socially, the Church is in a very strong position because it

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ther descent into sleaze. The questions sharpened when it was revealed that, of the \$2 Million Tyco paid Greenberg, Traurig for lobbying services, Abramoff had stolen over \$1.5 Million, redirecting it to his own companies. Doubt turned to disbelief when Flanigan, who had come on board at Tyco to protect it from further looting, was unable to explain why he had not discovered Abramoff’s theft of Tyco money before Greenberg, Traurig. As the Washington Post reported on October 8, 2005:

*In April 2004, Greenberg Traurig informed Tyco that Abramoff had misspent \$1.5 million of the more than \$2 million that Tyco had paid him in lobbying fees, by diverting the funds to -*

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## Jack Abramoff's House of Cards

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*companies that Abramoff controlled. Flanigan assured the committee, in his written answers, that he had cooperated in the firm's investigation and also that Tyco had turned over pertinent evidence to the Justice Department. But the Democrats then wondered why Flanigan - who said he was "shocked and disappointed" by Greenberg Traurig's disclosure - had not caught the alleged misconduct himself. Flanigan responded that Abramoff had fooled even his own employer.*

The obvious answer, that Flanigan could not speak for fear of going directly to jail without passing go, was that the money was not for lobbying, but a straightforward wealth transfer from the private sector of the Republican scam operation to the government sector of the same operation. In this scenario, people like Flanigan further the greater good, not only of Tyco, but of the entire world, by giving it away in neat little stacks to Republican lawmakers, who make the world safe for all of us. This makes Tyco shareholders kind of altruistic, but in the brave new world of governance by an elite corps of public/private servants, we must make allowances for these new arrangements.

The corruption of Republican lawmakers by a flood of money drawn from gambling interests has been widespread and extensive. While the identities of many remain undisclosed, the list is expected to get about sixty names long. We have spoken of Tom DeLay and Bob Ney, both of whom decided to shed their leadership posts in Congress after they were identified anonymously in the plea agreements that Abramoff and Scanlon have agreed to. With Abbe Lowell in possession of numberless incriminating documents, there is every possibility that a plethora of deals are in the offing, because the rule in Federal prosecutions is that the first ones to roll on their pals get the best deals. Honesty becomes the best policy when your lies have been found out. Mary Butler, with her methodical approach, is very likely to bag her limit of slimy bottom-fish, but some people are wondering if Abramoff and one of his partners are literally going to get away with murder.

### **I Steal Your Gambling Company – You Complain – I Kill You**

Murder of whom, you ask? Of Konstantin "Gus" Boulis, the former owner of SunCruz, a Florida cruise line that specialized in "trips to nowhere" or better put, anywhere

far enough offshore that Florida and US gambling laws wouldn't apply. Apparently the boats were popular places, because as you can deduce, if gambling laws don't apply, then none of the other laws do, either. *Welcome To Terrorland*, Daniel Hopsicker's book about flight schools in South Florida, reports that Mohammed Atta, leader of the 911 hijackers, a strip-bar habitué and a cokehead, enjoyed the pleasures available on SunCruz facilities. Boulis' floating dens of iniquity plied the waters off the Florida coast for several years with nothing more than minor harassment, but Boulis' happy days came to an end on August 3, 1998, when Federal authorities filed a sealed, civil complaint against Boulis, alleging he purchased some of his SunCruz gambling boats before he became a U.S. citizen. On February 10, 2000, Boulis threw in the towel and agreed to sell SunCruz within 36 months and never go back into the gaming industry.

Abramoff, smelling blood in the water, began maneuvering to acquire SunCruz, and got his friends in Washington to turn up the heat. On March 30, 2000, Bob Ney entered a statement into the congressional record attacking Boulis. On September 27, 2000 Boulis contracted to sell SunCruz to Abramoff, Adam Kidan, and a third partner, Ben Waldman, for \$147.5 million, following a protracted nine-day closing in Manhattan. Ney spoke up again in Congress after the deal was closed, praising the new management as a great change for the better. Boulis kept a silent 10 percent interest, and accepted a \$20 million promissory note in lieu of the \$23 million cash down payment. Within a few months, though, both parties declared that the deal had gone bad.

