

The “Lewis Family”

As my friendship with Bill and Jerry quickly deepened, I came to know Jerry’s appropriations staffer Letitia White. Brent was especially swarmy when dealing with Leticia and he made clear that while Jerry was “the Man,” Letitia got it done. Brent never registered as a lobbyist, instead relying upon a lawyer, Richard Bliss, to run that profile. Richard had been a front man for Reagan’s campaign, and I think I recall Wilkes mentioning they had also worked together on restoring Kennedy’s yacht. Brent loved talking about Kennedy’s exploits as a womanizer and always joked that he wanted to restore the USS Sequoia so it could again be used for the purposes to which JFK once employed it. He was enamored with philandering and would always speak to it. When I originally asked him how he had built such a close relationship with Bill, Jerry, and some of the other Congressmen that I had met, he relayed to me a story of when his buddy Dusty was posted in Honduras during the Sandinistas and Contra conflict in the ‘80s.

Apparently, Brent was working in DC at the time and was looking to meet people, find financing and all those good things, when Dusty offered to coordinate with Brent and Bill junkets to Central America. El Salvador and Honduras were their mainstays. Bill was then a member of Congress with some oversight to the matter and Brent was set up to be kind of a civilian “handler” and event guide. The story quickly degenerated to the high point which was multi-day orgies hosted at some generalissimo’s ranch. Wilkes relayed how the generals would use the army to round up a bunch of teenage girls from the neighboring villages and they would all have their way with them. Drinking, smoking cigars and debauching teenagers, what more could anyone ask for, he would say with obvious glee. The girls were prevented from leaving and if anyone wanted a change of menu, all you had to do was ask the General and he would round up some more. Presumably he had a lot of incentive to keep Congress and the CIA happy, and to hear it from Brent they did a very good job.

The show seemed to carry on in Washington as well. Having succeeded in inserting our conversion project into the Defense Appropriation Subcommittee’s budget recommendations after careful navigation by Congressman Lewis, Brent borrowed a boat from Richard Bliss and invited Bill, a staffer, myself, Letitia, and her husband to cruise up the Potomac to enjoy Sunday brunch in Georgetown. We certainly had cause to celebrate given that the test program I sponsored had achieved a consensus of support

in only a couple of months, although it is notable that the final step in the process was fraught with peril. Jerry had cautioned me that despite the Committee's support, the wording of the Bill's appropriation had to be absolutely specific to our objectives or the Pentagon would take the money and implement their own interpretation of how to spend it. To ensure that our intended designee, the Defense Logistics Agency, would be the resultant recipient, Lewis asked Letitia to literally escort me down into the inner bowels of the Rayburn building to dictate the language myself.

The Defense Appropriation's staff was housed within a rat's warren of offices located near a steam room in the basement of the structure. There were heating ducts networked overhead in every direction, such that the setting reminded me of Terry Gilliam's 1985 movie "Brazil". Much to my surprise she led me directly over to a word processor, asked the staffer working on it to step back and then promptly brought up the framework of the Subcommittee's budget bill. Letitia then placed the cursor in the appropriate position and politely asked that I write the Bill exactly like I wanted it to appear. I noticed that the displaced staff member not only registered no reluctance to give up his seat, he yawned and said he was going to get some coffee. His passive demeanor made it obvious that having strangers intervene in the editing of bills was not unusual, or in any way out of the ordinary course of how the Committee managed its affairs.

As soon as I sat down before the screen and began to gather my thoughts in preparation for commencing typing, everyone walked out of the room. That brief commotion causing my mind to again return to the movie Brazil. In my imagination I had now morphed from Sam Lowry, no relation to Bill, into Harry Tuttle and true to his character I was freelancing my subversion by taking over the Committee's word processor. Literally, my hands were touching the keys to a kingdom of riches and the techno-jargon that I was typing-in could appear to be solely written in order to waste "the Ministry's time and paper". It was hysterical to me to find myself alone and in that position. I will admit to feeling giddy inside. Undeterred by all my internal laughing, I finished up the language to my liking, moved the cursor to the task bar and clicked on the save icon. Bingo - now it was time to celebrate!

