

CRESCENT OF BETRAYAL

DIRECTOR'S CUT (v. 1.0)

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CRESCENT OF BETRAYAL

Dishonoring the Heroes of Flight
93

ALEC RAWLS



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PART THREE

GETTING AWAY WITH IT

CHAPTER SIX

THE ABETTERS

When the Bowl of Embrace redesign was announced in November 2005, my online exposé detailed how the original crescent was a Mecca-oriented *mihrab*, akin to a giant Muslim prayer-rug, and how adding a few trees behind this prayer-rug/*mihrab* did nothing to alter its presence or integrity. The giant crescent was still there and was still the central feature of a mosque. There were still 44 glass blocks on the flight-path, the Tower of Voices was still a Muslim prayer-time sundial, etcetera ad nauseum.¹

Dozens of other bloggers linked my post, clobbering the Memorial Project with a second flood of chastisement. That brought a call from the Project's Publicity Manager, Chris Martin. The first thing I asked Mr. Martin was whether anyone at the Project had ever investigated the Mecca-orientation of Murdoch's giant crescent. "It's not a crescent anymore," Martin said flatly. "It's a bowl. It's not called a crescent anymore, and there is no more crescent."

Hadn't he read my exposé of how the original crescent structure remained completely intact in the phony redesign? How could he call me without looking at the post that had prompted his call? Oh well. I re-phrased the question: "Did anyone at the Memorial Project ever investigate the Mecca orientation of the original Crescent of Embrace?"

"Everything points *somewhere*," was his dismissive reply. Aha. So he was not unaware of the issue. And this was the Project's answer? "Everything points somewhere"? I wonder what Mr. Martin would say if he saw a gun pointed at his chest. "Nothing to worry about. Everything points somewhere!"

Apparently Mr. Martin's task was to try to put me off. Warnings of terrorist attack simply did not interest him. I obviously needed to talk to someone else and managed to get Mr. Martin to agree to ar-

range for me to talk to Project Manager Jeff Reinbold. When Martin failed to carry through, I called Reinbold directly and told him that Chris Martin wanted me to talk to him. Yes, I knew that wasn't true, but since Chris Martin was pretending it was true, I figured I could pretend that he was being honest.

Again, my first question was whether anyone at the Project had ever investigated the hundreds of warnings people had sent in about the Mecca orientation of Murdoch's giant crescent. Reinbold answered that they had "talked about the possible Islamic symbolism of the Crescent," and that they had "asked the architect about it." So no, as of early December, no one at the Project had investigated anything for themselves. Paul Murdoch's denials apparently made investigation unnecessary!

Did Reinbold know *anything*? Had he read my exposés? Yes, Reinbold said, they had seen my posts. He knew about the upper section of Memorial Wall, placed right in the position of the star on an Islamic crescent-and-star flag. He knew about the forty-four glass blocks on the flight path. He saw my analysis of how the Tower of Voices seems to be a year-round accurate Islamic prayer-time sundial. "We decided we didn't need to worry about that."

Why? Because they thought it wasn't real? Because no one was raising enough of a stink about it to cause a P.R. problem? How could they be blasé about all these Islamic and terrorist-memorializing elements?

"You can verify the Mecca orientation of the Crescent of Embrace in half an hour," I said. "I can walk you through it." But Reinbold was placidly uninterested. "Who do I talk to then?" I asked in frustration. "Superintendent Hanley? Chairman Reynolds? Are there any higher ups I can talk to?" "Oh, they will be *much* less willing to talk to you than I am," Reinbold laughed.

So they all knew. All the higher ups were aware that I was warning them that the project was effectively under terrorist attack, *and they didn't want to talk to me!*

None so Blind

Eventually I managed to shame Memorial Project Superintendent Joanne Hanley into opening the door a crack. "This is a warning of terrorist attack," I insisted, "you *need* to hear what I have to say." She agreed to let me walk her through some of my information and went down to Reinbold's office where we could all talk on speakerphone.

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The one thing that seemed to get Hanley's attention was the forty-four glass blocks on the flight path. She knew about the forty glass blocks on the lower section of memorial wall, inscribed with the names of the forty murdered passengers and crew. She also knew about the three glass blocks on the upper section of memorial wall, inscribed with the date: September 11th, 2001. Where was the forty-fourth?

"It is the large glass block at the end of the Entry Portal Walkway," I said, "inscribed with the Project's mission statement." "But that glass block isn't the same as the others," Hanley protested. "It is much bigger!"