By the end of 2000, Kidan and Boulis had publicly accused each other of lying and cheating, and Kidan told reporters Boulis was trying to kill him. It was just another prequel to what looked to be acrimonious litigation, but someone decided that Boulis had enjoyed enough of the good life in South Florida, and shot him to death as he drove home from his Ft. Lauderdale office. The police said there were no suspects, but the Boulis estate sued Kidan in Broward Circuit Court, alleging in their complaint that Kidan was linked to various organized crime figures. In Florida, the facts emerge slowly, like a bloated body rising from the depths of a swamp. Kidan and Abramoff had looted SunCruz rapaciously, leaving nothing to pay Boulis for the business he had built like an ordinary decent gambling magnate. The October 2, 2005 Miami Herald reported the following facts in an article entitled "Kidan's Story Stranger Than

Fiction:"

*Court records show that Kidan, along with Abramoff, drew a \$500,000 annual salary; rented a \$4,500 condo on Williams Island in Aventura; bought a 34-foot powerboat for \$90,000; and leased an armored Mercedes-Benz for \$207,000. Kidan and Abramoff also diverted \$310,000 in SunCruz money to pay for a luxury skybox at FedEx Field, home of the Washington Redskins, according to court documents. It was part of Abramoff's Republican fundraising enterprise at that stadium, Camden Yards and MCI Center in the Baltimore-Washington area. Kidan also tapped SunCruz coffers to pay about \$250,000 to Moscatiello and Ferrari, who claimed to be a relative of Gambino boss Gotti, for catering and security services.*

So that's not bad – a half a million in salary each for both Abramoff and Kidan, over three-hundred grand to fete politicians in a "skybox" at FedEx Field, forty-five hundred a month for an island condo, and a paltry ninety-grand for a cigarette boat to get there. After downing all those goodies, it was a no-brainer to pay Moscatiello and Ferrari a quarter-million to clinch the deal by silencing the clueless Boulis, who didn't know when he'd been fleeced by a couple of guys who were on the Republican sweetheart list. What is particularly tasty is the fact that, during all of this looting of a gambling boat company, Abramoff, Reed, and Safavian were intensively engaged in strategically blocking the expansion of Indian gambling casinos.

After Boulis' murder, Kidan tried to pull a corporate coup by putting SunCruz in bankruptcy, but the Boulis estate bought out Kidan in bankruptcy court, and until April 7, 2003, held control of the company. Eventually, a bankruptcy judge authorized sale of SunCruz for \$36.1 Million to a group led by Boulis' nephew, Spiros Naos. As the bankruptcy court proceedings were creeping along, in May 2002, Lenders Foothill Capital and Citadel, who had backed Abramoff and Kidan with funding based on the \$20 Million transfer, alleged that Abramoff and Kidan's payment to Boulis had indeed been fraudulent. Then, in November 2002, a Federal grand jury began investigating the SunCruz sale and financing.

The other shoe dropped loudly on September 27, 2005, when Fort Lauderdale police arrested three men for Boulis's murder: Anthony Ferrari and James Fiorillo were arrested in Florida, and Anthony Moscatiello was arrested in New York. Moscatiello, described by the Miami Herald as "Kidan's pal," has longstanding affiliations with the Gambino crime family headed for years by "Silver Don" John Gotti. Although Kidan claims he met Moscatiello

through the restaurant business, police say Moscatiello's true occupation was as an enforcer for a Mafia loan sharking operation.

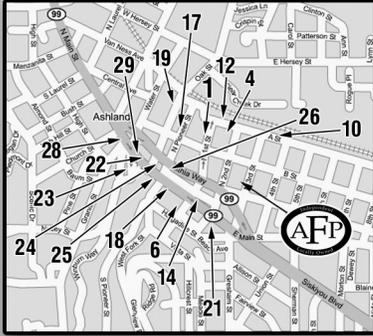
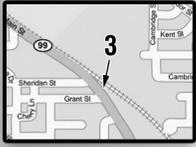
No stranger to mob violence himself, Kidan's own mother was murdered in what was called a "botched mob robbery" in Florida by the Bonanno crime family. But Kidan found a silver lining in that cloud, skimming \$15,000 in funds posted as a reward for information concerning the murder, a trick that cost him his New York law license. So you see, not all of Abramoff's friends are lawyers. Some of them used to be.