It was a beautiful day for brunch and the champagne was flowing right from the moment we left the marina's dock. We had a great time. The "USS Bliss" docked directly below the restaurant, and we dined on their outdoor patio overlooking the river. Even President and Mrs. Clinton were there, looking

painfully polite as they listened throughout their meal to a very talkative guest. The President waved to the crowd that had gathered as they left in their motorcade, and we laughingly waved back. It was an afternoon not to be forgotten. Letitia was having an especially good time and Brent, as a result, was beaming. I later found out in a news article that she had decided to buy shares in Audre around this time, which was either astute or an industrious use of non-public information. I had noticed ever since Audre's stock rapidly rose before we were even notified that we were being awarded a subcontract in the ADMAPS program that government insiders played the market, using their informed position to take unfair advantage of the public. It would seem that this occasion would be no exception, as both Letitia and her tobacco lobbyist husband were obviously quite familiar with the inner workings of Washington.

Bill Lowery especially seemed to be having a good time and the staffer he spent most of the afternoon locked in conversation with appeared to be someone he knew well. I guess I got that right as he humped her all the way back to the marina. The part that made it a little tough to take, putting aside the detail that he was married at the time, was the fact that they didn't bother to close the stateroom door. Lowery's butt looked like the crest of a white beluga, furiously pumping up and down as our boat forged ahead through the chop of the river. To make it easier on the eyes, we all retreated to the flying bridge and closed the hatch to below deck.

I was now one of the fellowship, the "Lewis Family" as Jerry called it and all formality was a fond memory. Lewis had gone to great lengths to describe how he considered his friends, key staff, close colleagues, and a select group of contributors his "family." And like a family, everyone stuck together and looked out for the collective good; with each doing what they did best. He was starting to act and sound like a mafia Don, but a very kind and nurturing one, just so long as you did not cross him. Jerry also made it clear that he had a long memory for his friends and a longer one for his adversaries. Bill and Jerry were very interested in my becoming Bill's first lobbying client and one day Bill took Brent and me over to a building close by the Capitol that would house his new office. We carefully walked the upper floor Bill was having built out in an expansion of an existing lobbying firm that he was joining. He proudly showed me where his new corner office would be located and relayed how his firm was comprised of former democratic members. Bill was there to bring in the moderate republicans and in combination, he assured me they could provide coverage for everything.

I knew Bill had to wait a year before he could lobby his former defense committee regarding Audre's interests, and it gave me pause. I also wondered why I needed Bill in addition to Brent or if I was going to be put in a position to choose. It was also not apparent if Brent was going to replace Richard Bliss with Bill as his nominal "official" registered lobbyist. Everything was quite unclear, but I noticed they all thought I had an unlimited budget. Nothing could have been farther from the truth. Although Audre had always financially struggled and for once we had a little in the bank, I knew that there would be no significant revenue until the fiscal year after the test and that the true start of the evaluation was still almost a year away. It was going to be a long road to profitability, and I needed to be capital conscious, but at least we were making a lot of headway.

It was around this time that I also started getting subtle pressure from Brent and Bill to choose between Jerry and Duncan, but I saw no need at the time to take sides and was unwilling to do so, no matter what they said. I knew how to stand my ground, being deeply instilled with a stubborn streak, and I believed that characteristic generally served Audre well. The seriousness of their suggestions, however, started to get my attention in a very around about way. From a very early age I have always been interested in fighting, and I excelled at both boxing and wrestling when I was younger. I continued to host a deep admiration for the courage and simplicity of hand-to-hand combat and I enjoyed watching professional boxing whenever I had the chance. One evening I was again dining with Jerry and his wife Arlene, along with some of their other friends and colleagues, when I informed them I would have to be leaving early because I was going to watch a boxing match on TV at Bullfeathers. Lewis was himself a star athlete in High School and he loved all manner of sports. He excelled in swimming and surprisingly for someone of his short stature, he was outstanding in basketball. Jerry said that watching a fight sounded like excellent entertainment to him and asked if Arlene and he could join me.