I expected to have to work through the different dodges that could be raised. That was fine. Murdoch provided redundant answers to everything. "The proof of the terrorist-memorializing intent," I said, "is how the forty-fourth block creates the exact Mecca-orientation of the central crescent." "But there *is* no more crescent," Hanley protested: "It is a bowl now." "I'm talking about the original Crescent of Embrace design," I explained. "Let's just look at the Mecca-orientation of the original crescent. Then we can see if it is still present in the re-design."

Finally, I was able to start describing how to verify the Mecca orientation of the Crescent of Embrace. We just had to do two things, I explained: we had to punch the coordinates of the crash site and the coordinates of Mecca into an online great-circle calculator to find the direction to Mecca; then compare it to the angle of a line connecting the most obtruding tips of Murdoch's central crescent.

"I can't hear this!" Superintendent Hanley suddenly screeched into the speakerphone, explaining that it would violate the procedures she had set up for achieving a fair design competition. "Not unless the family members who have been involved in the decision-making process all along can hear it at the same time."

The competition ended two months ago, ma'am. But this wasn't about making any kind of sense. Hanley was grasping for any excuse to avoid understanding what Murdoch had done.

Shades of the Clinton administration's "wall of separation" between intelligence gathering and law enforcement, listed in Congress's 9/11 Report as a primary cause of our pre-9/11 intelligence failures. Here was the top executive officer of the Memorial Project, directly responsible for protecting the Project against any serious threat, and

she was creating artificial rules on-the-fly to wall *herself* off from crucial information.

Pretty crazy, but it did give me an in. Desperate to put me off, Hanley suggested that I write up a report, which she could later send to the circular file. "If I write up a report, you'll let me present it to the jurors? Either by conference call, or in person?" "That is certainly a possibility," she answered.

You can see where this was going. So could I. But I was willing to try to work through the process from the inside. I was curious. I wanted a closer look at these people, and I needed to compile my information in any case, which at that point was strewn across a series of blog posts.

For the next seven months, I would take advantage of a series of opportunities to engage many of the players in the memorial debacle: to warn them, to push them, and to shake information out of them. It is a story full of strange twists, but the one constant is that no one would ever actually investigate any of my information. Instead, they would spend a great deal of time running interference against it,, trying desperately to keep anyone from taking it seriously.

One can argue about whether multiple redundant Mecca orientations imply intent, but no one at the Memorial Project ever contested any of my facts. No one denied the redundant Mecca orientations, White House orientations, sundial calculations, or anything else in my report. They simply denied that any of these things mattered.

"Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding;
which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not."

Jeremiah 5:21 (King James Translation)

There is a lot of detail to go into: chapters worth of oddball characters and through-the-rabbit-hole destinations that reveal the truth-avoiding mindset in its home environment. It is a whole culture, a whole way of life. Before delving into the particulars of this journey, let's start with a state-level map, showing just the main twists and turns.

Twist

On New Year's Day 2006, I sent a fifty-five-page report to the Memorial Project, detailing the Islamic and *jihadist* features of the Crescent/Bowl design. Project Superintendent Hanley was so eager to file it

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in the trash that she did something very careless. Before she even had a chance to examine my report, she sent me a letter, which she forwarded along with the report to a handful of Memorial Project functionaries, asserting that there was nothing in the report that anyone needed to bother with.

This became important later when Hanley would try to claim that, before sending the dismissive letter, she had asked several scholars to assess my report and that they had told her that my concerns were baseless. By sending the letter before she had time to acquire such feedback, Superintendent Hanley laid a trap for herself, which she would step into in February, when the Memorial Project announced that a public meeting would be held in Somerset Pennsylvania.

I and a group of *Western Pennsylvania Compatriots* (our nickname), decided to use the public meeting to try to get western Pennsylvania newspapers to publish just our first claim about the Crescent/Bowl design: that the giant crescent was oriented on Mecca. If they would also print that a Mecca-oriented crescent is the central feature of a mosque, or that the redesign left the giant crescent completely intact, so much the better.

We did succeed in getting the claim of Mecca-orientation into the papers, where we were countered by Flight 93 family member Gordon Felt, who told the press that the Project had debunked my information. As paraphrased by reporter Kirk Swauger, Mr. Felt relayed that: "memorial planners have forwarded Rawls' assertions to architectural and religious scholars around the country, who have dismissed the claims as not credible." ²

Shortly thereafter, Superintendent Joanne Hanley's boss, Mary Bomar, Northeast Director of the National Park Service, would be more specific. Bomar claimed to have been told by Hanley that several scholars had reviewed and debunked my report prior to Hanley sending out the letter that dismissed my report. I explained to Bomar that, just from the timeline, Hanley had to be lying. After sending my report on January 1st, I called Superintendent Hanley on Wednesday the 11th to ask when we could talk about it. Her secretary sent the message back that Hanley had looked at my report, but had been traveling, and would not be able to go through it fully until she got back from her trip on Monday the 16th. The dismissive letter was postmarked January 18th. That left no time for her to get any feedback.

