large table; it took a little while for everyone to assemble, but we were finally all there. Dad had built our large table by attaching a varnished sheet of plywood to the top of an ordinary table; it was wobbly at times, but at least we all fit. We ate supper all together as a family nearly every evening.

“So kids,” Dad said as the food was being served. “Did you hear who won the election in California the other day?”

“No,” replied Ben. “We didn’t.” We had been keeping track of what was going on following the recall of Governor Gray Davis in California, and the election to select a new governor had taken place a few days before. We paid a lot of attention to politics and world events, and commonly discussed these things as a family around the dinner table.

“They elected Schwarzenegger,” Dad said.

“I knew it! I knew it!” Ben said; he had been hoping that Schwarzenegger would win.

“But Dad,” I broke in. “He’s a liberal Republican, right?”

“That’s right, Rachel, he is,” Dad responded. “He’s got to be more conservative than Gray Davis, though.”

“I think he wants to be the president,” Ben said.

“But he can’t be,” I responded. “He wasn’t born in the United States, remeber?”

“That’s right,” Dad affirmed. “But enough politics for the moment; can anyone find a country that borders twelve other countries?” We all stared at the maps that covered the surface of the table as we began searching.

“Nine, ten, eleven, twelve,” said Hannah. “China!” Dad loved studying geography and facts about the world, and he seemed to have a knack for it. For instance, he could generally guess the population of a country and be right within a couple million.
We children left the table and began either cleaning the kitchen or dressing the little ones for bed. Dad went his room to rest while Mom nursed the twins. When the kitchen was clean and the smaller ones were in their pajamas, we children begged Dad to read us a chapter of the book he was reading aloud. Both Mom and Dad made a point of reading aloud to us; Mom usually read us historical fiction books that backed up our study of history, and Dad usually read us what we called "Henty books." G.A. Henty, an Englishman who lived from 1832 to 1902, wrote over a hundred novels; his books were usually stories of brave young Englishmen standing up for their values as they courageously fought battles, distinguished themselves, and rescued young women. The plots were predictable, but I loved them. After Dad read us three chapters from our latest Henty book, we all went to bed.

This, then, was an average homeschool day in my family. In many ways, I think being homeschooled made my siblings and I closer to each other. After all, we studied together, worked together, and played together. It is important to remember, though, that though this was a typical homeschool day for me, every homeschool family is different. The beauty of homeschooling is that it is completely individualized, allowing parents to fashion their children’s learning in the way that is best for their particular family.
Chapter 15: Co-operation

Homeschoolers Helping Each Other

I don't want to give the impression that we children spent all of our time at home learning only from Mom and Dad. Homeschool parents today rarely teach their children completely on their own; rather, they create groups called "co-ops" which provide socialization and additional instruction for their children. The Evansville area was home to literally thousands of homeschoolers, so there were a good number of co-ops. There only need to be a half-dozen or so homeschool families in an area, though, for co-ops to start springing up. Some co-ops hire actual teachers from the community to teach subjects while others tap the talents of the different homeschool mothers as they work together to teach their children. Over the years, my family was involved in several different co-ops, and I loved every one of them.

Praise Ensembles took place every Monday morning, and had choir (three different levels), art, band, and strings; there was also drama in the afternoons, but this was optional and we didn't participate in it. There were around 120 homeschooled children in Praise Ensembles, and that meant that we saw many of our friends there each week. In addition to learning music and art and socializing with our friends, we also gained the experience of changing classes, something we didn't otherwise do.

One concern I often heard from adults when they found out that I was homeschooled was that my mother couldn't adequately teach me music and art. This was true, but the reality was that she didn't have to; Praise Ensembles, which hired teachers from the community, filled our need for learning both music and art.
In fact, at the end of each semester Praise Ensembles put on a concert and art exhibition to showcase what we had learned.

When I was in elementary school, my family was involved in CHEER (Christian Home Educators of the Evansville Region) co-op. Homeschool mothers and all of their children, babies through high school, were involved in this co-op. There was a different topic studied each semester (outer space, Civil War, chemistry), the children were divided by age into different groups, and three or four of the mothers taught each group. The mothers tailored the curricula to the age group they taught while others, usually those mothers with babies themselves, took care of the babies and toddlers. In this way, the mothers put their talents to work and their children spent time with other children, learning and having fun at the same time. This co-op was held every other Friday morning, and we often went to a park for picnics with friends afterwards.

One year, Mom was in charge of the 3rd and 4th grade boys in CHEER co-op; she was the lead teacher and had three other mothers as her helpers. Mom made that year a year to remember. One of the semesters the topic was Civil War, and each of the boys got his own Civil War hat, either grey or blue, and a wooden gun (made by one of the fathers). The boys also got their own identities; they were each a general in the Civil War, either from the north or from the south. Every week they were given a letter from the family of the characters they had taken on (and real research went into this). One week, Mom had Dad come in dressed as Abraham Lincoln to teach the boys battle strategy; another week the boys got to cook beans and cornbread over a little stove. Those boys certainly loved coming to co-op that semester.

At the end of each semester, CHEER co-op had a presentation at which each group had time to show what they had learned.
There were skits, songs, and game shows; we were creative. It was always lots of fun, a time to show what we had learned and socialize with other homeschoolers.

The best of all the co-ops and groups we were involved in was speech and debate. When I was in 8th grade, Mrs. Oatess, a homeschool mother in the community, offered a debate class. There were about twelve students, and Mrs. Oatess taught from a debate textbook written by Christy Shipe, Michael Farris' daughter. The following year, Mrs. Mabry, another homeschool mother, took up the mantle and officially began Evansville's homeschool debate club.

Our debate club was part of the National Christian Forensics and Communication Association (NCFCA), which is made up wholly of homeschoolers. NCFCA's mission statement is as follows: "NCFCA believes that formal speech and debate can provide a means for home schooled students to learn and exercise analytical and oratorical skills, addressing life issues from a Biblical worldview in a manner that glorifies God." NCFCA had a different debate topic each year, and there were various debate meets in different cities around the country; all of the teams that qualified then went on to nationals, the largest NCFCA debate meet of all. I met a lot of other homeschoolers in a lot of other cities and states through participating in NCFCA debate, and they all believed as my parents did. NCFCA required all debaters to sign a statement of faith, thus doing its best to require that all of those involved shared a common worldview.

Our debate club in Evansville met weekly to discuss the year's debate topic, brainstorm ideas for plans and arguments, collect evidence, and learn debate and logic strategies. Mom soon became involved as well as she added speech to our club.

Mom and Dad often ended up being the parents who drove us students to the debate meets, which were sometimes as much as a five hour drive away. Yet, in spite of the distance involved, Mom and Dad felt that learning debate was important for us. We were learning to think, reason, and understand public policy and how it worked, and these were all things that were necessary if we were to make a difference in this country.

Mom and Dad and other parents in the homeschool community told us that they were the Moses generation; they had taken us out of Egypt and were walking through the wilderness teaching us God's truth. We, on the other hand, were the Joshua generation; we were to grow up and take the Promised Land, winning America back for Christ. Bringing God back into our government and doing what we could to restore morality to a morally depraved nation became important goals, and, in this context, debate was a wonderful opportunity for practice and preparation.

Just as with music and art, homeschool parents often have to find innovative ways to help their children learn languages. In many cases, this means finding outside instructors. There was a Spanish class offered for homeschoolers through our church, yet, though some of our friends were involved that, we went another route. Mom had a friend, Mrs. Martin, who used to be a Spanish teacher but now had small children and was staying at home with them. The Martins went to CFC and were in our small group. One morning each week, Mom took Hannah, Ben, and I to the Martins' house for Spanish lessons.

Though we did study Spanish, Mom and Dad put more importance on our learning Latin than any other language. Indeed, Mom began teaching me Latin when I was only seven, and she was soon teaching Hannah and Ben as well. In homeschool circles, this is very common; giving children a classical education, which includes classical languages and an immense
amount of literature, logic, and rhetoric, is very popular. Mom didn’t know Latin herself, but she purchased books designed for homeschool mothers teaching their children and used these with us. This worked for a while, but by the time I reached middle school learning vocabulary and case endings wasn’t enough; we were ready for grammar, and Mom found that she couldn’t understand Latin grammar well enough to teach it to us. Mrs. Martin, though, had enough of a background in languages to teach us Latin, so we began studying this with her in addition to Spanish. After my first year of high school, Mrs. Martin moved away because her husband, Dr. Martin, got a job at Liberty University, the university founded by Jerry Falwell in Virginia. By that time, though, I felt like I had a good handle on Latin grammar and I spent the next three years continuing my study of Latin independently. I soon began teaching others as well.

“Rachel, I’ve been thinking,” Mom told me early in the summer after my freshman year of high school. “I’d like to start Latin with Jeremiah, Josiah, and Grace; they’re ten, eight, and six, after all. I was hoping that maybe you could teach them next year, along with helping Ben continue his study of Latin.” I was also teaching Jeremiah and Josiah their math at this time and helping Ben with his, so this request wasn’t all that odd.

“Sure, Mom, that’d be fine,” I replied.

“I had another thought too,” Mom went on. “How would you feel about starting Latin classes that other homeschoolers can attend as well?”

“Wait, you mean I would have other kids come over to the house and teach them?” I asked. Teaching my siblings was one thing, but teaching other children would be something new and scary as well as a lot more work.
"Sure," Mom went on. "It'd look great on your transcript, and you could make some money and help other homeschoolers out at the same time."

"Mom, I'm just fifteen," I said. This was the summer a year after Mom had had Charity and a year before she would have the twins.

"Rachel," Mom said, trying to reassure me. "You may be just fifteen, but you're very mature for your age and you have knowledge other homeschoolers could use. You could hold classes for an hour once a week, and you could use the craft room in the basement; there's that big table down there you know, and the white board on the wall. How does that sound?"

"I don't know," I said. The idea of earning some extra money to save for college and having something that looked that good on my transcript was starting to appeal to me.

"You could write this up in an email and send it to Mrs. Beiver," Mom suggested. "She can send it down her homeschool email list and then we'll see what feedback you get."

"Okay, I'll do that," I replied. Within two weeks, I had had so many people sign up for my classes that I knew that I would have to turn some of them down if I wanted to keep my sanity. Mom and I decided that I would hold my classes on Tuesday mornings and would have three classes total, two beginners and one intermediate. The classes would be held at eight-thirty, nine-forty-five, and eleven, and there would be six to eight students in each class. I spent the rest of the summer preparing to teach Latin to my siblings and other homeschooled students, including some I had never met before; fortunately, the students were all in elementary and middle school, which meant that they were all at least two years younger than I.
“Mom, I can’t do this,” I said, finding Mom in her room early on the morning of the first day of classes. “I just can’t. My stomach hurts and I feel sick and I can’t do this. I feel sick.”

“It’s okay, Rachel, you’re just nervous,” Mom said. “Calm down and relax, you’ll be fine. It’ll be easier next week, I promise.” Mom was right. That first day was especially nerve-wracking as I met my students and stepped into the role of teacher for the first time, but I soon grew used to teaching and it ceased to be worrisome or a big deal. In fact, I rather enjoyed it.

This aspect of entrepreneurship is one thing I loved about being homeschooled, and this opportunity to teach other homeschoolers while in high school has helped me in my career path today in many ways. During my junior year of high school, I taught four Latin classes each week, and, during my senior year, I had to expand to five. Over my three years teaching Latin, I worked with over fifty students in the Evansville homeschool community.

Latin classes made Tuesday mornings special. There were mothers coming and going, visiting with each other and with Mom, and then there were the kids. In our community, homeschool families were usually larger than average; in fact, five children seemed to be pretty much the norm. When mothers brought their oldest children to class, their younger ones overran our playground equipment, and between classes our wonderful backyard looked like recess at a public school.

When Mom and Dad had first moved to the middle of a cornfield and begun to homeschool us, Poppa, Mom’s father, had been worried about our socialization. It wasn’t until he was at our house on a Tuesday morning a dozen years later that Poppa finally completely changed his mind as he witnessed over a dozen
mothers coming and going and socializing while between fifty and a hundred children ran and played in our backyard over the course of the morning. For a lot of the children, this was one of the highlights of their week; many mothers intentionally allowed their children extra time to play or brought food for picnics.

The trees were full of children, the swings were in constant motion, and explorers were all through the tall grass field beyond the backyard (the plastic log cabin, which the children called "the little house on the prairie," was one of their bases of operation) and the Sherwood Forest (which is what the children called the marshy area filled with cattails between the gardens and the pond). There were children competing on the climbing rope and having tea parties on the patio, digging in the sandbox and having mock sword duels, forming clubs and playing at pirates. Poppa was slightly overwhelmed at this sight, but he was completely convinced that we were not undersocialized.

Hannah also made use of this homeschool community, leading art camps each summer during high school and also offering piano lessons. Hannah was artistic and musical, two things I very definitely was not. The way Hannah and I became a resource for the homeschool community illustrates what I’m trying to get across; homeschooling is not something that is done alone, but rather something that the whole homeschool community comes together and cooperates in. No homeschool parents are on their own unless they choose to be; instead, the opportunities available to homeschoolers today are nearly limitless. And I loved it.
PART 4:

RELIGIOUS RIGHT
Chapter 16: On the Warpath for God

A History of the Religious Right

It's hard to remember just what's what when looking back to the earliest stages of childhood. Mom and Dad have told me that I went door to door with them campaigning for their Republican candidate for U.S. Congress in 1992 when I had only just turned five, and I think I actually remember it. Sometimes, though, I wonder if this memory is only imaginary, dreamed up from hearing about this an event again and again. I do know, though, that I joined my parents in their campaigning for conservative Christian candidates at an early age, thus participating in the rise of the religious right.