I had already made arrangements to meet Duncan, a rabid fan of all forms of fighting, and they became downcast when I informed them of his participation. But Jerry so wanted to watch the match they decided that he and Arlene would drive me to Bullfeathers, just in case Duncan didn't make it. On the ride over I suggested that it might be good for them to join with us, a proposition that prompted them to get uncharacteristically vocal and derogatory about Duncan and his "Hillbilly" wife Lynne. They made

comments that I did not especially appreciate, and I was glad to arrive at Bullfeathers. True to form, once he pulled over to the curb and I got out of his car, Jerry asked that I look into the window and let them know if Hunter had made it. Of course, Duncan, being a true fan, was already positioned at the table closest to the TV. When I signaled as such to Jerry, he just waved and drove on. He missed a great fight.

Audre was starting to get well known in Washington and I was certainly popular around Capitol Hill. I was dining regularly with various members of Congress and signing what seemed to be a never-ending line up of campaign checks. I had no initial quarrel with that, however. It was understandable to me that a Congressman from New Mexico or Pennsylvania wouldn't be very interested in meeting with some guy from San Diego unless there was something in it for them. I clearly understood that I had to contribute to their campaign for them to then schedule me in for five minutes of their time. That was the way it worked, and I wrote the checks and attended the meetings. Still, there sure were a lot of them and it did add up. At the time the Democrats were in power, and John Murtha was the "Man" - Chairman of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, a position that garnered him a lot of financial support. It was the kind of situation where you paid the price, or you paid the price.

A survivor of the FBI's Abscam investigation in the '70s, principally due to the last-minute insertion on his behalf of fellow appropriator "Good times" Charlie Wilson onto the Ethics Committee, I found Murtha to be direct and realistic. A former Colonel in the Marine Corps, he was gruff and very experienced in the ways of Washington. Making my work much easier was the fact that Chairman Murtha was very aware of data conversion, having located one of the Department of Defense's CALS operations into his Congressional District years earlier. As the second ranking member on the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, it was also no surprise that Congressman Wilson had a CALS operation in his District as well. I supported both men, but Wilkes insisted that we really go out of our way to raise money for Murtha. I shook every tree and called all the shareholders I could, with our contributing a collective \$60,000 to the Congressman when he personally visited San Diego. It was one of the few times I distinctly remember Wilkes reaching into his own pocket back then.

A couple of times I also asked my employees to kick in whatever they felt comfortable with. I was very open with them, and everyone had complete

knowledge of where we stood and where we were going. That openness was an important part of my belief that they were dedicating themselves to the best interests of the company and as shareholders and citizens, their future livelihoods stood in the balance with every decision I made. It was never a lot of money, but it did give cause to some very humorous moments. The ethnic diversity of our workforce was reflected in their names and on more than one occasion it gave pause to campaign committees who would later call and ask if such and such was really a person's name. I also had to laugh when I was asked to contribute to Maryland's Democratic Congressman Steny Hoyer's library. It seemed they had a cause for every check.

Since I do not like to play golf, tennis, or cards, I was often not a participant in some of the Congressmen's favorite recreational activities. I think it was cause for some degree of consternation as various individuals attempted to determine how to spend more social time with me. It was pretty well known that I liked to race cars, and that was out of the question, so that left my interest in scuba diving as a possibility. I never thought I would find that to be anything anyone would undertake, but one day early in our relationship I was asked by Bill Lowery if I would join Jerry Lewis and him on a trip to Belize, serving as their dive master.