I doubted that she had even looked at the report *herself*, given the content of the dismissive letter. The letter made no mention of any of

my information, nor of any attempts to investigate it. It appeared to be a form letter, with a couple of lines at the top acknowledging receipt of my report. The letter described the jury process that selected the winning design and made the wonderful assertion that: “we all understand and agree that the design neither depicts nor was intended to imply any religious iconography.” It asserted that the original crescent is now a circle, without addressing my demonstration that the original crescent remains intact, and it described the Project’s satisfaction with the chosen design.

A person who later submitted his own criticisms of the Crescent/Bowl design sent me the form letter he received in response. It is virtually the same letter that Hanley sent to me. (Both are included in Addendum Ten.)

Could Project Manager Reinbold have been busy rounding up assessments of my report at ultra-high speed while Hanley was traveling? I called him on January 11th as well. “No, I don’t have a copy,” he told me when I asked him if he had seen my report. “I can email one to you,” I offered. “No. I’ll look at it when Joanne gets back next week.”

Not only was there no time for Hanley or Reinbold to solicit and receive assessments of my report, but the letter did not mention any such assessments. If they had actually been acquired, and had debunked my information, surely the letter would have said so, given that , it was cc’ed to other interested parties along with my report would have said so.

Turn

In addition to telling Mary Bomar that Joanne Hanley was lying to her, I also sent her graphical proof of the Mecca orientation of the giant crescent (which Hanley was claiming to have debunked). Just by looking at the overlay of the qibla direction on the orientation of the crescent, Bomar could verify for herself that my information was accurate and that Hanley had to be lying. I reiterated that this was a warning of terrorist attack: she HAD to look into it. In April 2006, Mary Bomar appointed Jill Hawk, Chief Ranger of the Northeast Region of the Park Service, to investigate.

July 2006 brought another public meeting from the Memorial Project, opening up a period of public comment on whether to proceed with the Crescent/Bowl of Embrace design, or choose a “no action” alternative, which would in effect scrap the existing Memorial Project.

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Before a memorial could be built under the “no action” alternative, new enabling legislation would have to be passed.

I and the *Western Pennsylvania Compatriots* would again manage to get the local press to publish our claim that the original crescent was oriented on Mecca, only this time they also published the claim that the huge crescent was still there in the redesign, and that it constituted an Islamic religious construct equivalent to a gigantic Muslim prayer-rug.³ All else that was needed was for Chief Ranger Hawk to confirm the Mecca-orientation of the original crescent.

Jill Hawk had been telling me in the run-up to the July meeting that she did not dispute the Mecca orientation of the original crescent, but when it came to letting others in on this crucial information, she balked, explaining to me afterwards that she hadn’t actually tried to verify for herself whether or not the original crescent was oriented on Mecca, so she couldn’t say anything about it.

This woman had supposedly been investigating my information for the previous three months. I was talking to her every other week, constantly offering to help her fact-check my information, and she had still not checked fact one. Imagine that? You are a top-level law-enforcement officer, assigned to investigate a very specific warning of terrorist attack, *and you don’t do it?*

So instead of Jill Hawk verifying the Mecca-orientation of Murdoch’s crescent, the press corps at the July meeting was treated to Park Service Spokesman Phil Sheridan telling reporters that: “In the end, Mr. Rawls sees a mosque or Islamic designs because he wants to see it there.”⁴

Sheridan is the spokesman for a cadre of people who for the best part of a year refused to check even the first fact that hundreds of people were warning them about, and he publicly accuses *me* of only seeing what I want to see. He has his eyes squeezed tight shut, and accuses *me* of fantasizing.

What Mr. Sheridan was really offering was a description of his own mental process: that the reason *he* does not see a mosque is because he chooses not to. These people don’t even understand the *concept* of looking at the facts.

Conspiracy Nuts and Anti-conspiracy Nuts (*Director’s Cut*)

Maybe Phil Sheridan and his cohorts in the Department of the Interior think that anyone who warns of a conspiracy is by definition a “conspiracy nut,” as if there is no such thing as a real conspiracy. They cer-

tainly act that way, which is pretty bizarre for a group of people who are charged to memorialize the heroes of Flight 93, who thwarted one third of one of the most ambitious conspiracies in history.