The religious right today, which is also called the Christian right, is "a social movement that attempts to mobilize evangelical Protestants and other orthodox Christians into conservative political action...the movement remains concentrated primarily among white evangelical Christians."197 The religious right today is made up of conservative Christians, the majority of which are either evangelical or fundamentalist. Over the past century, the religious right has experienced three buildups which turned out to be false starts (the 1920s, 1950s, and 1980s), followed at last by a final bursting into full bloom in the 1990s. These first three periods of the religious right were made up either solely (the 1920s and 1950s) or primarily (the 1980s) of fundamentalists while the religious right that has found great success beginning in the 1990s and continues to this day is made up of both fundamentalists and evangelicals, along with any other conservative Christian who shares the views of the religious right.

The first buildup of the religious right was in the 1920s when fundamentalists, led by William Jennings Bryan, actively campaigned against the teaching of evolution in schools. The religious right at this point did not adhere to any political party (for instance, William Jennings Bryan was not a Republican as conditions today might lead one to expect, but rather a prominent Democrat politician who actually ran for president on the Democratic ticket three times). Rather than aligning themselves with a political party, the fundamentalists who comprised the religious right merely sought to garner support for their antievolution crusade, regardless of the source. After the Scopes trial, though, the religious right, with its one political issue, antievolutionism, faded out of the picture. The next time it arose, the religious right would begin to be linked to the conservative political right.

After World War II, the United States had to decide in which direction it was going. Was it going to continue the social policies of the Democrat's New Deal, with a large United States government that takes care of its people, or was it going to return to the era of a smaller, more limited government with a great emphasis on individual responsibility? Would the economy be planned, or would it be freely guided by capitalism? Would the government be liberal or conservative? Just what was the role of the government? America had changed through the rampant consumerism of the roaring twenties, the trials of the Great Depression, the socialist policies of the New Deal, and the big government of World War II. What would happen to America now? Two primary views competed as the country moved beyond the World Wars.

At the conclusion of World War II, "American conservatism stood for limited government in domestic, economic, and social affairs and aggressive government in foreign affairs." Yet, an "overwhelming majority" of Americans still supported the Democrats' liberal policies of the 1930s, the liberal policies that made up the New Deal. Directly following World War II, the Democrats controlled the federal government, but in 1946, after a wave of strikes upset Americans who now merely wanted peace, the Republicans took both houses of Congress. These Republicans passed the Taft-Hartley Act in 1947, greatly decreasing the powers of unions, and then set about working to dismantle the New Deal.

While liberals were interested in providing housing for the poor and money for the elderly, conservatives saw these things as socialistic and communistic, opting instead to vigorously support a free capitalistic market and, in so doing, big business. It is important to remember that while the Democrats of the time were predominately liberal, the Republicans were a mix of many moderates and a few conservatives; it was not until decades later that conservatives began to dominate the Republican Party.

Conservatives after World War II had three main schools of thought: free market, anticommunist, and cultural conservative. The 1950s through the 1970s saw a great growth in all of these three areas of conservative political thought, and in 1955, William F. Buckley founded the National Review, a conservative magazine that gave a voice to conservative ideas and brought the three main areas of conservative thought

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199 Story and Laurie, 1.
200 Story and Laurie, 5.
201 Story and Laurie, 5.
202 Story and Laurie, 5.
together. In 1962, Milton Freidman published *Capitalism and Freedom*, which advocated a small government and a capitalist free market; his ideas took fire and he became the "most influential conservative economist." In 1953, Russell Kirk wrote *The Conservative Mind*, laying out six canons of conservatism; these included "affection for the mystery of religion and traditional life and the necessity of private property and social hierarchy." Meanwhile, conservative Republicans were, in advocating actual military action against the Soviet Union, much harder on communism than liberal Democrats or moderate Republicans. These conservatives demanded stronger action against suspected communists in the United States and some, like Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy, railed against a supposed communist conspiracy within the U.S.

Many fundamentalist preachers joined politicians of the conservative political right in denouncing a perceived evil, atheistic, communist conspiracy. Carl McIntire, who had founded the separatist fundamentalist American Council of Christian Churches in 1941, called for a return to "'old-time' Christian values," a return that he now said was being blocked by a communist conspiracy. Fundamentalist leaders resurrected the religious right as they formed the Christian Crusade, the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade, and the Church League of America, all three strong anticommmunist groups. This severe anticommmunism was the second buildup of the religious right, and this time the time it was linked to the conservative political

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204 Story and Laurie, 8; Blumenthal, 15.
205 Story and Laurie, 9.
206 Story and Laurie, 9.
207 Story and Laurie, 6.
208 Story and Laurie, 7.
209 Utter and Storey, 4.
210 Carpenter, 12.
211 Utter and Storey, 4.
212 Wilcox, *Onward Christian Soldiers*, 34.
right. Many fundamentalist leaders of Christian anticommunist groups were in contact with leading secular anticommunists of the time. When Robert Welch founded his secular conspiratorial anticommunist John Birch Society in 1958, Billy James Hargis, a fundamentalist anticommunist preacher like McIntire, called Welch "a great American patriot." 213 Thus, the secular conservative political right and the religious right began forging an alliance that would only deepen with time.

Barry Goldwater, a staunchly conservative, anticommunist candidate who had supported conservative Christian positions in the Senate, ran for the presidency in 1964. 214 The religious right abandoned their "separatist tendencies" and gave the Republican Goldwater their full support. 215 Goldwater lost the election in a landslide defeat, and, after this, the fundamentalist anticommunist groups, and thus the religious right, "slid into obscurity." 216 Though the religious right again disappeared, it had this time definitely linked itself with conservatives on the political right and with the Republican party, and this link would become significant as time went on.

The Goldwater campaign also marked a turning point for political conservatives as it brought together conservative political activists who would take what they had learned and expand upon it. 217 Soon, under the directing of political planners and organizers such as Paul Weyrich and Richard Viguerie, conservatism expanded its base and gained voters and influence. 218 The conservative Young Americans for Freedom was founded in 1960; its membership was in the tens of thousands by

213 Utter and Storey, 5.
215 Wilcox, God's Warriors, 71.
216 Wilcox, Onward Christian Soldiers, 35.
217 Story and Laurie, 11-2.
218 Story and Laurie, 13.
the end of the decade.\textsuperscript{219} The Heritage Foundation was founded in 1973 and the Cato Institute in 1977; these were both think tanks for political conservatism.\textsuperscript{220} As numerous other conservative organizations formed and various conservative constituencies mobilized, the conservative movement gained the roots it would need to spread.

The religious right would rise again in the late 1970s and the 1980s, and the reason for this third buildup began with the 1960s. The social upheaval of the 1960s shocked fundamentalist Christians out of their isolation and brought cries of consternation from many fronts. It seemed to them that every accepted norm of society was being challenged and that the Christian principles on which America had been founded were cracking. In addition, beginning in the 1960s a series of court rulings and governmental decisions seemed to strike at the heart of Christianity and morality. In 1962, the Supreme Court declared that school prayer was unconstitutional, and a year later it banned Bible reading in school as well.\textsuperscript{221} In 1972, the Equal Rights Amendment passed both houses of Congress and went on to the states for ratification, and in 1973 the Supreme Court legalized abortion.\textsuperscript{222}

In the eyes of fundamentalists, something was clearly drastically wrong. In 1980, Tim LaHaye, a prominent fundamentalist leader, published \textit{The Battle for the Mind}, in which he identified secular humanism as the root of the problems in society.\textsuperscript{223} In the midst of great social change, fundamentalists felt that society was going downhill and the family itself was being attacked, and then were, in the face of

\textsuperscript{219} Story and Laurie, 167, 10.
\textsuperscript{220} Story and Laurie, 168-9.
\textsuperscript{221} Utter and Storey, 29-30.
\textsuperscript{222} Story and Laurie, 16.
\textsuperscript{223} Ammerman, "North American Protestant Fundamentalism," 40.
such threats, ready to do anything to stop the secular humanists "entrenched in the courts, media, and schools" and set society to rights. The religious right that began to emerge in the late 1970s was mainly made up of outraged fundamentalists, and it was limited by a lack of political organization and political experience.

Then, in 1976, Jimmy Carter, a southern Democrat who was a professing born-again evangelical Christian, was elected president. Though they had actually not been instrumental in electing Carter, nationwide attention was suddenly paid to religious voters, filling the religious right with a sense of power and optimism. Carter, though, was a liberal evangelical, and he soon angered fundamentalists with his liberal policies. Tim LaHaye wrote that "between 1976 and 1980, I watched a professing Christian become president of the United States and then surround himself with a host of humanistic cabinet ministers" who "nearly destroyed our nation." Nevertheless, the election of an evangelical Christian to the presidency had given the religious right a sense of hope for the future.

Several conservative political leaders noticed as STOP ERA successfully blocked the Equal Rights Amendment and the anti-abortion group Iowans for Life defeated a liberal congressional candidate in 1978, and they were impressed. Fundamentalists, together with other conservative Christians, were proving that they could be "enthusiastic and affective political actors." Some of the leaders of the conservative political right soon moved to net the votes of the religious right for their conservative Republican candidates, and, bearing in mind that

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224 Utter and Storey, 6.
225 Utter and Storey, 8.
226 Utter and Storey, 8.
227 Story and Laurie, 19.
228 Wilcox, Onward Christian Soldiers, 35.
political conservatism had, since World War II, been culturally conservative as well as anticommunist and pro free market, this move made good sense. In 1978 and 1979, conservative leaders provided the necessary materials for the formation the Moral Majority, the Christian Voice, and the Religious Roundtable.\footnote{Utter and Storey, 9; Story and Laurie, 19; Wilcox, \textit{Onward Christian Soldiers}, 36.}

In 1979, conservative leaders launched the Moral Majority with Jerry Falwell, an influential fundamentalist pastor and televangelist at its head.\footnote{Story and Laurie, 19.} The mission of the Moral Majority was to create a network of conservative Christian voters that would become active in supporting political candidates who shared their views. In 1980, only a year after it was founded, the Moral Majority had 400,000 members,\footnote{Story and Laurie, 115.} and, at its highpoint in the 1980s, it had a full four million members.\footnote{Wilcox, \textit{God's Warriors}, 95.} Though Falwell urged Catholics and members of other Christian denominations to join hands with fundamentalist Christians in support of any candidate who shared their religious values, the vast majority of those involved in the Moral Majority were fundamentalists.\footnote{Wilcox, \textit{Onward Christian Soldiers}, 36-7.} In his \textit{The Fundamentalist Phenomenon}, Falwell outlined the five main positions of his Moral Majority: pro-life, pro traditional family, anti illegal drug traffic, anti-pornography, and pro-Israel.\footnote{Gunn, 54.} Falwell’s Moral Majority marked the third buildup of the religious right, a buildup in which voters were no longer as concerned about the teaching of evolution in schools or the threat of communism as they were about the perceived decrease in morality and the attacks of secular humanists against Christianity.

When Ronald Reagan won the presidency in 1980, the religious right claimed victory. Falwell asserted that he had
activated previously apolitical fundamentalist and evangelical voters, thus winning critical votes for Reagan,²³⁵ but whether he was correct in his assertion is nearly impossible to tell.²³⁶ Whether or not Falwell's Moral Majority actually influenced the election, it did gain nationwide attention.

As president, Reagan lived up to his name as a staunch political conservative, being hard on communism, cutting taxes, and deregulating business,²³⁷ but he proved to be a bit of a disappointment to the religious right. Though he paid the religious right lip service, Reagan did very little to truly further their religious agenda.²³⁸ Nevertheless, Reagan did acknowledge his religious right supporters and even spoke at the National Association of Evangelicals.

Yet, all was not well with the religious right. While the 1980s saw a great buildup of the religious right, this buildup was destined to fail. The Moral Majority, because of its acceptance of moderate and liberal Christians who shared the same values, soon fell into disfavor among fundamentalists. In fact, Bob Jones, jr., the extreme fundamentalist president of Bob Jones University, called the Moral Majority "the instrument of Satan" and Falwell "the most dangerous man in America as far as Biblical Christianity is concerned."²³⁹ Non-religious conservatives were equally appalled by the Moral Majority, which they saw as being intolerant and dangerous.²⁴⁰ Soon, many conservative candidates began intentionally distancing themselves from the Moral Majority, and, as a side effect of the televangelist scandals of the late 1980s, Falwell faced

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²³⁵ Wilcox, God's Warriors, 96.
²³⁶ Wilcox, God's Warriors, 118.
²³⁷ Story and Laurie, 23.
²³⁸ Story and Laurie, 25.
²³⁹ Utter and Storey, 11.
²⁴⁰ Utter and Storey, 11.

In 1988, Pat Robertson, a fundamentalist preacher and strong advocate of the religious right, attempted a bid for president. Robertson is at the extreme of the religious right; in fact, he once stated that the feminist agenda "is about a socialist, anti-family political movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, and become lesbians." When his bid for the presidency failed miserably, Robertson formed the Christian Coalition to replace the folded Moral Majority, placing conservative activist and fundamentalist Ralph Reed at its head. With the end of the 1980s, the third buildup of the religious right had failed, but the 1990s was about to see the religious right burst into unexpected bloom.

