

October 30, 1974

Superaide: Escaping
The White House Pull

74-71

Fourth of a Series by Wallace Henley
for Baptist Press

Requiem Mass for Superaide began like a Bourbon Street funeral: blaring trumpets, glory, proud prancing.

It was November 8, 1972. Only in the White House, perhaps, can there be somber giddiness. One could feel it the day after election, however.

A meeting was summoned that morning in the big room at the top of the Executive Office Building. Superaides by the dozen entered the room, wiping from their eyes the drowsiness brought on by a night of celebration.

Then, President Nixon himself walked on stage. For many of the most junior aides, it was a fairly rare glimpse of the man for whom they had put virtually everything on the line.

Nixon congratulated the staff for outstanding work in the first term. In effect, he said, we were able, strong and nice.

Then Bob Haldeman took the podium and asked for all our resignations.

Shock, silence, a blunting of the euphoria. Certainly, we thought, it was a mere formality. No one wanted to take seriously the bid to hand in their White House passes.

"All members of the White House staff are expected to submit a pro forma letter of resignation to become effective at the pleasure of the President," said an unsigned cover memo. "This period," continued the anonymous spokesman, "will necessarily be a time of some uncertainty...It is anticipated that virtually all major actions on personnel will be complete by December 15 (1972)."

That day--December 15--came and passed and Superaides all over the White House still didn't know if they should make Christmas bills.

As the scramble for jobs escalated, I joined the fray. It was occurring to me I was not quite as cherished a staffer as Henry Kissinger, though we worked for the same company. If I wanted to hang on, I would have to work at it.

Then one afternoon Superaide got a microscopic fleck of poison on his brain. It was a question: Why, really, are you struggling so hard to stay here?

As I sorted through the answers, they all seemed paltry. Happiness was the end-all, chipped out via prestige, the realization of ambition, a measure of affluence, a sharing of power. I was staggered to realize that I had all these things, yet I really had no fulfillment.

The danger with questions is that one often leads to another. My suppression of critical faculties had caused me to turn off all the rumors I was hearing about Watergate, the ITT and a jillion other accusations.

But the opening of my mind, however slight, was enough to dampen my ability to turn off the rumors. The immediacy of it all came late one night when Carl Bernstein of The Washington Post called to see if I could supply information about the Watergate. I explained to him that being a junior aide meant one never had a full picture of things; I knew nothing.

But why did I know nothing? The answer to that was another question, the most devastating in my life to that point. The question was: given your inexperience, political

naiveté, ambition, awe, loss of critical objectivity, is it possible the only reason you're not involved is that you were not asked?

The whole process of introspection had shaken me. I had taken a hard look at me and was fast deciding I didn't like what I was becoming. I knew I had to leave the White House.

The confusion of identity I had felt in the days I had cast off the ministry was returning. I had fixed my selfhood to transitory politics. Now I had to make a firm decision about what I was going to do with the rest of my life.

Vincent Townsend Sr., vice president of The Birmingham News, had heard of the mass resignation scheme. He had called and let me know that the News would be willing to consider letting me return, if I desired.

Shortly after his call, I had been offered two positions in government, each paying more than I had been making at the White House. Later, two more job possibilities would open in the Executive Branch. But all I could think of was getting out of there.

So I returned to the News as general affairs editor. At times, I felt almost numb. Washington, the White House, seemed a giant tornado, into whose vortex I had been sucked. Escaping the pull of that force was an effort that would occupy me for months.

As more and more revelations about Watergate opened up, I was seeing men I had known and admired brought down under repugnant accusation.

At last I realized I was playing at the News the same old game I had pursued all my life. My gods were still ambition, prestige, acceptance by people. I knew I was still running from God's purpose as hard as I could run. At the News, I saw myself on a treadmill running fiercely, but going nowhere. It was no fault of the newspaper. The problem was buried deep in my soul.

So one day, I said, "Okay, Lord, I submit."

I knew that reentering the preaching ministry after a decade's absence was risky business. But I had written a book on the risks of discipleship. Now it was time to do what I had talked about.

There would be risk for the church calling me as well. They would have to take me at face value. I could hear suggestions I was trying to run and hide in the ministry. But if the Lord wanted me to have a church, He would steer me to the right one. Without realizing it, I was learning a dependence on God blocked by my years of manipulating my own destiny.

And He did lead. A small church in South Alabama--Old Spanish Fort Baptist Church near Mobile, extended me a call. In November, 1973, one year from the week I had been dangling in euphoria at the White House, I went to the pulpit of Old Spanish Fort Baptist Church.

In the months that would follow, life would become a discovering process. I would learn, for example, a new appreciation for the balance between church-related and secular ministry. Before, I had concluded one was irrelevant, the other vital. Now I would understand there is an urgent need for both forms of ministry in God's scheme.

The most important thing I learned had to do with the will of God. And it was this: If God has called a person to a task, nothing will fulfill the person completely except the doing of God's will.

The days at Old Spanish Fort have not been one rapturous moment after another. But one fine Sunday morning I found myself facing the congregation, and thinking, "I wouldn't trade this pulpit right now for all the desks in the White House."