Ironically, Hanley, Reinbold, Sheridan *et. al.* display the exact same cognitive style as the classic “conspiracy nut.” Instead of following reason and evidence, they selectively attend only to what can be made to serve their presumptions, and look for excuses to discount anything contrary. Conspiracy nuts are fixed on seeing a conspiracy. The Memorial Project is fixed on not seeing a conspiracy. Both are completely irrational in their fixations.

There is a conspiracy nut I see with some regularity on the sporting field. He often tries to convince people that the Trade Towers were brought down by a series of controlled-demolition explosions. Anyone who saw the buildings come down saw how the pillars under each successive floor blasted apart under the weight of the collapsing building hitting the floor above. Can anyone really be idiotic enough to think that was a controlled demolition, with each explosion somehow perfectly timed to coincide with the building coming down on the floor above?

“Didn’t you see the airliner smash into the building?” I asked this friend. “Did you see the fire weaken the building?” But he isn’t trying to think straight. He is trying *not* to think straight. Anything that conflicts with his presumptions he looks for an excuse to dismiss.

The editors of *Popular Mechanics* magazine have extensively debunked the “Bush did it” conspiracy theories of the “9/11 truth” movement. Examining their evidence and their conclusions in detail, *Popular Mechanics* found that not a bit of it stands up to scrutiny.⁵ In contrast to the debunking performed by *Popular Mechanics*, the anti-conspiracy nuts at the Memorial Project have never contested one iota of my information. It just doesn’t fit their presumptions, so they assume it is wrong, without feeling any need to even investigate it. For nuts of all stripes, if defending their presumptions means putting their hands over their ears and chanting nonsense phrases to keep themselves from comprehending contrary information, that is what they do.

Bring it On (*Director’s Cut*)

If it is up to the Memorial Project and its overseers in the Park Service, Murdoch’s mosque will be approved for building. Maybe that is all to the good. If this hijacking can only be stopped by raising a gigantic

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public controversy, so be it. However big a controversy it will take, the facts will raise it, and maybe the country needs this battle. Maybe the lessons of 9/11, and the meaning of Flight 93, need to be clarified by the heat of contest with their opposites.

The extraordinary ordinary people on Flight 93 heeded warnings from the ground and used their lives to foil their hijackers. To the overseers of the Flight 93 memorial, the mere receipt of a warning is too discomfiting to look into. The memorial to the flight that taught us to connect the dots and take vigilant action has refused to even look at the dots, never mind connect them, all to avoid even thinking about taking any kind of action.

This indictment does not extend to the Flight 93 family members, who stepped up to a difficult responsibility, and laboring under endless grief, struggled to set aside anger in favor of healing and goodwill. As best as I can tell, they had no idea that hundreds of warnings were pouring in, detailing the Mecca-orientation of Murdoch's crescent, and worse. They would all become aware that someone was making these "crazy" claims about mosque features in the Crescent design, but all in the context of assurances that all of my information had been investigated and debunked. Blame the information gatekeepers.

In a March 2006 press conference, President Bush spoke about the need to heed the terrorists' continuing promises to attack America:

Now, maybe some discount those words as kind of meaningless propaganda. I don't... I take them really seriously. And I think everybody in government should take them seriously and respond accordingly.⁶

Is anyone at Interior listening?

Murdoch's terrorist-memorial mosque is much more than a scandal. It is much more even than a terrific wrong that needs to be righted. It is a symptom of a much larger problem: a widespread culture of truth-avoidance that pervades a broad swath of America. Even just within the story of the memorial debacle, this culture of truth avoidance extends to outright truth-suppression, and it spreads well beyond the Memorial Project itself.

The News Media Knew about the Mecca Orientation

To rally press coverage of the February meeting, I sent a press release to all the reporters who had covered the Crescent controversy in September. It promised that protests on the ground would expose the Mecca orientation of the giant crescent. Since the Mecca orientation of Murdoch's crescent had never been reported, surely this was a newsworthy claim that deserved to be published. I offered to walk reporters through the verification, if any of them wanted to become famous.

In my follow up call to *Post-Gazette* reporter Paula Reed Ward, she dropped a bombshell. "We have already covered the controversy about Islamic interpretation of the memorial design," she explained. "It is not called the Crescent of Embrace anymore, and some extra trees were added. There is no more controversy. There is nothing new to report." "But no one ever reported the Mecca orientation of the original crescent," I countered, "and since none of you reporters ever analyzed the original crescent, how do you know it is not still there?"⁷

Her reply was most unexpected. "I *did* report the Mecca orientation of the original crescent!" she insisted. "No you didn't!" was my flabbergasted response: "I've read every one of your reports." "Yes I did," she answered confidently: "Here, just hold on a sec. I'm bringing it up on my computer now."