In the 1990s, the religious right rose with incredible vigor, making use of new, more sophisticated tactics. The Christian Coalition, Focus on the Family, Family Research Council, and Concerned Women for America were the "largest, most professional, and best organized" of the many religious right organizations active in the 1990s. The Christian Coalition boasted nearly 1,500,000 members in 1994. By the 1990s, the wedding of the religious right and the conservative political right was complete, and religious right voters were working hand-in-hand with the Republican party; at the same time, though, prominent leaders of the religious right have sometimes

241 Utter and Storey, 12-3; Wilcox, Onward Christian Soldiers, 37.
242 Story and Laurie, 26.
243 Utter and Storey, 15.
244 Story and Laurie, 26.
245 Wilcox, Onward Christian Soldiers, 61.
246 Wilcox, Onward Christian Soldiers, 61.
247 Utter and Storey, 14.
248 Wilcox, Onward Christian Soldiers, 74.
threatened to leave the Republican party if it rejects their values by, for instance, ceasing to be pro-life.  

Why has the religious right found success in the 1990s when it failed in the 1920s, 1950s, and 1980s? For one thing, the religious right has become more ecumenical in the 1990s as Christians who share common beliefs and values cooperate across denominational lines. No longer is the religious right made up solely of fundamentalists; instead, it is made up also of evangelicals and other conservative Christians, including conservative Catholics. As a product of this, the religious right has become less vitriolic in its rhetoric. In an effort to sound more acceptable to secular voters, conservative Christians of the religious right often simply speak of rights, such as the right of Christian children to pray in schools, the rights of unborn children, and the rights of parents to decide how their children will be educated. Conservative Christian candidates have also learned when to turn on the Christian rhetoric and when to turn it off.

Also, the religious right of the 1990s was not a top down affair, but rather a grass-roots movement in which conservative Christians worked together with other likeminded individuals to make a difference at the local level. The religious right made wide use of voter guides, which instructed voters on where candidates stood on issues important to the religious right. The Christian Coalition, for instance, claims to have distributed twenty-nine million voter guides in 1993 and 1994 alone. The religious right has also often made use of existing Christian

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249 Wilcox, *Onward Christian Soldiers*, 64.
250 Story and Laurie, 27.
252 Utter and Storey, 118.
networks, even conducting voter registration drives and passing out voter guides within churches themselves.\textsuperscript{253}

The religious right of the 1990s also began to focus on primary elections as a way to make sure that the candidates on the Republican ticket were conservative Christians who supported their positions.\textsuperscript{254} The religious right grew increasingly better at finding and campaigning for veteran political candidates who supported their positions rather than raising up brand new candidates who were not politically adept or likely to attract support outside of the religious right.\textsuperscript{255} Then, once the conservative Christians of the religious right had a candidate they could truly support in the general election, they would campaign with a fury, using voter guides, direct mailings to groups of likely sympathizers, and sophisticated door-to-door campaign methods. Finally, in addition to influencing politics through the electoral process, the religious right also has organizations which lobby federal, state, and local governments.\textsuperscript{256}

What beliefs and views unify the religious right today? In generally, the conservative Christians of the religious right oppose abortion, euthanasia, gay marriage, prostitution, pornography, and sex education and support school choice, Israel, capitalism, and small government. Of course, conservative Christian voter is slightly different and the religious right today contains a lot of variation, but these are, nevertheless, their most commonly shared issues of political importance.

The opposition of the religious right to abortion and euthanasia stems from the value conservative Christians place on

\textsuperscript{253} Wilcox, \textit{Onward Christian Soldiers}, 83.
\textsuperscript{254} Wilcox, \textit{Onward Christian Soldiers}, 74.
\textsuperscript{255} Wilcox, \textit{Onward Christian Soldiers}, 75.
\textsuperscript{256} Wilcox, \textit{Onward Christian Soldiers}, 88.
human life; as I grew up, I was told that every life, "from conception to natural death," had value. Those in the religious right oppose gay marriage, prostitution, and pornography because of the value they place on marriage. They believe that God established marriage to be between one man and one woman for life and that prostitution and pornography naturally lead to adultery and sexual perversion. Similarly, because a majority of the conservative Christians involved in the religious right believe that premarital sex is wrong, they oppose sex education in schools, believing that it teaches teens to be promiscuous. They support, instead, abstinence only education, which teaches teens that they should abstain from sex until marriage.

The conservative Christians who comprise the religious right generally support school choice because they believe that public schools teach children from an atheistic and secular humanist perspective, and therefore want Christian parents to have the option to remove their children from them if they choose. Conservative Christians, especially fundamentalists, are often strongly pro-Israel because they believe that it is God’s chosen country and that it will play a significant role in end times. Finally, those in the religious right support capitalism and small government in part because of their long-held opposition to communism and socialism, which they view as they same thing. In addition, many Christians believe that the Bible endorses the idea of capitalism and small government (which results in high personal responsibility). Falwell said that "the book of Proverbs and the parables of our Lord clearly promote private property ownership and the principles of capitalism." 257

It is important to remember that the conservative Christians in the religious right, especially those who are

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257 Utter and Storey, 97.
fundamentalists, see themselves as a minority, victims of liberals and secular humanists. They believe that they are in a cosmic struggle between good and evil, between God and Satan. Theirs is a mission from God.

My experience with the religious right truly began with 1994. During that election season, Republican Congressman Newt Gingrich issued his "Contract with America" which called for a balanced budget, term limits for office holders, and a decrease in regulations, but ignored the social issues that were the focus of the religious right. In spite of this, political conservatives and the religious right worked together in the election of 1994 like never before, and they achieved real results. It was in this election that I, at age seven, truly became active in the religious right, and I will look at this election specifically in the following chapter.

I grew up in the midst of the rise of the religious right in the 1990s. In fact, my family was so involved in the religious right that the movement had a tremendous influence on the way I came to see the world and my mission in life. I came to view every election as a chance to strike a blow for God and every political victory or defeat as a part of a global struggle between good and evil, between the forces of God and the forces of Satan.

258 Story and Laurie, 27.
259 Story and Laurie, 28.
260 Utter and Storey, 15-6.
Chapter 17: Living Through History

The Religious Right in 1994

I remember Election Day, 1992. Dad came home from the Republican Party headquarters sad and dispirited because the Democrats now controlled both the house and the senate and George H.W. Bush had lost the presidency to William Jefferson Clinton. Looking back, I can see what a blow this was to Dad, who had been an extremely ardent supporter of both Reagan and Bush. Dad spoke to us of the atmosphere of the Republican Party headquarters, saying that it was full of despair, smoking, and alcohol.

The next political thing I remember was Hillary's health care. We picketed was a rally for it in Evansville in 1993. Yet, it was the following summer, the summer of 1994, that my involvement in the religious right truly began.

My father adored Reagan, and he was extremely proud of the fact that he shook Reagan's hand when he graduated from the Naval Academy. Dad told me that Reagan made the American people proud to be American again. Dad supported Reagan for both his conservative views and his religious beliefs.

Dad was a strong Republican, but he was a values Republican; he was fully in agreement with the Moral Majority of the 1980s and the religious right that emerged in the 1990s. Dad wanted to bring God back into politics and restore America's Christian foundation, and that is what he set about to do. He was pro-life, pro-marriage, and against the homosexual agenda. Finally, Dad was politically conservative, desiring a small government with an emphasis on personal responsibility. When Dad looked at Republican candidates, he looked for whether they just wanted to be elected to have power or whether they supported
real values, and that is why Dad was thrilled with our Republican congressional candidate in the election of 1994. This election pulled together many aspects of the religious right of the 1990s and thus provides a good summary of the way the religious right functioned and its influence and success.

Our congressional district was commonly called "the bloody eighth." Its races were always so close that every vote truly counted. A Democrat, though, had managed to hold the seat for quite some time, and sometimes by a margin of only a few dozen votes. In 1994, John Hostettler decided to take him on.

John Hostettler stood for family values and conservative politics. He had four small children and was a common working man, an engineer, who felt that God was leading him to run for political office. Hostettler knew the constitution and the founding fathers; he openly said that America was founded to be a Christian nation and had fallen from its foundations. He said that he would bring God back to the capitol and bring the federal government back to doing only what the Constitution specifically stated. Hostettler stood for values, real values, and my father could not have found a candidate with whom he agreed more. In many ways, Hostettler was typical of a new breed of Republicans surfacing at this time, Republicans with conservative politics and openly Christian values. It was the early 1990s that saw the final rise and success of the religious right as evangelicals, fundamentalists, and other conservative Christians voted for their religious values irrespective of any other concerns.

That summer, we were everywhere Hostettler needed us, and we weren't alone. Hostettler had thousands of volunteers, so many in fact that even the media was impressed. There were often literally hundreds of us when we walked in parades, and Hostettler never had a problem gathering enough volunteers to
put out mailings or go door-to-door. In fact, Hostettler had so many volunteers that some parades actually started putting limits on the number of people who could march for him; his train of supporters was at times actually longer than the entire rest of the parade. I remember driving over an hour to one parade we planned to march in for Hostettler only to be turned away.

Parade after parade, rally after rally, mailing after mailing, phone call after phone call, on and on it went. We children - there were five of us at the time - were very much a part of everything. I remember Mom nursing Josiah in secluded spots as we waited for a parade to begin and then passing him to friend after friend as we all marched in the parade. Hannah and I sometimes rode on Hostettler’s float, wearing a white and red outfit and waving pom-poms. Mom had a big red shirt with a single letter on it, and, together with a group of other women, did a cheer involving the letters in Hostettler’s name. Most of Hostettler’s volunteers were families, parents with children. Indeed, his sections of the parades always overflowed with children, and I remember slipping away from Mom and Dad during rallies to play games or hunt bugs with the other children.

When Election Day finally arrived, Dad took me with him to the polls even though I was only seven. It was a long day, working from six in the morning to six in the evening. Dad brought lots of snacks and also books for me to read. We were working inside, sitting at a table and crossing off people’s names when they came in to vote. Our list was a list of voters in the precinct who usually voted Republican. Every few hours someone would come and take a list of the Republicans in our precinct who hadn’t yet voted and deliver it to the phonebanks where other volunteers called through the names and reminded these prospective supporters to vote. I loved working the polls;
it made me feel very grown up. Many of the other workers and
volunteers there asked me how old I was, what I was doing, and
why I wasn’t in school, and I knew my answers. I was
homeschooled and I was helping my Dad campaign for Hostettler.
Part of the time I went outside and held up a sign for
Hostettler, and part of the time I just read my books, but I
really didn’t actually get to the point of being bored;
everything was too interesting for that. I loved watching as
people came in and voted, and I wondered who each person was
voting for and how it felt to be big enough to vote.

The best part, though, was after the polls closed. Two
years before, Dad, and Dad alone, had spent election night at
the Republican Party headquarters; this year we all spent
election night together at a party for Hostettler in a large
hall at the 4-H Center. There were tons and tons of people
there: lots of families, and lots of kids. There were food and
balloons and there were lots of friends to play games and talk
with. Several large television sets were set up and people
gathered around them to watch the results on different channels.
I loved seeing new election results on one station and then
running over to a group around another TV watching another
station to give them the update. I also loved trying to get on
TV myself; there were numerous reporters there, and from time to
time they would actually show Hostettler’s election night rally
on TV with me in it if I stood behind the reporter.

The night started out quietly but expectantly; no one knew
quite what to expect, but everyone was optimistic. Hostettler
was not just another Republican candidate running for an office;
Hostettler was different. No one was quite sure how the general
public would vote. Soon, though, the results started coming in
and things looked good. The atmosphere in the building climbed –
everyone was excited. As the night dragged on, this excitement
rose to a fevered pitch. At one point I grew tired and went and laid down in a side room where sleeping bags were spread out and covered with small sleeping children; I couldn’t stay away long, though, because the bursts of excited exclamation I kept hearing at intervals drew me back to the main hall.

Up and up and up the atmosphere went. Hostettler was not alone in leading his election; Republican candidates all over the country were winning new seats. I could hear the excitement, the tangible excitement, on every tongue. Everyone was shocked by the difference they had made, by the fact that they could step out as conservatives, step out as voters with religious values, and make a difference. It was like they were realizing that this country wasn’t beyond hope, that religion was still alive and that God was still guiding America.

Even thinking back on it now, I find it difficult to express the level of excitement I saw that night. When the news stations called the election for Hostettler, everyone was on their feet. The excitement was so real that I could have floated to the ceiling carried by its force. They’d done it! They’d won! Everyone was clapping, shouting, crying aloud for joy, and I’m not exaggerating when I say that there were probably fifteen minutes straight of clapping and cheering. Everyone was crying and hugging everyone else. At first the children were a bit confused, but, when their parents explained it as best as they could, the children, too, jumped with joy.

When Hostettler stood to make his acceptance speech, there was a cacophony of celebration. I honestly don’t think I’ve ever been in a room with more excitement than there was then. Hostettler made his speech with his family by his side and the media recording every word of it. We cheered and clapped and yelled and hardly let him finish. I think many of the people there hardly thought they could be happier in their lives; they
had done it, they had really done it. They had gotten Hostettler, a political nobody, elected to U.S. Congress solely based on family values. A new day had dawned; this was the heyday of the religious right.

And it wasn't only Hostettler; all over the United States, conservative, values Republicans were taking Democrats out of offices, sweeping both the house and the senate. The Democrats lost fifty-four house seats as Republicans gained control of the house for the first time since 1954. The Republicans also took eight seats in the Senate, gaining control of it for the first time since 1986. These victories were huge. The Democrats might have the presidency, but they could no longer get anything done. In early 1995, Ralph Reed, the leader of the Christian Coalition, stated that "as religious conservatives, we have finally gained what we have always sought: a place at the table, a sense of legitimacy, and a voice in the conversation that we call democracy." Indeed, the energy created by this tremendous upset was, as I have stated, overwhelming.