### **Let's Make A Deal**

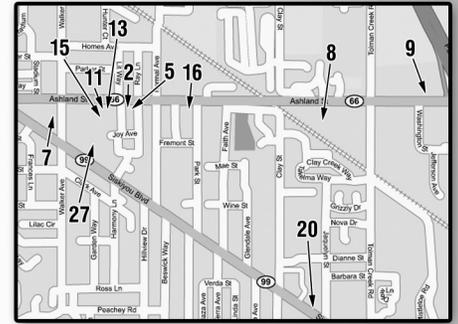
With this storm of flying fecal material whirling about their heads, it is no wonder that Kidan and Abramoff both decided to plead to the Florida SunCruz fraud indictments. Kidan's deal should net out at under five years, and Abramoff has been assured that any time that is imposed in the Florida case will likely "run concurrent" with the years he's assessed in the corruption case. In other words, the SunCruz fraud is a twofer for Abramoff. While their admissions of guilt in the SunCruz case don't foreclose prosecution for murder in Florida state court, Abramoff is likely to be a very busy, and still very important man for the next several years. With Abbe Lowell as his choirmaster, his stool-pigeon performance will be orchestrated for maximum advantage to Abramoff, and minimal disclosure to the public. Lowell will sell every bit of information as dearly as he can, and whatever the look on Abramoff's face says, it does not bespeak repentance. His canny mind is unfazed, and he will attempt to finger his former associates with an eye to preserving future benefit and paying off old scores.

Certainly many powerful Republicans are quaking silently in their richly-paneled government offices. These people thought they were on the fast track with Jack Abramoff, but they didn't realize how crazy, how wild and uncircumspect their partner in greed would become. Few expected Greenberg, Traurig to put him on the pavement and turn over his emails to the FBI. There may be a silver lining for true conservatives, however. Since most Washington politicians and operatives are lawyers, and since conviction of a felony results in a canceled law license in all fifty states, Abramoff may have unwittingly advanced the stated Republican goal of reducing the number of lawyers in government. A goodly number of politicians may need to trim their resumes of legal qualifications, and add some references from the Bureau of Prisons, once Abramoff's house of cards completely collapses. *Charles Carreon*

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## A Law Unto Itself: The Vatican Rules

*Continued from page 27*

controls minds through tradition and something its adherents call faith. It is strange that they call it faith, because that is what Islamics say informs their belief in a different Deity, and the same is true for the Jews, and the Hindus, etcetera. They all cite faith as the ground of their belief, but it results in belief in different things. But when people work jointly to generate a concrete result, they do not speak of faith. Prayers for rain are abandoned in favor of drilling a well or digging a ditch. Hoping for manna to fall is replaced by hunting for squirrels and pulling up roots. But if a concrete result does not have to be produced, people are comfortable relying on faith to produce it. So most expectations based on faith are scheduled for fulfillment in the afterlife. Donations to the Church, however, have to be made now. It was ever thus.

### Serving God by Serving Mammon

Financially, the Church is in good shape. Too good a shape up in Portland, it turns out, to stay in bankruptcy. When the Archdiocese of Portland sprung a stinky leak in its scandal-soaked legal Attends, its lawyers dragged it into bankruptcy court, claiming it needed protection from its creditors. Nobody had ever noticed priests bouncing checks at the liquor store, or short a dollar in a local strip

bar, so it took many people by surprise. Well, it turns out they're still flush, and all the dancing around like one of Disney's hippos in Fantasia, trying to hide its full-hipped bottom line, was just a ruse. The Archdiocese is stuffed with real estate and other eminently saleable assets, but Archbishop John Vlazny will be damned before he lets a penny of it go to sex abuse plaintiffs until he has exhausted every possible legal maneuver and paid his Catholic lawyer friends every dollar in fees he can squeeze out of the collection basket. So in an effort to wedge its ungracious bulk into the the framework of "insolvency," the Archdiocese left all of its juicy real estate off the schedule of assets in bankruptcy. How did the Church lawyers explain this brazen stratagem? Because "under Church law," that property was owned by various official and unofficial Church sub-entities, and couldn't be touched to satisfy the debts of the Archdiocese. Fortunately, the bankruptcy judge checked to see that there was an American eagle on the wall and not a man bleeding on a cross, and instead of genuflecting, told the Church lawyers to file a schedule with *all* the property on it.

### Time to Reconsider Whether The Vatican Is Our Friend

As always, the Church lawyers will quickly deploy another roadblock to slow the advance of claims. Like the Philadelphia Grand Jury said, describing the delaying tactics of the archdiocese – "the biggest crime of all is this:

it worked." Yes, it works. Justice delayed *is* justice denied, and no one yet has exceeded the Vatican's skill in outlasting its foes. But these days, the smell of false piety is insufficient to mask the stench of corruption, and the reek should motivate us to get to the bottom of the rot. We should begin by dismantling the mistaken description of the Vatican as a sovereign nation and the Pope as a Head of State. The Pope should no more be considered a head of state than Sun Myung Moon, who crowned himself in the Sam Rayburn building, or Bubba Free John, who owns an island in Fiji.