EDITOR'S NOTE: Last in a series of Baptist Press articles by Wallace Henley about his experiences as a special assistant to President Nixon and the transition back to a pastorate, Old Spanish Fort Baptist Church, Mobile.



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October 30, 1974

Misappropriated Funds Total Escalate in Illinois

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (BP)--The total amount of funds misappropriated from a Baptist children's home in Carmi, Ill., has escalated as auditors, retained by the Illinois Baptist State Association, have probed deeper into the home's records.

Incomplete auditors reports show at least \$86,200 now missing over at least three years--1972-74. A full auditors' report is expected by the March, 1975, meeting of the board of directors of the statewide body of Southern Baptists.

In September, James H. Smith, the executive secretary of Illinois Baptists, told the directors that James Paynter, the home's business and development director, had transferred \$32,000 in children's home funds to a bank account in his name.

Paynter, a seven-year employee of the home who has been missing since Aug. 31, left Carmi, Smith said in September, after it was revealed that Paynter had opened a checking account under the name of the Baptist Children's Home Association and deposited two checks from an estate totaling \$4,000 and \$32,721.

Later, Paynter wrote a \$32,000 check on the account, according to a statement by Smith in the Illinois Baptist state newspaper, and deposited it in another account which he had opened in his own name.

Since that time, incomplete reports by auditors have indicated that at least \$58,332 has been misappropriated from the home from January through August, 1974; at least \$11,565 in 1973 and at least \$16,303 in 1972. That totals \$86,200 now known to be missing.

Auditors described the audit, which is continuing, as "tentative" and as yet they have not formally charged a specific person with the responsibility for the newly discovered shortages.

In another development, Smith said in a letter to Illinois Baptists, "Mr. Paynter wrote a check on his account for \$25,468.85 as down payment on a home in Springfield. At present. . . (that check) is being held by the Springfield Marine Bank pending a suit in Sangamon County Circuit Court to determine the legal owner of the funds."

The \$25,468.85 apparently came from the \$32,000 Paynter transferred to his personal account, an Illinois Baptist spokesman said. Over \$5,000 of the \$32,000 has been recovered, the spokesman said.

Smith's letter to Illinois Baptists said, "Following legal counsel, we have brought no formal charges against Mr. Paynter at this time. This letter is not to be construed as an indictment of Mr. Paynter in any sense but is an informal sharing of information with our Baptist people, who have given generously and sometimes sacrificially to the home."

In September, Smith said the home was covered by a "\$100,000 blanket bond" and that any charges would be the responsibility of the bonding company.

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War Opponents Lose Tax
Fight in Supreme Court

10/30/74

By Stan Hastey

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in effect that citizens opposed to war on religious grounds may not refuse to pay federal income taxes which support the nation's defense machinery.

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The high court held that the Internal Revenue Service may not be restrained by court injunction from forcing employers to withhold income taxes from employees who object to paying the portion of their taxes which goes for defense purposes.

The case, *United States v. American Friends Service Committee*, involves two pacifist employees of the Quaker committee. In 1969, they requested their employer not to withhold from their paychecks that portion of taxes due which would be funneled into the Defense Department budget.

According to the Friends Committee on National Legislation, that amounted to 51.6 per cent of every tax dollar in the 1969 federal budget.

The American Friends Service Committee complied with the employees' request and then remitted the total amount due, including what it had refused to withhold, to the Internal Revenue Service. The group then filed a refund claim which the IRS denied. That action led to a request by the employees before a U.S. district court in Pennsylvania to restrain the IRS from collecting the disputed portion of their taxes due.

In their brief before the Supreme Court, attorneys for the employees argued that "a central and inseparable part of their faith is that they must give active expression to their religious objections to war, in order to bear witness to their beliefs. To force payment of their war taxes," the argument continued, "without tolerating even a symbolic gesture of refusal and enforced collection by the government, is to suppress the most central and deeply held tenets of their religious beliefs."

By a decisive 8-1 majority, however, the high court disagreed. It held instead that the IRS may not be restrained from forcing the withholding of such taxes as the Internal Revenue Code allows it to collect.

The new action reinforces several previous decisions in similar religious liberty cases favoring the IRS in recent years. Earlier this year, cases involving conflicts between the IRS and Americans United for Separation of Church and State, Bob Jones University, and Billy James Hargis' Christian Echoes Ministry, the court similarly held for IRS.

The lone dissenter was Associate Justice William O. Douglas, who argued that the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is being violated by the court's recent decisions.

"I have not bowed to the view of the majority," Douglas stated, "that 'some compelling state interest' will warrant an infringement of the Free Exercise Clause."

The American Friends Service Committee was organized in 1917 to provide employment for conscientious objectors and has since expanded its operation to include other religious, charitable, social, philanthropic and relief work. The Supreme Court's decision against the organization promises a new wave of concern among religious groups which are increasingly concerned over IRS power.

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CORRECTION

In Baptist Press story mailed 10/25/74, entitled, *Stevens Predicts Baptist-Owned Satellite by 1984*, delete the word--ones--from third line of first graph, and change the word--panic--to the word--mechanics--in line 2 of graph 17, making that read: mechanics, methods and techniques that. . .etc.

Thanks.

--Baptist Press