I distinctly recall a clip created and aired by a news station after that election. I remember seeing this clip late on election night, but, looking back, I don't think it could have been created until a bit later; I must be imputing the memory of seeing it when it came out later back onto that night. The clip showed President Clinton shaking hands with Democrat candidate after Democrat candidate, and, after each, it showed how much the candidate lost the election by. This was very moving because a total of sixty-two Democrats had lost their seats. In the background as the clip was shown there was a song playing, the song with the words "na na, na na na na, hey hey, goodbye." The

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261 Story and Laurie, 29.
262 Story and Laurie, 29.
263 Durham, 107.
effect this created was overpowering, and the memory of that clip will be with me forever.

It took my parents a long time to come down from the emotional high of that election night, yet this was truly only the beginning of my parents' involvement in the religious right. We campaigned for Hostettler, who didn't lose his seat until 2006, during every election year from this time on, and we campaigned for many other candidates as well. Every election year we were in parades, put out mailings, made phone calls, attended rallies, worked the polls, and, on election night, gathered with the rest of Hostettler's supporters at the 4-H Center.

The religious right was simply part of my growing up experience; I cannot imagine my childhood without it. I always accepted my political involvement as a part of life, and later learned with shock that many Americans don't care anything about politics and a great number don't even vote. In contrast to this, being a part of the religious right meant having a cause and a passion and being able to do something about it. It meant telling others and then telling still others; it meant marching in parades and passing out fliers; it meant doing something with true conviction. And as I grew up, it was something I enjoyed with all of my heart.
Chapter 18: Defending Life and Marriage

Abortion, Gay Marriage, and Terri Schiavo

Of all the political issues I grew up supporting, the right to life and the protection of traditional marriage were by far the most important. Indeed, my parents saw these as the chief political issues of our day. Working to end abortion and define marriage as only between one man and one woman was incredibly important to my family, and I cannot imagine my childhood without this characteristic of the religious right.

Supporting the right to life and making abortion illegal was my parents' number one political issue. In fact, Dad told us daughters that he would never give his blessing for one of us to marry someone who wasn't 100% pro-life. Shortly after we moved to Evansville, Mom began volunteering at our local Crisis Pregnancy Center. This center was a resource for pregnant women who might be considering abortions; it provided them with information about their babies' development, counseling, maternity clothes, and baby supplies in an effort to convince them to keep their babies. Meanwhile, Dad became active in supporting Evansville Right to Life and Indiana Right to Life. Each year, Evansville Right to Life brought in big-name pro-life musicians and speakers and held a pro-life banquet. Mom and Dad went every year. In addition to doing what they could to support the pro-life cause, my parents made sure to teach us children about this crucial issue.

"You know kids, I was only nine years old when Roe v. Wade took place and abortion was legalized in this country," Dad told us. "It's funny, but I remember it. I had a friend, then, who was Catholic, and one day he came up to me and told me that our government had decided that people could kill babies before they
were born. I didn't believe him; even at age nine I could see that that was wrong. I told him that that couldn't be, but he said it was. And he was right.”

Dad told us that his solution to the abortion problem was for the Supreme Court to overturn Roe v. Wade, declaring that the Constitution says nothing about abortion and thus allowing the decision to be up to the individual states. Dad felt that if state governments were allowed to make this decision, individual people would have more of a say and moral people would rise up and bring an end to the senseless slaughter of unborn babies. This opposition to abortion is directly in keeping with the views of the religious right, and for Dad, the whole abortion issue quickly became very political.

"Dad, why don't you like our State Representative, Vaneta Becker?" I asked one day when I was in middle school. "You said you wouldn't vote for her, but she's a Republican, so why won't you vote for her?"

"You see Rachel, Vaneta Becker is not pro-life. She supports abortion, and I can't support a candidate who doesn't value human life."

"But you have a problem with Suzanne Crouch too, and she's pro-life," I said. "She's a county commissioner, right?"

"Yes, but Suzanne Crouch is not pro-life," Dad told me.

"But I thought she said that she was," I said, feeling confused.

"She is pro-life except in the case of rape, incest, or life of the mother," Dad said, his voice full of intensity.

"Oh," I replied, but Dad continued before I could say anything else.

"Rachel, life begins at conception, and once that is understood it is clear that abortion is always wrong. Anything that kills an unborn child, no matter how small that child is,
no matter how the child was conceived, is murder. That means that abortion is always wrong. Does that make sense?"

“Yes, Dad.”

“And so, if abortion is always murder, then we cannot allow even a woman pregnant by rape, as unfortunate as that is, to kill her unborn child,” Dad said. “That is why those who are truly pro-life are those who believe that abortion should be illegal in every circumstance. Those are the candidates that I will support, and that’s why I so strongly support John Hostettler - he is 100% pro-life in every circumstance.”

Dad’s support of life also extended to the realm of stem cell research and cloning. He taught us that anything that included terminating a human embryo was murder. Thus, killing embryos in any form, even for stem cell research, was murder. Dad also taught us that cloning was wrong, as it included man playing God by creating human life.

Each fall, after the crops were harvested, we went out to a cornfield overlooking a highway not far from our house and, with a group of other people, helped put up two thousand white crosses, all in rows. There was a big sign that said “Abortion kills 4000 babies each day,” and each cross represented two murdered babies. This was called a “Cemetery of the Innocents.” It was always cold that day, and the field was always muddy, but it was still fun to be there with other people actually doing something for the pro-life cause. Once the crosses were all put up, we headed to a nearby barn for a hot chili dinner; it was always a perfect way to warm up after spending hours in the field. Then, each spring, we all came back and helped take the crosses down and stack them for storage until the crops were in again the next fall.

The first Sunday of every October was the “Life Chain.” After lunch, we all bundled up for the cold and went to a
specific church on Green River Road, the main road on our side of town. Hundreds of people gathered at the church and picked up signs to hold and then walked along Green River Road, meeting another group of people coming from a Catholic Church further south on Green River Road. Dad liked to say that the pro-life cause was the one time when Catholics and Protestants really came together across denominational lines, and it truly was. The Cemetery of the Innocents, for instance, was located on the farm of a Catholic family. Once we had reached the Catholics coming up the road toward us, we all, hundreds of us, lined up on both sides of Green River Road for a good long stretch and held signs that said things like “Adoption: The Loving Option,” “Abortion Stops a Beating Heart,” and “Abortion Kills Children.” The Life Chain lasted for several hours, and when that time was up we all went home. Like the Cemetery of the Innocents, this was a way we could actually do something toward saving babies from horrible deaths, and because of that, we children always loved it. It also helped that many of our friends were usually there with us. Yet even as preserving human life before birth was the Dad’s most important political issue, there was a second issue that was only just less important: preserving marriage.

When I think of my parents’ view of homosexuality, I immediately remember one Sunday at CFC when baptisms were being held. I was seventeen and in my senior year of high school, and this particular week there was one baptism that was a bit unusual.

“I want to be baptized today to show the world that Christ is first in my life, and always will be,” said one of the men who was about to be baptized. “Living for Jesus defines who I am. It’s not easy to give my testimony today, though. You see, only three years ago, I was a homosexual. I didn’t just say I was homosexual, I lived it. I was immersed in the gay lifestyle,
every bit of it. It was only by God’s grace that I came to see that Satan was blinding me, and it was only through Christ that I found my way out of that cycle of unfulfillment. By God’s grace I stand before you today, a healed man, Christ’s servant.”

Pastor David was beaming; I don’t think I’d ever seen him ever so happy to baptize anyone before. “Andy, based on your profession of faith, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Pastor David lowered the man into the water; as he raised him back up the whole sanctuary erupted in an applause that kept coming and kept coming and finally ended in a standing ovation. I scrambled to my feet with everyone else and looked around at the smiles on everyone’s faces. After thirty seconds or so, everyone sat down and the baptisms continued as normal. Wanting to make sure that we children all learned something from this testimony, Dad brought it up at lunch that day.

“So kids, what did you think of the baptism today?” he asked.

“I thought it was fascinating,” Ben replied.

“Yeah,” added Jeremiah. “It must have been hard for him to stand up and say something like that.”

“Does anyone want to explain the significance of Andy’s testimony to the little ones?” Dad asked.

“Sure, Dad,” I replied. “See, that man used to be homosexual and now he’s not. Liberals like to say that people are born homosexual and can’t help it, but they’re wrong, and this man’s baptism helps prove that.”

“What is homosexual?” asked Patience, who was five.

“Don’t you even know that, Patience?” asked Grace, who at nine was shocked at her sister’s ignorance. “When a man is a homosexual that means he is gay and that means he kisses on boys instead of girls. Right, Mom?”
"That's right Grace," Mom replied. "God doesn’t like it when men kiss on other men; it’s Satan who leads people astray like that."

"Eww, that’s gross!" Patience said, appalled.

"That’s right Patience, it is," Mom continued. "People like that have twisted, perverted minds." She shuddered visibly.

"You know, kids," Dad broke in. "What I liked best about today’s baptism was that it flies right in the face of the gay agenda and what homosexuals today would have the rest of us believe. The reality is that homosexuality is not ever something someone is born with, it is rather something that comes about by conditioning. If a man grows up without a father, he’s always looking for male affirmation, and always desiring men to like him. Society then tells this man that he is gay, and he starts to believe it. Soon he is convinced that he was born this way, and he walks right into the gay lifestyle and away from God."

"What I found most amazing about the man’s testimony," Mom added, "was the power of Christ to bring someone out of that kind of lifestyle, the power of Christ to save anyone, no matter how perverted or evil."

"I agree," Dad affirmed. "Kids, did you know that homosexual marriage is legal in Massachusetts?"

"Wait - gay people can actually get married there?" Eleven-year-old Josiah asked incredulously.

"Can you believe how far our country has fallen?" Mom broke in. "Such depths of depravity! To recognize such misguided perverts with marriage!" She shuddered again.

"The most worrisome thing about this," Dad told us, "is that there is a possibility that a couple could get married in Massachusetts and then move here, and that Indiana’s government would have to respect that as a marriage. What we really need is a national amendment to the constitution defining marriage as
being between one man and one woman. Short of that, states should amend their own constitutions to define marriage; actually, some states already have.”

“Has Indiana?” I asked.

“No, not yet. But actually, I’ve been meaning to talk to you kids about that. There is a marriage amendment before the Indiana General Assembly right now, and there is something we can do to help. In a few weeks there will be a pro-marriage rally at the statehouse, and I thought I might take some of you older ones there. Are any of you interested?”

We always loved going on political trips with Dad, and it was soon decided that Dad would take not only us older ones but also some of our homeschool friends. Grace, who at age nine was usually classified as a younger one, begged to go with us until Dad finally relented and agreed to take her too. And so, a few weeks later, we piled into our van for a four hour trip to Indianapolis with our friends Rachel and Rebekah Shinebarger and Rachel, Stephen, and Drew Weinzapfel. Since we drove a fifteen passenger van at the time, we had plenty of room. The drive up to the capital was lots of fun; we spent the time visiting with our friends and talking politics with Dad. We always loved these kinds of trips, and with Dad, they were frequent.

When we arrived in Indianapolis, Dad shepherded the eleven of us children into the capital building. We looked around with wide eyes at the huge arches and numerous statues, and headed for the middle of the building, where the rally was being held. As we grew closer and closer there was more and more of a crowd; soon the halls were so crowded that we had to hold hands to stay together. In fact, there was such a crowd that a third floor balcony overlooking the area where the speakers would stand was as close as we could get. There were literally thousands of people there. There were children in uniforms and people who
looked like they were Mennonite or Amish, adults with numerous children whom we guessed were much like us and groups of college students standing together. We knew that we all had one thing in common; we were there to support marriage.

Soon the speeches began and everyone quieted down and stopped moving around. We heard about the importance of marriage and the family to American society and about the degeneration of morals today and the problems that are plaguing society. The speakers also provided information about the marriage amendment and the importance of passing it and of protecting marriage in Indiana. We children all listened attentively, and we also watched closely as a group of homosexual activists tried in vain to make their large pro gay marriage sign visible through the crowd of people who sought to block it. This strong support of defining marriage as between one man and one woman is another important characteristic of the religious right.

When the rally ended, Dad took the eleven of us children out a specific entrance so that we could meet with a reporter. Before we came up to Indianapolis for the rally, Dad had called the office of the Evansville Courier & Press to let them know that he was bringing a vanload of people from Evansville up to the rally in case they wanted an interview. The paper told Dad that their Indianapolis correspondent, Kelly Waters, would meet us after the rally for an interview. Dad took us all to where he had arranged the meeting, and then he turned to leave.

"Rachel, I'm going to go get the van," he told me. "I want you kids to talk to the reporter. Her name is Kelly Waters, and she'll be meeting you here. You know your stuff; just tell her why you're here."

"But Dad, I think you should do it, not us kid," I said.

"It'll mean more if it's kids," Dad said. "People are impressed with politically active young people these days, and
that’s what you guys are. I’m going to go get the van. Stay together and you’ll be fine.”

“Okay, Dad,” I said, realizing that it would be futile to argue further. Dad went to get the car while the eleven of us stood and watched people streaming out of the different entrances and heading for their cars and busses.

“Hello. Are you all from Evansville?” I looked up to see a well-dressed official-looking woman with a clip-board.