Now Belize is an offer that is hard to refuse. I had never dived there, having gotten only as close as Cozumel, but I had learned early from my days watching Jacques Cousteau in High School that it was the home of the famous Blue Hole and host to the second largest barrier reef in the world. I could not think of a better location to dive, and I was very anxious to go one day. Bill said that he really wanted to go diving and that they could travel there under the umbrella of visiting the Belizean Navy. They had identified a Belizean Navy Captain that would serve as our host, and I could manage the diving arrangements. They had a lot of confidence in my abilities, and besides, it would be a great place to get some sun and have some fun.

Bill pressed the possibility of the trip to me a couple of times before I took him to be serious. I surprised even myself in not hesitating to turn them down. Despite my rabid interest in going there to dive, I really was repulsed that they were contemplating the classical Congressional junket to some beach resort under the bullshit cover of reviewing some supposedly strategic entity. I think I remarked that it would be a waste of time to visit the Belizean Navy and that I did not want to participate in any scam. I was kind of

brusque in my refusal and I sensed they were taken by complete surprise. Never in a million years did they doubt that I would have jumped at the chance and now, there I was, turning them down cold. They were polite in saying they completely understood, but I knew it had to get them thinking about where I was coming from.

For me that answer was simple. I wanted a fair shot in broad daylight to compete my technology against all comers, the more the merrier. Once so competed, I wanted it to be the winner take all, with the result directing the future procurements of the Pentagon. Ultimately, I believed the decisions of what to purchase and when should reside entirely within the Department of Defense. I had gone to Congress because it was a historical fact that the Pentagon resisted any type of change or new technology. It took the Army a long time to appreciate the advantage tanks introduced to ground combat and for decades they resisted the wide scale introduction of the machine gun. Al Capone may have liked submachine guns, but my dad had only his M-1 to fight with on Guadalcanal. My favorite, however, was when they court-martialed Billy Mitchell for insubordination for his determination to prove naval ships could be sunk by aircraft.

As it goes, there are few that get old who are bold and that certainly held true for getting promoted at the Pentagon. Implementing any type of innovation becomes even more of a problem due to the fact that military commands change over every two years. Just when you start building a base of understanding with a Colonel, Brigadier General, Captain or Rear Admiral, they transfer to another command, and you start all over again with the new guy. That happened to us time and time again. Audre started early with the Army through White Sands but had eventually gravitated to mostly civilian projects until we participated in teaming with Apollo Computer to work on the Sea Wolf Submarine. The Admiral in charge of that project was brilliant. He immediately understood the significance of Audre's conversion technology and made a point to encourage me to pursue more business within the military. The Admiral then changed commands and into his position parachuted an Army Ranger Brigadier General. They must have forced the General into what was then known as the Computer Aided Logistics Systems (CALS) command. He strutted around in his camouflage uniform with his jump boots on and never listened to anyone. He was a complete contrast to the Admiral's competency and his tenure was a total setback to the program. The good news was that two years later he was gone, and the next guy came in. There were so many that I couldn't keep up to date with it all.

That left a lot of power to the civilian employees of the Department. John Karpovich was one such individual. Long standing in service to the Navy, Karpovich's career spanned a multitude of bases and the transition of old typesetting presses into modern digital print on demand systems. John was bright, knowledgeable, and almost always drunk. He was a throwback to the two-fisted drinking days when Navy men proved their machismo by drowning themselves in vast amounts of alcohol. It seemed he literally drank fourteen hours a day. I quickly learned that meetings with him needed to be held before 11:00 AM or he has soused until he passed out around 1 or 2:00 AM – nigh on every single day. What was remarkable about John was that he could be nearly passed out, mumbling Martian speak at 2:00 AM and then be up and presenting a detailed briefing at 7:00 AM without missing a beat. He was small in stature with thick glasses and for the life of me I did not know where he put it. Most shocking of all was where he got it. As the Navy's publication guru, he held sway over millions of dollars of procurements and the vendors knew it.