The Church's reputation for sanctity is remade in every generation out of the pure new cloth spun from the hearts of fresh believers. The Church will never cease cultivating this illusion in the minds of those predisposed by birth or sentiment to believe that Jesus founded One True Church. But for those of us who live in secular, political reality, and have been reading history, not catechism, a new viewpoint is overdue. The Church is not a country, and if a clutch of Archbishops hide criminal acts committed by priests in our country, because the Pope directed them to do so, then the Pope can and should be sued. The current Pope may have had actual knowledge of the scope and severity of the clergy abuse scandal in this country, and ordered the continued strategy of concealment. The bankruptcy judge in Portland had the right idea – the law of our nation, not "Church law" should apply in our courts. The Texas judge who dismissed the lawsuit against the Pope erred by subordinating our laws to the pretensions of a religious sect that claims national autonomy despite its lack of a truly national character. With literally billions of dollars in claims from abused victims gathering on the horizon, and the assets of the Vatican itself at stake, the issue of Papal immunity from civil liability will eventually come before a Supreme Court with five Catholic justices. When that case comes before the Court, a lot will depend on Alito.

*Lo-Fi Nikita*



## TWINTOWERS

*by Michael Wear*

*As Below so Above ...  
When Everything feeds on Others,  
Does it not make you Un-easy,  
Perhaps slightly Dis-easy?  
Sanguine the smile of the fittest,  
To Glorify Somebody's God,  
And prey on Lesser Relatives,  
Rudimentary Intelligence ...  
Collateral Damage ...*

*Striking Terror among their kind,  
'Tis the Future of mankind,  
Pale the Pustule of the Kind  
In War and Strife we find,  
No Respite from woe and grief  
In this Century 21 ...*

*From suffering we find no relief, Like  
flossing your teeth the smell of death, Sweet  
the scenes of Macbeth ... Compared to this*

*Age of Ours,*

*All in the name of Right,  
The might of Peace in Flight...  
Voltaire was right when he said:  
Earth is the Asylum to which, The  
rest of the Universe ...  
Sends its Lunatics.*

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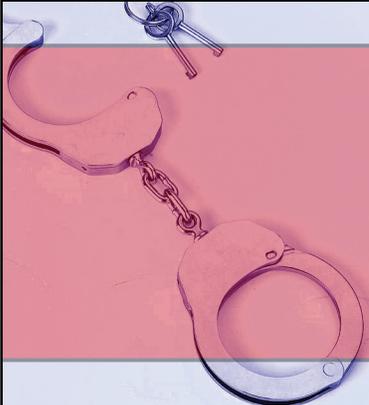
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**-- Billy Graham**



# Don't Let a DUI Ruin Your Life!

Peter Carini  
PJC Law Group



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### You Drink. You Drive. You Lose...Another Government Lie?

It is legal to drive a car after drinking alcohol. That said, you may be arrested anyway because of the factual distortions and omissions taught to our local police by mandatory training and testing on the written materials provided by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). When truth and science gets in the way of the agenda of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, NHTSA yields. MADD definition of drunk driving is driving after drinking any amount of alcohol...period. In essence, this is what our police are instructed to believe, and why you will probably be arrested if you admit to drinking alcohol...even though you are fine! To that extent you do lose, but you shouldn't.

DUI is considered by some to be the witch-hunt of the new millennium. If you thought that the public had been riled up against citizens accused of being communists during the McCarthy era... think about what the governments "public service announcements" have done to strip us of the presumption of innocence in DUI cases? You Drink. You Drive. You Go To Jail! If You Drink And Drive You Will Lose More Than Your License! You Drink. You Drive. You Lose! These

government paid for, MADD endorsed, advertisements are pure scare tactics and have an insidious, subconscious effect on potential jurors. This increased hysteria and the "dumbing down" of the definition of what is an "impaired" driver to include responsible social drinkers has logical yet absurd ramifications. Based on the current police officer (MADD endorsed) definition of the term "impaired", some people (logically) are asking why isn't a crime to drive while fatigued, or ill, or old, or on the cell phone, or with screaming children in the car, or animals in the car, or eating, or drinking,, or smoking, or taking allergy medication, or taking prescribed medications even when you doctor says it is O.K. to drive, or speeding... because each one of those driving factors cause the same if not more "impairment" than the social drink. Should those folk go to jail? THINK IT OVER. Do we have to drive with the precision and coordination of Air Force fighter pilots on pure, military grade, methamphetamines in order to be deemed "safe" drivers by law enforcement?

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