“Yes,” I said. “Are you Kelly Waters?” I fell right into the position of spokesperson for our little group and, though it hadn’t actually been discussed, it was clear that the others were happy with my taking this role.

“I am indeed,” the woman replied. “But are you all here alone?” she asked, looking around at the eleven of us kids.

“No, my Dad brought us,” I told her. “He left to get the van.”

“Ah. Do you mind if I ask you a few questions?”

“No, go ahead.”

“Can I ask this little lady something?” she asked, gesturing to Grace.

I looked at Grace as she stood there watching the reporter, her tan jumper flapping in the breeze and her two sandy-blond ponytails swinging slightly. I was mentally calculating what she did and did not know. She could really impress this reporter if she answered well, and if she didn’t, well, she was only nine, so it wouldn’t look that bad. “Sure, go ahead,” I said, and the reporter turned to Grace.

“What is your name, honey?”

“Grace Fulton.”

“And how old are you?”
"I just turned nine." Grace was standing as tall as she could and looking directly into the reporter's eyes. "I'm big now."

The reporter laughed, and it was a pleasant laugh; she scribbled something down on her notepad and then asked another question. "Why is it that you're here today, Grace?"

"Because I support marriage, and marriage is supposed to be a man and a woman." Grace did know her stuff, and I felt justified.

"And why is that?" the reporter asked.

"Because God said so," Grace said with assurance.

The reporter smiled at Grace's reply and continued scribbling in her notepad before she turned to me. "Why is it that you all are not in school today?"

"We're homeschooled," I replied.

"I see," the reporter said. "Do you have anything you want to add to what Grace said?"

"Yes," I said. This was my chance, and I knew it. Dad had left us here like this because he trusted us, trusted me, to get his message across. If he wasn't right here with us coaching us, it would come across even more clearly. "The family is the building block of society, and without it, society falls apart," I said confidently. "This is why we need to protect the family against every threat. We need to protect and safeguard marriage, and that's why we're here today. Marriage is meant to be between one man and one woman, and the idea of gay marriage threatens that. Every child needs a mother and a father. We need to define marriage as it is meant to be so that we do not lose it, and thus lose the bedrock of society."

The reporter continued writing in her notepad and then looked up. "I see," she said, and then turned to Rebekah Shinebarger. "I have one more question, and I think I'd like to
put it to you. Why is it that you came all the way here from Evansville on a school day to attend this rally?"

Rebekah paused for a moment and then spoke. "I want to be a part of making the right decisions happen; this is a way I can stand up for what I believe and learn more about it."

"Thank you," the reporter said as she wrote in her notepad for a final time and then looked up, "Thank you, all of you, for talking with you today. And now, do you all know where you’re going?"

"Yes." I pointed to where Dad has just pulled up in the big van. "Dad’s right over there."

"All right, well, thank you again," the reporter said and then headed off, probably to her next assignment.

"Come on guys," I said as I grabbed Grace’s hand. "Let’s go to the van." And with that, the eleven of us headed across the long stretch of grassy lawn leading to the spot where Dad had pulled up.

This wasn’t our only trip to Indianapolis; we went there every time there was an important rally or event. Dad often took vanloads of children with him because he believed that introducing us to political activism early was important. Dad felt that we needed to take a stand on important issues, and the most important issues, he believed, were those that involved life and marriage.

Dad’s support of life extended to the end of life as well as the beginning. He was completely opposed to any kind of euthanasia and was only okay with the removal of life support when a person was completely brain dead. The time that this was most evident was in the case of Terri Schiavo. During the weeks leading up to the removal of her feeding tube in March of 2005, the spring of my senior year of high school, it seemed that her case was the only thing we could talk about. Terri Schiavo had
been in what doctors called "a vegetative state" for fifteen years; she could breathe on her own, but was on a feeding tube. Her husband now wanted to remove her feeding tube and let her die, but her parents wanted to keep her alive.

"What I don't understand," I said at the dinner table one day. "Is why her husband doesn't just divorce her and give her over to her parents. If they want to care for her - and they do - he should let them. Why is he so adamant about her dying?"

"He says it's what she wants," added Ben. "But one of her friends remembers watching a movie with her about a woman in a vegetative state like she is now, and she says Terri Schiavo said they should keep the woman alive."

"You know," Dad added, "her husband actually has a live-in girlfriend now, and has had two children by her."

"It seems to me," said Mom, "that they shouldn't let a husband who is openly being unfaithful to his wife like that make life and death decisions for his wife."

"Did they ever figure out how she ended up in this condition in the first place?" Hannah wanted to know.

"No, and that's another thing," Mom was really adamant here. "Her friend said she'd been having an argument with her husband for some days before, and that she was worried about going home that night but went home anyway. Officially, Terri Schiavo had a heart attack of some sort, but such an attack could be caused by being strangled, and there were some marks on her neck that would indicate that that is what happened. Of course, she never woke up to tell what really happened that night."

"And also," Dad added, "there was some mix up with medicines or something that made her condition worse, and her husband sued the hospital and ended up being given hundreds of
thousands of dollars to use for therapy for her. He never used it for therapy at all though. My question is, why not?"

"I bet he didn’t want her to get better," guessed Ben.

"I’ve thought about that, and it’s a definite possibility," said Dad. "After all, if he’s responsible for her being in this condition in the first place, he wouldn’t want her to ever tell."

"I bet that’s why he doesn’t want to give her to her parents either," I added. "They might help her get better!"

"What bothers me most, though," said Mom, "is that if they remove her feeding tube she’ll die a slow, painful death. It’s not like she can’t feel things; she opens her eyes and looks around and moves her arms. And, she can actually be fed by mouth; her mother fed her a container of yogurt by mouth at one point. The only reason she’s on the feeding tube at all is that it’s really hard and time consuming to feed her by mouth."

"And her mother says she communicates," added tender-hearted Hannah. "She said she moves her arms and blinks her eyes at command."

"That’s right," said Mom, growing more incensed. "And now they’re talking about removing her feeding tube and starving her to death. We don’t even do that to the worst of criminals!"

"And where does this lead?" Dad asked. "Terri Schiavo, even without therapy, which would probably improve her condition, has the same capability as an infant. If the mother didn’t feed an infant, it would die just as Terri Schiavo will if her feeding tube is removed. A baby is just as helpless, yet it is wrong to starve a baby to death. Why is a baby’s life valued and yet hers is not?"

"It just doesn’t pass the common sense test," said Mom with a sigh.
We spent those weeks praying for Terri Schiavo and watching every court decision. We felt that she should be taken from her husband and given into the custody of her parents for care. Yet court after court upheld her husband’s wishes, and finally, in mid-March 2005, her feeding tube was removed. We were all horrified. Every time I took a bite of food or a sip of water, I cringed for Terri Schiavo, who was slowly dying of starvation and dehydration. Surely someone would stop this madness! But no one did. Day after day passed and nothing was done. More courts were appealed to, and the state government even tried to intervene, but everything was struck down. We followed ever last ditch effort with immense interest, but in the end every last hope was exhausted. Little by little a crowd of protesters gathered outside of the hospice where Terri Schiavo was being kept. I wanted to be there supporting her, standing with her. Time dragged on and on as she survived without her feeding tube for a week. Every conversation was fixated on this crisis, every meal in our house had a somber tone, and I wasn’t the only one who felt guilty eating.

When Terri Schiavo finally died nearly two weeks after her feeding tube was removed, there were tears shed in our house and the feeling of a funeral descended on us. It was like there had been a death in the house. We decided that Terri Schiavo would serve as a martyr for the cause and would help awaken Americans to the need to protect every life from conception to natural death, and that gave us a gleam of hope. As time went by, the somber mood gradually dissipated. What had happened was a tragedy, but it wasn’t the end of the world, and life went on.

These cases, though, highlight the importance my parents put on protecting all life and on safeguarding marriage. My parents’ stance on these issues was typical of that of that of the religious right. With their strong stance on the importance
of human life and the family, these positions seem to come naturally to conservative Christians, and they have become the backbone of the issues the religious right supports. For me, these beliefs and the accompanying political action were always part of life. Indeed, as a child, I embraced all of this wholeheartedly as it gave me a vision and a passion.
Chapter 19: Camp America

Learning Conservative Politics

“I don’t think women should be allowed to vote,” I overheard Mr. Rentschler say one day. I stared at him, shocked; I had never heard someone hold this position before.

“Why ever not?” I wanted to know.

“When our country was first founded,” he replied confidently, “the Constitution only gave men twenty-one and over the right to vote.”

“Yes, but, women are supposed to be equal to men,” I protested.

“They are equal,” Mr. Rentschler said. “But at the same time, they are different. The founding fathers intended for there to be one vote for each household, not one vote for each person. That’s why each male twenty-one and over was given the right to vote; in this way, each voter would represent a household, and each household would be one vote.”

“But that would mean that women would have no say in politics,” I stammered confusedly.

“Sure they would,” Mr. Rentschler assured me. “Women can influence their husbands’ votes. Their husbands are supposed to be their representatives in the political field anyway. My wife doesn’t vote, but that doesn’t mean I don’t listen to her opinion.” I knew he was right to a point; I didn’t think women should hold political offices, at least not over the county level. But this, the idea of women not even voting, struck me as going a little too far.

“But surely that’s outdated,” I responded. “I mean, a system like that can’t work today, can it?”
"We have to try," Mr. Rentschler declared. "We can't just give up on something because we don't think it'll work; if it's what's right and best we have to keep trying no matter what. This kind of thing starts one person at a time, and someday maybe we can actually get this changed."

"But for the time being," I said, still not ready to concede the point. "Doesn't having your wife refrain from voting deprive us of one more conservative vote?"

"You have to do what's right even if it's less politically expedient; you know that," Mr. Rentschler finished, and the conversation ended there.

I had a lot to think about after that conversation. I felt that Mr. Rentschler was right about the ideal way of doing things; after all, I knew that modern feminism had messed up a lot of things in this country. Yet, at the same time, I didn't think that depriving women of the vote could possibly work today, and I knew I wouldn't be willing to refrain from voting myself because that would give conservative Christians one less vote. If anything, I thought that Mr. Rentschler was maybe a little bit idealistic. In many ways, this conversation, though, was typical of my time at Camp America.

Camp America is a week-long summer camp for teens and adults. Its motto is "where God's truth and patriotism go hand in hand."264 Camp America was founded by Noelle Dielman, a homeschool mother, who lives in Louisville, KY, and had held an advisory position on the board of directors of the Christian Heritage Center. She had worked as a camp counselor and a camp communications director, and so decided that she had the qualifications needed to start her own camp, using her contacts to bring in nationally known conservative Christian speakers.

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Her first successful camp was held in Pokagon State Park in Angola, Indiana in the summer of 2000 under the name "Camp America." Its name has since been changed to "Camp American," but because the camp was called "Camp America" when I first attended it in the summer of 2001, I will continue to use that name.

Camp America teaches teens about the U.S. Constitution, the original intent of the founding fathers, the Christian principles upon which the U.S. was built, the proper role of government, the principles of good government, and history, civics, and government from a Christian perspective. Camp America advertises that it will teach teens to "recognize and refute false teachings and morally bankrupt philosophies now so prevalent in American culture. Students will discover the deception of evolution, the importance of purity and morals in a free society, and the pagan connection to the radical environmental movement. Your teen will learn the importance of prayer and action. Most importantly, students will learn that in order to restore America, we must return America to Christ."

Hannah, Ben, and I went to Camp America during the summers of 2001 and 2002, when I was fourteen and fifteen, and a lot of our friends from the Evansville homeschool community went along with us. Here we were truly awash in the beliefs of the religious right and neoconservative politics. We were also surrounded by other homeschoolers who shared our evangelical and fundamentalist beliefs.

Camp America was a week long, and it was attended by around fifty upper middle and high school students who lived in cabins and ate in dining halls. Each morning, we had sessions in which

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we learned about God, the government, politics, and foreign policy; then, each afternoon, we had our choice of activities, from canoeing to water skiing to tubing to playing capture the flag to hiking. There were also always board games available in one of the big open rooms. After supper there was another session, then campfire time, and, finally, bed. We loved Camp America because it meant fascinating teaching and lots of fun with friends; it also meant meeting and getting to know new people with similar beliefs.

Mr. Rentschler, with whom I had discussed whether women should vote, had two sons, Micah and Josiah, and they were both with him at Camp America. One night when everyone was eating pizza for supper, I finished early and was walking around the tables; Mr. Rentschler saw me and called me over to the table where he was eating with his sons.

"Rachel, what is it you’re looking for in a husband?" Mr. Rentschler asked. He and his sons were staring at me, and this was awkward. I finally found my tongue and responded with the answer I had already thought through many times.

"Well, first he would have to be a good Christian with a strong character," I said. "Second he would have to be someone I could truly respect and look up to, because only then could I submit to him and obey him, and third he’d have to be someone who could support me financially. And I think that’s all."

"Thank you, Rachel," Mr. Rentschler said. "We were just wondering." I made a quick exit before he could ask any more questions. The issue of who to marry was an important one, and all of those in my community, both boys and girls, began considering it early. Though dating was unheard of among us and we all intended to practice courtship when we were old enough to marry, we already kept our eyes open for potential spouses and often thought about what characteristics were important.
One of my favorite things about Camp America was cabin inspections. There were generally six or seven students to a cabin, and our cabins were inspected and assigned points each day during morning classes. The points were announced around the campfire each night, and the cabin with the least amount of points each day had to clean the bathrooms when everyone else went to bed.