I met him when we became a subcontractor for Kodak on the ADMAPS project and Kodak's federal group was all over him, as was everyone else. Hand in glove with his relentless drinking was a long string of DUIs. His driver's license was a distant memory, but he had no transportation problems whatsoever. Literally, vendors attended to his every need or whim. Vendors picked him up off the floor or from his house in the morning, drove him to wherever he needed to go and most importantly, kept him completely inebriated throughout. I have seen him drink beer, wine, scotch, vodka, tequila and then move on to Champagne, all in the course of one evening. What would have killed a mule did not even faze him. No worries about expensive dinners, he was fine with bar appetizers and why waste the space in his stomach with bulk when he needed the room for booze. His deputy was Ann Barnes and they knew each other, literally, very well. Ann was always there to keep him on schedule and fundamentally on task. I was appalled by his drinking and the conduct of the vendors that facilitated it, but there was no denying his abilities and his understanding of the military's requirements.

Karpovich immediately grasped the significance of Audre and became a great proponent of its potential. He could quickly articulate a multitude of essential areas where our software would unleash the data into application after application. He had a lot of respect for our technology, our team, and

my ability to find financing. He also knew I was a novice in Washington and in need of not only guidance, but also staffing. Karp also realized that our technology was the antidote for the power the CAD companies, especially Intergraph, held over the military. His competition within the Department of Defense was the other program managers for the many project commands. As a publication person, his responsibilities did not really measure up to the romance of the big weapon systems and the prestige they conveyed to their management.

Karpovich had a couple of arch adversaries, especially in Huntsville, home of Intergraph, NASA and the Redstone Arsenal. John went wild with joy when I informed him of revealing the dirty little secret of the 200-year project and how the Star Wars General came to realize it was true. I could swear that he proposed a toast and then another and then another to my taking them on. In addition to introducing me to salesmen like Tom Adams, the consultant that suggested I seek out Wilkes, John formed a plan to set up some companies in complement to Audre. The idea was to serve all the needs of the military within the logistical arena, and he knew not only what was needed, but also who could fill the void. He called it the "Team" and my role was to pull it all together by finding financing for his friends and their proposed companies.

His plan was ultimately sketched out in greater detail during one of their infrequent visits to the west coast, when John and Ann offered to pay a social call to me at my mountaintop ranch one Sunday. Driven by a CACI employee I eventually ended up hiring to work at Audre, John arrived with beer in tow. It came as no surprise to me that Karp had hired CACI to do his bidding. CACI was a firm I was quite familiar with, having our Audre Geographic Information Systems office in Reston Virginia run by Gary Slack, one of the founders of the CACI operations in Washington. Gary was a great guy and a very good General Manager of our mapping office, someone I came to completely trust before eventually consolidating that operation into our San Diego headquarters. Not wanting to move west, Gary ended up leaving us to work for the CIA as a consultant. Originally started as California Analysis Center, Inc., CACI quickly became a bare-knuckle player at the Pentagon in the mid-80's, an attitude which Gary came to resent, and which ultimately caused his resignation from the firm. Little has changed over the years, with CACI lately making headlines for abuses they allegedly inflicted on prisoners while working as a contract interrogator for the military in Iraq. Suffice it to

say it was my take that wherever they were, no task was too distasteful for them if the dollars added up.

Ann Barnes, much to my surprise, arrived with her husband. I do not know if they were actively engaged in a ménage-de-trois with Karp, but the possibility was more than a little probable under the circumstances, although I preferred to perish the thought. It was a typically perfect San Diego day and it made no sense to disrupt it with such a disgusting prospect. Strangely, rather than exercise an opportunity to walk around and take in the mountain views overlooking the coastline from Mexico to Los Angeles and out to San Clemente Island, they turned on a football game, smoked cigarettes, drank beer and stayed inside all day while making his case. He was so intently focused, no mix of palm trees or the Pacific would be allowed to give pause to his pitch. Conceptually it all made sense, even looking back on it today. There was no denying he was intelligent, and he had envisioned quite a set of capabilities. With my ability to raise money, it was the perfect opportunity to build some technology dynasties. I should not have been surprised, however, that all of his proposed participants were to be found in close proximity to a bar.