Each morning, my friends and I cleaned our cabin carefully, sweeping, dusting, and making our beds perfectly. We were extremely thorough. Yet it was more than just the cleaning; even as dirt or un-tucked covers led to negative points, extra flags and patriotic decorations led to positive points. We carefully hung every flag that we could find and strung the cabin with red, white, and blue streamers. We also arranged stones outside of our cabin into phrases like "God Bless America" and "Get America out of the UN." One morning, we rigged a flag so that it fluttered down in front of the door when it was opened. The boys soon learned that they could gain points by creating and labeling OSHA (Occupational Safety Hazard Administration) violations; once, for instance, they unhooked the fire alarm, and another time they rigged the ladder so that it was unsafe. Their biggest victory, though, was when they rigged up a tape player to play a favorite patriotic camp song when the door opened. Cabin inspections were a time of hurried cleaning and patriotic fervor; no one wanted to have bathroom duty at eleven at night.

Campfire time was also lots of fun as we talked about what we had learned that day and sang campfire songs, many of which were very patriotic. There was one pair of songs in particular that we all loved; one was called "The Ballad of the Green Beret" and the other called "The Ballad of the Blue Beret." The Ballad of the Green Beret goes like this:
Fighting soldiers from the sky,
Fearless men who jump and die,
Men who mean just what they say
The brave men of the Green Beret.

Silver wings upon their chests,
These are men, America's best,
One hundred men we'll test today,
But only three win the Green Beret.

Trained to live off nature's land,
Trained in combat, hand to hand,
Men who fight by night and day,
Courage take from the Green Beret.

Back at home a young wife waits,
Her Green Beret has met his fate,
He has died for those oppressed,
Leaving her this last request:

Put silver wings on my son's chest,
Make him one of America's best,
He'll be a man they'll test one day,
Have him win the Green Beret.

The Ballad of the Blue Beret is a parody of the Ballad of the Green Beret; the Blue Berets are the UN Special Forces, and at Camp America, we viewed the UN like Americans viewed the USSR in the 1950s. In this version, for instance, we substituted "he has died on a hopeless quest" for "he has died for those oppressed." The best part was the end, when the dead blue beret
leaves his wife his last request for his son: "Tell him to burn his blue beret."

During the sessions, we listened to big-name speakers from around the country. We learned about the UN, socialism and capitalism, America's Christian foundation, the problem with the size of the government today, the importance of exporting freedom and democracy, and the necessity of electing conservative Christians to government positions today. We felt proud that these adults were trusting and counting on us, teaching us important things and giving us a mission in the world today.

We learned that the UN is trying to take over the world through its web of restrictions and treaties. In fact, we were told that the UN is using fear of environmentalism and global warming, both of which are actually a scam, to control people and make them do what they say. The UN, we heard, has also used these restrictions to deprive people of their private property; there was a farmer, for instance, who shot a wolf that was attacking his sheep and ended up being prosecuted and fined for killing an endangered animal. Also, we learned that people who had endangered animals on their property sometimes simply had their land confiscated by the government against their wills. When it came to dealing with endangered animals, we were told we should simply "shoot, shovel, and shut up" in order to protect our property. The only real way to be free and prosperous, we learned, was to have separate, sovereign nations and strictly protected private property; a system based on free trade and capitalism was best.

Those who live under socialism, we were taught, are lazy, unproductive, and unhappy; in contrast to this, we learned the wonders of capitalism and private property. We soon understood the evils of socialism and were sure that capitalism was the
only system under which people could be truly free and happy. In order to correct the problems in America today, we needed to end welfare, Medicaid, and Medicare; families and churches should care for those in need, not the government.

We learned that the founding fathers had explicitly intended to found a Christian nation. We needed to get our country back to what its founders intended, to bring America back to God and bring God back into politics. Our nation was meant to be a Christian nation, we were told, not an atheistic, secular humanist nation. We were taught that there are forces in America that are trying to make our nation atheistic and rid it of all aspects of Christianity, and the ACLU with its godless, atheistic scheme is right at the head of this movement.

We also learned that the United States government today has grown too large, and that the founding fathers had only intended for the federal government to govern things that states couldn’t, things like trade between states, treaties with other countries, and military protection. The federal government was never intended to outlaw guns or pass laws regarding schools; those things should be under the jurisdiction of the states. After hearing the speakers, we all felt sure that we needed to get the government back to the time when the states governed the people and the federal government only did what the states couldn’t. The country would become more democratic and efficient as the government grew closer to the people; in this way, we would gain more freedom.

We were also taught that it was our responsibility to spread Christianity and freedom abroad; it was our God-given duty to export democracy and capitalism to other countries. Building up our military force to protect our nation and defend freedom abroad was absolutely mandatory, and supporting our armed forces was critical. Military action overseas was often
justified, we were told. I later learned that these political views, political views we were thrilled to defend, are called neoconservative.

In order to attain all of these changes in government and society, we were told that we needed to do our best to get conservative Christians into positions of power in our government. We learned that most of the senators and congressmen in this country today are taking bribes and are nothing but rich party hacks; rather than caring about our beliefs and needs, they care only about power. This was something we children all agreed needed to change, and we could participate in this by electing conservative Christians to power.

Camp America was the highlight of my summers. I loved spending a week having fun with my friends, learning truth and gaining a mission. Camp America was not a place where I learned new political views, but rather a place where the political views Dad was striving to teach me were enhanced and encouraged. I drank in the views taught at Camp America with pride, happy to have a mission and a cause.

We children and our friends who attended Camp America each summer were, in many ways, the core of the group Dad shaped into his campaign force. In many ways, Dad became a political coordinator in our community; we children and our friends were his lobbying force. We loved campaigning with Dad, and we loved learning more about God and government.

In addition to campaigning, Dad also took us children and our friends to the NRA (National Rifle Association) Youth Shoot, which happened one Saturday each summer. We spent the day learning to shoot rifles, shotguns, and handguns; instructors taught us about gun safety and worked to help us improve the accuracy of our shooting. Dad felt that understanding the significance of our right to bear arms was critically important,
and he wanted to make sure we understood this; gun rights were also an issue supported by Camp America where protecting our freedom, especially against the government and the UN, was critically important.

Those of us who formed Dad’s campaign team loved helping him in whatever he needed. For instance, we sometimes went with him to meetings of the Second Amendment Patriots, a gun rights group headquartered in the Evansville area. But whatever we did, our campaign events were always filled with fun, friends, and stimulating conversation and thought. One year, as we were riding the Republican float at Evansville’s Fall Festival in mid-October, wearing Hostettler shirts and calling chants, an interesting conversation took place. We were talking with our friends about the different candidates we were cheering for, and Ben had a question.

“Who’s our State Representative, Dad?” he asked.

“Vaneta Becker,” Dad answered, waving at the crowd as the float moved along the street.

“Is she a Republican?” I asked.

“She is, but she’s a ‘RINO,’ a Republican In Name Only,” Dad replied. “She really might as well be a Democrat.”

“How did she get elected, then?” asked my friend Sarah.

“Well, the way I heard it,” Dad said. “She had an affair with our old State Representative whose last name was Becker; he then divorced his wife and married Vaneta. When he died suddenly, Vaneta replaced him and, with his name, won the subsequent elections. She’s been in office more than twenty years now.”

“Does she have a sign on the float?” Ben’s friend Isaac asked, looking around the float we were riding on curiously.

“No, she hasn’t done anything to campaign for years,” Dad replied. “You see, no one ever runs against her.”
“Wait a minute,” asked Ben, “Why don’t any Democrats run against her?”

“Why should they?” Dad asked. “She votes like a Democrat. This district, district 78, is a heavily Republican district; that means that whoever the Republican candidate is basically wins automatically.”

“Why doesn’t a Republican run against Vaneta Becker in the primary?” I asked.

“I’ve wondered that myself,” Dad answered. “All that a candidate running against Vaneta Becker would have to do is shake a few thousand hands; not all that many people vote in the primary, so if a candidate could get a few thousand votes, he could beat her.”

“I have an idea,” said Ben excitedly. “Why don’t you run?”

“I can’t say I haven’t considered it,” Dad answered. “But I’m not sure I’d have the time for all of you children and running a campaign.”

“But, Dad,” I said. “We could be your campaign team! You could teach us all about the government and about elections and such, and we could put out mailings and walk in parades – we and all of our friends.”

My siblings and our friends turned to Dad and murmured in agreement; we knew we loved campaigning, and the idea that we could actually campaign for Dad himself was thrilling.

“Hm,” Dad responded thoughtfully. “I’ll have to think on that.”
Chapter 20: Learning a Worldview
Patrick Henry College and World Journalism Institute

"Attention, attention everyone," came the voice of an important-looking man in a suit who was standing on a podium and holding a microphone. "I would like to welcome you all to Patrick Henry College. I am so pleased that you have all taken up a challenge like this, spending a week out of your summers studying Constitutional law. This is an amazing opportunity for you and you are clearly an amazing group of young people. I hope you will remember what you learn here for the rest of your lives, and that some of you will come back here for college in the next couple of years."

I was at Patrick Henry College (PHC), and I was thrilled; I had heard so much over the years about this school, and all of it good. Michael Farris, the president of HSLDA, founded Patrick Henry College in 2000. PHC is located in Virginia, just outside of Washington D.C., and most of its students are homeschooled. Its mission is, in part, "to prepare Christian men and women who will lead our nation and shape our culture with timeless biblical values and fidelity to the spirit of the American founding," and its vision is "to aid in the transformation of American society by training Christian students to serve God and mankind with a passion for righteousness, justice, and mercy, through careers of public service and cultural influence."267 I heard Michael Farris, who is a national speaker as well as the founder of both HSLDA and PHC, speak at a homeschool conference in Evansville once, and it was from him that I first heard about the Joshua generation. Farris taught that homeschool parents are

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the Moses generation, leading us children out of Egypt and teaching us truth in the desert; we homeschooled children, then, are the Joshua generation, and it is our duty to take back the Promised Land. Farris even wrote a book called The Joshua Generation: Restoring the Heritage of Christian Leadership. PHC, then, was a step in this plan; its goal was to raise up homeschooled young people to step out and change society at every level, including the government. In keeping with these goals, PHC has five majors: classical liberal arts, government, history, literature, and journalism.

The mission and vision of PHC was perfectly in line with that of my parents, and they were so thrilled when Farris founded it that they donated a full $1000. When the opportunity opened up for me to attend a week-long Constitutional Law Seminar at PHC in the summer of 2003, Mom and Dad were thrilled. As for me, I knew I was going to enjoy this experience. I was surrounded by scores of other homeschoolers who had been raised just as I had and believed just as I did, and I was spending a week at THE college for homeschoolers. This was something I knew I would always remember.

"Tonight, we will be having chapel following dinner, and attendance is mandatory," the man continued. "Because your schedule will be so busy this week, though, we will not be having regular chapel sessions; we will, however, open each day with a devotional.

"Another rule to remember has to do with the dormitories. You have all already taken your things to your rooms; you need to remember that there will be absolutely no boys in the girls dormitories and vice versa, not even in the dormitory lobbies. This will be strictly enforced. If you need to study together, find an empty room in one of the main buildings. Curfew is at
eleven, but you can stay up studying after that, you just have to be within your dormitory buildings."

I met many wonderful friends that week, but though there was time to socialize and have fun together, the focus of the week was on study. And study and study and more study. We spent most of each day in classes and the rest working on our masses of homework. Michael Farris taught most of the classes himself during this seminar, and we students, having been raised hearing all about him, HSLDA, and Patrick Henry College, were slightly in awe.

"Young men and young women," he addressed us in class one afternoon. "It is important to remember that this country should not be run by a group of activist judges. The supreme court was never intended to function this way; in fact, the supreme court was never even capitalized in the Constitution. Because of that, I generally don't capitalize it. You see, there was a question shortly after our nation’s founding about the function of the supreme court itself. Was it only to hear criminal cases? Many hadn’t even thought of the idea that the supreme court could interpret the Constitution itself. With the case of Marbury v. Madison in 1803, though, the supreme court declared that it could interpret the Constitution itself. Now, interpreting the Constitution isn't the problem; writing new things into it is. Over the past hundred and fifty years or so, the supreme court has changed from one that merely interpreted the Constitution to one that rewrites the Constitution.

"In the case of Roe v. Wade, for instance, the supreme court determined that there existed, in the shadows of the Constitution, a right to privacy, and that that this protected the right of women to kill their unborn children. Nowhere does the Constitution address abortion; the court should have said that that abortion is not a Constitutional consideration and
thus left it up to the states to decide this issue as the people chose. In this way, we would have freedom and democracy.

"Rather than inventing rights, the supreme court should be merely looking at the original intent of the founding fathers in writing the Constitution and then making decisions based solely on that. There was a case not so long ago when the court stated that it was looking to precedents set overseas, in Europe, to guide its decisions. It is like the judges have forgotten that this is a sovereign nation and that they swore to uphold the Constitution.

"Another thing that America has forgotten today is that it was founded as a Christian nation. Nowhere does the Constitution say that religious expressions should be suppressed, and yet we need only look to Alabama and the removal of the Ten Commandments display in the courthouse to see this happening. The court should not be restricting our freedom of religion; the Constitution merely states that the federal government was not to establish any one denomination as our national religion. If you read the writings of our founding fathers, it is clear that our nation was intended to be a Christian nation, founded on Christian principles and on the Christian religion. At some point, both our government and the supreme court have forgotten that.

"All right, that's all for today; tomorrow we're going to look at states rights and the ways in which the federal government has taken jurisdiction away from the states, especially in its abuse of the interstate commerce clause."

We all drank in every word Michael Farris said, and, when he finished speaking, there was a buzz in the room as friends got together to go to a meal or study. We had so much reading that week that I thought my brain would stop processing it; we were required to read at least a dozen supreme court decisions
along with many other documents as well. We learned a lot of technical terms and practices of the court along with things like the "Lemon test," a way in which the court makes decisions. The final exam involved writing "actual" Supreme Court opinions in response to two fictional cases we were given; we had to use the technical lingo and the tests the court uses today to write our decisions. Believe me, that final exam was long and hard, yet I came away from that week with an A, lots of new knowledge, and plenty of new friends.

The following summer, the summer I was seventeen, I had a similar opportunity; this one involved World Journalism Institute and Covenant College in Georgia.

My family had subscribed to World, a magazine which offered news from an evangelical, fundamentalist Christian perspective, for as long as I could remember. World was founded in 1986 by Dr. William S. Barker; its goal was to provide "a weekly summary of world news and commentary from a Christian perspective for adults." My entire family loved and read it, and I often had to arm wrestle my younger siblings to get my hands on it. In fact, the magazine was usually grabbed up by the first child who saw it upon its arrival in the house, and as soon as news of its existence was made known, several other children would immediately call for next dibs. It was common to hear Dad say some version of the following each week: "All right kids, where's World? I know it came in with the mail today, now who has it?" I've seen siblings as young as seven pouring through the World; in fact, the magazine had such an impact on my siblings and that it's hard to imagine my childhood without it.

World is owned by God's World Publications, though it has a separate board of directors. In 1999, several of the main people

involved in putting out World founded World Journalism Institute, which also functioned under God’s World Publications. World Journalism Institute was a training school for Christian journalists, teaching them to report the news from a Christian worldview.\textsuperscript{269} As I had been interested in writing and in journalism for a few years, Mom and Dad had often wished they could send me to one of the many seminars World Journalism Institute put on, but, unfortunately, the seminars were generally only for college students. Mom and Dad were therefore delighted when, one summer, World Journalism Institute offered a two-week seminar for high school students; it was to take place at Covenant College in Georgia, and there were going to be many important speakers there, including Bob Jones IV, who would have been president of Bob Jones University except that he had decided to write for World instead. Excited, Mom and Dad signed me up for this seminar as soon as they saw it advertised in World.

Mom and Dad drove all of the kids down to Georgia to drop me off at Covenant College, hitting some sights on the way and making it into a little vacation. As soon as I arrived at the dorms where I would be staying, I started getting to know the other students with whom I would be spending these two weeks. They were all homeschooled and most of them had large families; we all had a lot in common.

We were soon in classes, though, learning that everyone sees the world through lenses. We were told that we should see the world through conservative Christian lenses, viewing everything through a Biblical worldview, yet this didn’t mean that we should - or would - produce mediocre writing. Rather, we were to produce writing that was equal to or better than that of

other media sources, but from a Christian worldview. One of the editors from the Indianapolis Star Press was there, and he worked to teach us how to write well; Bob Jones IV, during his sessions, continued our worldview training. The sessions were interesting and the assignments - like writing articles about each other - were challenging and fun to carry out.

On Sunday, we went to a little Presbyterian church just up the road; the church was small and the service was simple. This was a very old-fashioned little fundamentalist church, and the minister's three teenage daughters all followed the Biblical command to keep their heads covered while in church. Like this little church, Covenant College was also Presbyterian, and it had strong religious undertones. It was founded in 1955, and its motto is "In all things...Christ Preeminent;" Covenant College seeks to give a scriptural, godly education to its students.270

On Sunday afternoon we all went over to the house of the president of Covenant College for a barbeque. It had the feeling of an afternoon picnic in Victorian times; the house was incredible, the grounds were gorgeous and sprawling, there were important adult guests, and the students strolled about in their nicest clothes. I loved this atmosphere. I spent most of my time that afternoon enjoying the grounds and snooping around some of the rooms in the house. In one of the drawing rooms I found bookshelves with wonderful old books, and I was soon immersed in books written a hundred and fifty years ago, learning new stories and examining interesting old woodcut pictures. Some of the important adult guests came upon me there and we had some interesting, grown-up conversations about classic works and old authors; I was in my element.

Through the course of our seminar, we students had the opportunity to put together an actual newspaper. We went into Chattanooga, a city near Covenant College, to interview people on various topics for writing articles, and we also wrote articles on topics around the college. Interviewing random strangers in Chattanooga was challenging and scary, but it forced me to learn, grow, and become more comfortable. At the end of the two weeks we printed our newspaper, full of articles we had written, on actual newspaper facilities. There was a real feeling of accomplishment. I had learned a lot and grown as a person and as a writer, and I had also made lots of new friends. I had taken on yet another challenge, and I had made it through.

My parents sent me to these seminars in order to help me see the world through a Biblical worldview and give me training that would benefit me in the future as I worked to further God’s will in our nation. Mom and Dad were very proud of me and my accomplishments, and I loved having their trust and learning new things; I accepted everything I was told as true, and I was ready to conquer the world. Then, in the spring of my junior year, something happened that gave me and my siblings and friends the opportunity to be completely involved in the political process in a unique way.
Chapter 21: Marching the Campaign Trail

_Dad runs for State Representative_

"Betsy, I think this is the sign I’ve been waiting for; this article, I mean," Dad said, pointing to the article Roberta Hieman had written about my family during the fall of my junior year of high school.

"Do you mean about running for State Representative against Vaneta Becker?" Mom asked.

"Yes," Dad replied. "I’d been praying for a sign. You know this is something I’ve thought of off and on for years. I really think I could do it, but I’ll only do it if it’s what God wants me to do. Do you remember how I laid out a fleece with this article?"

"Yes," Mom responded. "You said that if they quoted you saying something good about the public school system you would see that as a sign that you should run."

"Yes, and look," Dad said, pointing at the copy of the article. "They do quote me saying something positive about the public school system. But more than that, the entire article is completely positive about our family! I knew that if we ran there would be questions about our family size; after this article, though, many of those questions would be laid to rest."

"That’s true," Mom said. "Do you really think you should do it? Remember, Jon, I’ll support whatever you decide."

Around Christmastime, Mom and Dad called us children together and told us of their decision. The next year was an election year, and Dad had decided to run for Indiana State Representative in the Republican primary that spring. We children were thrilled.
Our first campaign meeting was a Tuesday evening in early January of my junior year. We had a large meeting room in the unfinished side of our basement, and the room was soon crowded with about forty homeschool middle and high school students; we met every two weeks, and the first part of each meeting consisted of learning about our government and the political process. We each received a binder with documents and information, and Dad gave us each jobs to do, things to research, and campaign planks to write.

Dad taught us about the founding fathers and their wisdom in forming our government; he told us about the purpose of the government - to keep citizens from infringing on each others' rights and otherwise leave us alone - and about the ways in which our government had gone wrong. We learned that the government had grown too large and needed to return to its simple role and stop interfering in our lives. Dad taught us a lot about the conservative view of the government and neoconservative politics, and we students drank it up. We loved feeling that we could make a difference and affect the government, and there was certain exhilaration in working together with all of our friends on our own election.

Dad was taking on Vaneta Becker, our current Republican State Representative, in the May 4th Republican primary election. Vaneta Becker voted pro-abortion sixty percent of the time, was extremely anti-business, and voted with the Democrats so often that the Republicans all admitted that her vote was unreliable. In contrast, Dad was pro-life, pro-family, pro-gun, pro-business, and in support of smart, effective government and school choice. Dad told us, though, that the most important thing about this campaign was that God was in control and guided it from the beginning. Dad wouldn’t have started the campaign
without feeling led by God to do so, and we believed we saw God helping us every step of the way.

Dad waited until the last minute to sign up in Indianapolis to run for State Representative because he wanted to make sure that no one signed up on the Democratic ticket. Dad was running against Becker in the primary, so even if he defeated her and got onto the Republican ticket, he would still have to run in the general election in November. Ordinarily, the Democrats didn’t put a candidate up against Becker, both because she was liberal and because ours was a heavily Republican district. But if Dad won the primary there was a possibility that a Democrat might try to run against him in the November general election because Dad was a political newcomer. In signing up at the last minute, thus keeping the Democrats from having the time to put someone up to run on their ticket, Dad made sure that he would be unopposed in the general election if he won the primary.

It was while signing up for candidacy in Indianapolis that Dad coincidentally met the man the campaign team only ever knew as “the spy.” He was a State Representative and told Dad that he and other Republicans had been hoping for years for a way to get Becker out of office. Though she was a Republican, Becker had, as we knew, been stymieing Republican action and voting against Republican legislation. Our spy, then, was thrilled to hear about Dad’s campaign, and offered to do anything he could to help. He began periodically giving Dad advice for the campaign and information about Becker’s recent voting records. Dad said that his chance meeting of our spy was an act of God, and saw it as another confirmation that he was doing what was right.

Dad had a plan. Our district was heavily Republican, and the contest here was in the primary between Dad as a conservative Republican and Becker as a liberal Republican. Dad felt that all he needed to do was convince conservative
Republicans to vote for him in the primary, rather than for Becker, the incumbent. Therefore, we didn’t do mainstream TV advertising or even yard signs. We didn’t want to alert the liberal Republicans or the Democrats (who could choose to pull a Republican ballot in our open primary and vote for Becker so that she’d win) that anything was going on; we only needed to target the conservative Republicans.

Dad bought shirts with his name on them and passed these out to his campaign team and closest supporters; we were to use the shirts to advertise to other conservative Christians. We called them “Fulton for Life” shirts and wore them everywhere. These shirts were especially useful in getting the word out at church.

Dad also did some radio advertising on Christian stations and we campaigned heavily at the annual Evansville Right to Life Banquet. In fact, about fifty high school and middle school aged homeschooled friends of ours attended the banquet with us; we wore Fulton for Life shirts, passed out stickers, and held signs outside. Our biggest way of getting the word about Dad out, though, was through targeted mailings; we found lists of pro-life voters, pro-gun voters, and pro-business voters, and we sent out specific mailings addressing each group.

The hardest part about mailings was that each envelope was hand addressed in order to ensure that people actually opened the letters rather than throwing them away as junk mail. This meant that we, Dad’s campaign team, had to hand address thousands upon thousands of envelopes. Our hands grew very tired, but we soon found that we could do this while talking, listening to radio dramas, or watching movies together.

Our first mailing went out to those Republicans in our district who supported Indiana Right to Life. One Tuesday evening after a campaign meeting, everyone came together to fold
the letters and stuff them in the pre-addressed envelopes; we then sealed the envelopes and stacked them in a box. Dad merely signed each letter and we all did the rest. Putting out mailings like this was amazingly fun because everyone worked together and had a role to play. Even four-year-old Micah Yoder actually helped, and the whole house was abuzz with fun, friends, and activity.

Once the mailing was all prepared, we had a problem. Dad had had the money for paper and envelopes, but he didn’t have the $3000 needed for postage to put out this mailing. Sure, money had been coming in through fundraising, but it had all been appropriated and we didn’t have enough money for the mailing at the moment. Dad made phone calls the next day in an effort to find a big donor to cover the mailing, and we had plenty of people praying over this problem. When Dad got home from work, he was feeling rather down; he had made phone calls all day, but it hadn’t done any good.

"Hey Dad," I said as he walked into the house. "There’s another donation letter in your box. It came in today and I put it there."

Dad went to his box, opened his letter, and shouted aloud with a look of absolute disbelief and joy on his face.

"Bets, kids!" he called out to anyone who could hear him. "Look at this! It’s a check for $3000 exactly!" We gathered around and cheered, and everyone on our campaign team took heart at the news. Once again, this was tremendous affirmation that we were following God. There was simply no way that this donor could have known that we were in immediate need of exactly $3000. And so, with God smiling upon us, we sent out the mailing.

Things weren’t always fun and pleasant, though. Political campaigns always come with pressure, and we found plenty of it.
Dad’s fundraising didn’t bring in as much money as we needed, and this was difficult for Mom. Dad began using our own money to fill in what we still needed in funding, but Mom felt like he just needed to be forthright with people, especially well-off people, about his campaign’s financial needs. Dad had a lot of people who verbally supported him, not just people we knew but also people in the Republican Party, Indiana Right to Life, the National Rifle Association, and Indiana Right to Work. Yet, though there was a lot of talk, there were not enough funds, and most of what did come in came in was in small amounts from those in our church and the homeschool community.

All through the month of April, our excitement rose. We continued holding campaign meetings, putting out mailings, and campaigning at various events. We also added another activity to all of this; we made use of Evansville Right to Life’s phone banks and spent hours calling through lists of pro-life voters and giving them information about Dad. There were dozens of volunteers involved and we made hundreds of hours worth of phone calls. We children were having the time of our lives; homework was effectively on hold, we saw our friends all the time, and we were truly involved in something that mattered, something that made a difference.

In the end of April, only two or so weeks before the May 4th primary election, we held a rally. Our goal was to bring hundreds of conservative supporters together, generate excitement, get conservative media attention, and address thousands of postcards with personal notes. The idea behind the postcards was for each person coming to the rally to bring the addresses of friends within the district and then address Dad’s postcards and add personal notes. Dad’s goal was to use this kind of contact - people telling their friends - to gain voters.
The rally, complete with balloons, food, a popcorn machine, and friends, would also be a fun place for children and families.

When the day of the rally arrived, we were excited. Nana and Poppa, Mom's parents, had arrived to help out until the end of the campaign, and it was good to have them there too. Right after lunch, Mom took the older kids and, with some of the campaign team, headed over to the 4-H center where we had rented a large, gym-like area for the rally. When all the chairs were set up, the tables covered with decorations, and the room filled with balloons, people began to arrive. The atmosphere was fun and festive and everyone seemed to be having a good time. There weren't as many people there as Dad had hoped, only just over a hundred, but we addressed postcards double time to make up for it; we had lists of the people from our church who were in our district, and we worked on going through those names as we addressed postcards.

"Remember, guys," Dad reminded us. "Make the notes you write on the postcards personal. You don't have to give information about where I stand on the issues, that's all on the front of the postcards. Just tell the people you're addressing them to that you go to the same church with them, or how you know them, and that you support me 100% and would like their support as well."

We addressed postcards until I thought my hands were going to freeze up. People took stacks of unaddressed postcards with them as they began to leave. Once only the mainstays of the campaign team were left, we looked with pride at the stacks of addressed postcards and then set about cleaning up. We arrived home that night tired but happy. Dad was disappointed that the turnout at the rally hadn't been higher, but he felt that all he could do was try. And really, that was the theme of his campaign; God had told Dad to try, not necessarily to win.
As Election Day approached, we were filled with hope and tense with suspense. Nearly everyone important in pro-life, pro-gun, and pro-business circles supported Dad. Dad continued to be in contact with his spy and we were hopeful that we had convinced enough conservative Republicans to vote for Dad to actually win. We had been doing our best to get our word out to our target audience. The night before the election, Dad got everyone together for our last meeting.

"I want to thank everyone here for being in this with us, and for all the hard work you have done and will do tomorrow. We’re going to do our best out there, and then we’re going to celebrate with a good old fashioned barn party. We’re not going to have a TV at our party; instead, we’re going to enjoy the night and not worry about whether we’ve won or lost. If we’ve won, then we’ll face a new challenge: the Indiana General Assembly. If we’ve lost, that’s okay, it’s the will of God. God called me to run, and that’s what I’ve done. Think of all the good that we’ve accomplished even if we lose; we’ve educated dozens of our teens in government and the political process, we’ve alerted people to the importance of these issues, and hopefully Vaneta will, after facing a threat like this, vote more conservatively in the General Assembly. The truth is that we can’t lose tomorrow, because whatever happens, God has worked. Just remember that. Also, I couldn’t have done this without all of you. Thank you. Now, you all know the plans for tomorrow; come ask me or Betsy if you need any more information. Let us go forth with the support of God."

All morning that Monday, Mom had had a group of us clearing over at a barn about a mile away. The Durkholtzses, who owned the field where the Cemetery of the Innocents was always located, told us we could use their barn for our election night barn party, but that we would have to clean it ourselves. And clean
we did; we swept, eliminated cobwebs, sprayed disinfectant, and set up tables for food and chairs for those who might want to sit. Dad wanted us to have a big barn party on election night to reward those who had helped on the campaign and give everyone some good, old fashioned fun. He hoped to get news reporters there to see what homeschoolers were really about. First, though, we had to get through Election Day.

Because we all had to be at the polls the next morning at six, a good number of our friends spent the night at our house Monday night. We enjoyed our sleepover and were thoroughly excited; soon, soon, the adventure of our lives would come to completion. That next morning Dad woke us early and he and other volunteers began the process of bussing everyone to their assigned polling places. Dad had mapped out which polling stations were most important and lined up scores of volunteers to work them all day, wearing Fulton for Life shirts and handing out information. He also arranged for some of the adults to go from station to station making sure we were okay, bringing us meals and snacks, and checking if we had everything we needed. When the polls closed at the end of the day, these drivers picked up all the volunteers and transported them to the barn party. It was an amazing day. We students were truly doing something real for our cause, and we loved it.

All of my friends were at the barn party that night, and I'm not exaggerating when I say that. There were three hundred people at the barn party all told, and it was amazing. We had borrowed a popcorn popper, so we had all the popcorn anyone could want, and we also had chili, chips, and lemonade. We had hay bales around for sitting on and there was music playing; there was lots of chatter as people ate, visited, and laughed with each other. The whole barn was filled with excitement. The best part, though, was the square dancing. We hired a square
dance caller and everyone had the opportunity to learn how to square dance. It was, indeed, a real barn party.

True to his word, Dad didn't allow any news of election results at our barn party, and, as it got later in the evening, people began to head home for some much needed sleep without having any idea of who had won. Most of the core campaign team stayed to help clean up after the party, and it was only when the barn was back in order that we headed home and hit our pillows.

The next morning, I walked down the stairs to see Mom and Dad checking the news on the internet. The votes were all in, and we had lost. Dad said he thought that we hadn't made enough conservative Christians aware of the issues to change their votes from an incumbent with a well-known name, and that some Democrats may have been alert enough to what was going on to decide to draw Republican ballots and vote for the liberal candidate. Whatever happened, we children were crushed. Dad told us not to be upset because we had done what God wanted and we had done it well.

We had a final wrap-up campaign meeting at which Dad reiterated that our loss did not mean that God wasn't in control or that we hadn't done things right. We had, he said, succeeded in what we set out to do; we had run a good, clean campaign and taught a lot of teens about government and politics. For Dad, the focus was always largely on raising up the next generation.

This entire election is an example of the way the religious right that emerged in the 1990s operates, and also of the way that Dad worked to pass his conservative values on to his children and all of those around him. Dad may not have won the election, but we had all learned and grown and the media had gotten an image of interested, involved homeschoolers, an image that couldn't help but be noticed by others. Loosing a battle...
didn't mean that we had lost the war; rather, we had shown our values and beliefs to the world and Dad had trained dozens of enterprising young homeschool students in political involvement.

In many ways, this campaign sums up my entire growing up experience. Dad made use of evangelical and fundamentalist beliefs and practices as he ran for office, and he also involved homeschool students and the homeschool network as he activated and typified the religious right. I was a huge supporter of my father in his campaign, and all of these issues filled me with vision and passion. I was ready to take on the world, and my senior year of high school, the year following Dad's campaign, was filled with preparation for my next challenge: college.
CONCLUSION
Only a few weeks after Dad lost his bid for State Representative, I went to a local university to take the SAT. I was finishing my junior year of high school and had only one year left before I would leave for college. I was nervous, oh so nervous; after all, I was the first child to be finishing high school and the first child to look at college. I was also extremely concerned about my SAT scores because I knew they would reflect on Mom and Dad’s teaching. I was tense with anticipation as I waited to find out how I had scored.

"Rachel, look what came in the mail today," Mom said one evening, holding out a large packet.

"What is it?" I asked.

"It says it’s from the College Board," she told me meaningfully.

"Aaa! It’s my SAT scores!" I yelled in both excitement and worry. "Give it to me," I said, and took the packet in my hands, looking at it fiercely.

"Open it, Rachel," Mom urged me. "Tell us how you did." The kitchen was filled with siblings cleaning up the supper dishes and Mom and Dad were standing nearby as well; I quickly realized that I couldn’t open my SAT scores in front of everyone.

"I’m going to take it to my room and open it, and then I’ll come tell you," I said. I ran to my room, my heart beating fast; how had I done? Was I a success or a failure? I would soon know. I quickly ripped the packet open with trembling hands and then stared at the results: "Verbal - 710; Math - 780." I quickly did the math in my head; I had gotten a score of 1490 out of a maximum of 1600. I knew that Mom had gotten a 1260 on the SAT
when she took it, and Dad had gotten a 1360. My score was fantastic!

"Mom! Dad!" I ran down the stairs and flew around the railing, through the hall, and into the kitchen, which was still full of activity. "Guess what I got?" The jubilation was obvious on my face as I practically shone with excitement.

"What?"

"1490."

"Oh Rachel, that’s wonderful!" Mom hugged me as Dad beamed with pride.

"I bet they’ve watered down the test," Dad said. "That’s how you did better than me." His face was an enigma for a moment.

"What?!" I exclaimed, and then I saw the twinkle in Dad’s eye. "Oh, Dad, don’t tease like that!"

"I love you Rachel, and I am proud of you," Dad said, giving me one of his rare hugs. I was aglow with joy. Yet, I had only just entered into the process of applying for college and scholarships, and there was a lot of work was head of me.

Mom was busy that fall with a new task; she had to write my high school transcript, and this was not easy. Mom had kept careful school records from previous years, so she knew what I’d done and what grades I’d gotten, but it wasn’t always easy to see what counted as what. Not all of our homeschool curricula corresponded directly with classes in public schools, and that meant that Mom had a real headache on her hands. She worked on writing my transcript on and off for weeks, and only finally finished it when I gave her two days of uninterrupted time by taking the younger children off her hands and watching them myself. Of course, I had my own things to deal with; I was applying to colleges and writing scholarship applications.
Deciding where I would go to college was a long and difficult process. I considered going to Patrick Henry College or Covenant College, but I soon decided against either of those because of the cost and because I wanted to go to a secular college so that I could stand up for what I had been taught and truly make a difference. I was tired of having everything made easy, tired of only being surrounded by people who agreed with me; I was ready to take on the world and truly make a difference for God. I looked around at a number of different colleges, and finally settled on Ball State University, a state school in Indiana that was about a five hours’ drive from Evansville. That I was to attend Ball State became clear in my mind when I was accepted into the Honors College there and given a full tuition scholarship (room and board not included).

In the spring of my senior year, I participated in Evansville’s homeschool graduation ceremony. The homeschool community in Evansville was large enough that we were able to have our own graduation ceremony, and I graduated with fifteen other homeschooled students. Our graduation was held at Faith Bible Church, a local church which was made up mostly of homeschoolers. Each child stood up with his or her parents and received a diploma, and each set of parents had a few minutes to share their favorite — or not so favorite — things about raising their child. It was a time of pride, joking, and, from the mothers, tears.

"Rachel, I have raised you for the past eighteen years, and it is now time for you to take the torch," Dad said when it was my turn. "I have raised you to do good and not evil, to know and learn and explore, and, most of all, to understand truth. You have not always been an easy child to raise; you were often headstrong and a bit bossy. Yet for all that, you have turned out beautifully. You are everything I had ever hoped, and I am
proud to send you out into the world. People have asked me if I really think you’re ready for college, ready for Ball State. My answer to them is this: Is Ball State ready for Rachel? You will take it by storm. You will succeed in your classes and, as is most important, in your knowledge of the truth. No one can take that from you.”

Dad said this and a lot more, and then Mom made some comments as well, mostly funny stories from when I was young. I was glad when they finally let me sit down, but I was also proud. I was graduating from high school and would be going on to college. I would stand up and show the world what I could do and share the truth I had been taught. It was my turn to prove myself, and I knew I could do it.

The best part of graduating, though, was my open house. We held it at our house the Sunday afternoon after the graduation ceremony, and there were literally well over a hundred people there, including scores of children. Mom and Dad had known that there would be a great number of families with children at my open house, and we were prepared. Dad had let the grass in the back field grow up and had then mowed a fascinating maze in it. In addition to the maze and a number of outdoor games, there was also plenty of food, conversation, and reminiscing as people came and went. By the time the party was over, I was happy, content, and very tired.

I carefully packed my things for college as the summer drew to a close, and Mom took me shopping for anything I didn’t already have. I was incredibly excited; I was stepping from childhood to adulthood, and all of those years of careful training would soon pay off. To be honest, I couldn’t wait to show people the truth of the Bible and be a witness to those around me. I had never been friends with people who weren’t dedicated Christians, and this would be my first chance to
influence others for God. I was sure I was up to the task, and Dad was sure too. He was extremely proud of me and ready to send me off as his representative in the world.

And then it was time for me to leave for Ball State University. My siblings didn’t want to see me go; they all loved me as dearly as I loved them. Leaving them was truly hard, especially because baby Mabel, who brought the number of children in my family up to its complete twelve, had just been born. Yet, I felt that leaving was necessary; after all, I had to grow up and leave someday, and besides, it wasn’t like I would never see them again. Mom was incredibly sad to see me go, and she told me that she was losing her right hand. I had indeed done a lot to help around the house and with the children, and Mom was about to lose all of my assistance. More than that, though, Mom was seeing her first child grow up and leave home, and this is something that is hard for every mother. Dad, though, was more proud of me than anything else. As he drove me up to Ball State (Mom stayed home because she felt that leaving me there would be too emotional for her), he gave me his last bits of advice.

"Remember, Rachel," Dad cautioned me. "Remember that Christ is in charge of all things. Give everything to him and spend time in the Bible and in prayer. Don’t let anything distract you from following Jesus. Remember what we have taught you. You know that many children who are raised as conservative Christians reject all of that when they go off to college; they are brainwashed by the liberal professors and secular atmosphere. Don’t let that happen to you."

"Oh, I won’t," I assured him.

"I know you won’t," Dad said. "I know you. You are my daughter and I have taught you. Stand firm in the truth that we share. Stand firm in the truth of the Bible and of creation. Let
those around you see Christ in you, let them see Christianity as it was meant to be. We have raised you, Rachel, to be part of a generation that will bring change to this country, a generation that will restore Biblical morality and bring God back to the government. Don’t forget about the task God has given us in the world today. Be a light to the world and my representative. You’re about to go off to college, about to enter a whole new environment and a whole new world. Do your stuff, Rachel; make me proud."

"Don’t worry, Dad," I said. "I will." I was about to leave home and stand on my own, and I had no idea then what changes the next few years would bring. At college, I found the beliefs that my parents had taught me questioned and challenged, and I eventually had to do a lot of reevaluation. Though my core values remain the same, much of what I believe has changed through my years of college. That, though, is another story.
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