Ladies: beware the perils of multi-tasking. "I remember," she continued as she looked for the file, "because we had a big editors meeting about it. We saw it in the blogs. Yours was probably one of them. And we decided that because the world is round, it didn't make any difference. You can go *any* direction to get to Mecca."

Are you kidding me? "Muslims calculate the direction to Mecca by the great-circle, or shortest-distance method," I corrected her: "Mecca is in the northern hemisphere, like us. Thus the shortest-distance route to Mecca takes a short-cut towards the North Pole. That's why the direction to Mecca points in a northeasterly direction, even though Mecca is south of us." "Okay," she said, "so I was wrong about that."

Not just you, Paula. If her account is accurate, the entire editorship of the one newspaper that was the source of the majority of wire stories about the Flight 93 memorial decided as a group, way back in September 2005, to suppress the startling information that the Crescent of Embrace was oriented on Mecca. Every editor who was in that room knows full well that Muslims face Mecca five times a day to pray, and here they were pretending that there is no such thing as facing Mecca.

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The truth is that at the height of a national controversy, a group of people who had come to see themselves as defending the Crescent design against right-wing bigots dismissed what they apparently saw as inconvenient information, based on the ridiculous rationale there is no such thing as a direction between two points on planet Earth. "Everything points to Mecca" is about as lame an excuse as can be imagined, but it didn't have to stand the light of day. Only the editors and reporters of the *Post Gazette* were ever supposed to know how they had justified keeping the public in the dark. Thank you, Paula, for exposing that little secret.

Human Shields: Using the Innocent to Protect the Guilty (*Director's Cut*)

How do I know that the editors of the *Post Gazette* saw themselves as defending the crescent design against right wing bigots? Because they said so. In an editorial titled: "This memorial is about the innocent, not the guilty," the Gazzeditors described critics of the crescent as having "small and suspicious minds," "like those who look at innocent kids trick-or-treating at Halloween and see only the devil's work," even as they suppressed evidence that the crescent design is *not* innocent.⁸

What hair shirt prompts the Gazzeditors to gouge their eyes out like this? The editorial declares that suspicion about Islam must be rejected as a matter of principle. Critics had likened the building of a crescent shaped Flight 93 memorial to "putting a swastika on a Holocaust memorial." The *Post-Gazette* rejected the parallel by pulling the multiculturalist trump card: victimization. It is out of bounds to connect Islamic symbols to the terrorists, said the *Post-Gazette*, because "the hijackers who struck on 9/11 also hijacked Islam."

Logically, the proclaimed victimization of Islam is completely irrelevant. Suppose that the Nazis can be said to have hijacked the swastika (as of course they did). Either way, it is just as improper to put a swastika on a Holocaust memorial. Whether Islam has been hijacked by the Islamofascists, or is merely showing its historic character, is very much in dispute. But whatever the answer to that question, it does not change the simple fact that the Islamo-fascists claim the crescent-and-star, and the religion of Islam, as their own. It is fine to contest their claims, but not by being intentionally oblivious to the symbols, and the religion, that they stake claim to.

While the *Post-Gazette* regards claims to victimization as a magic totem that places non-Western cultures beyond scrutiny, it takes the presumptive guilt of the West as a given that nothing can relieve. In

their moral universe, every accusation against the United States must be taken to heart. Their editorial even suggests that we have to prove ourselves against the accusations of Osama bin Laden:

The United States is not at war with Islam—despite Osama bin Laden trying to depict Americans as “crusaders,” an effort that can only be helped by unthinking critics making a big deal about crescents.

According to the *Post-Gazette*, the fact that Osama bin Laden has accused the United States of waging war on the basis of religion makes it incumbent on us to prove our purity by refusing to see possible Islamic symbolism, even to the point, apparently, of refusing to publish the Mecca-orientation of Murdoch’s Crescent!

The method to all this madness is backwards thinking mindset of partisan dishonesty. The editors of the *Post-Gazette* place their moral presumptions about which side they should be on ahead of reason and evidence. The Mecca-orientation of the crescent militates against their presumption in favor of the crescent design, so they regard it as a weapon of the other side, to be dismissed or suppressed however possible.

The Memorial Project has behaved the same way, creating excuse after excuse for Murdoch’s terrorist-memorializing design features. Genuine morality operates very differently. Moral conviction is not supposed to *resist* reason and evidence. It is supposed to flow *from* reason and evidence. When moral presumption trumps reason and evidence, the result is a divorce from reality, both practical and moral.

It is this divorce from reality that has enabled the Memorial Project and the *Post-Gazette* to twist all the way around to actively covering up evidence of terrorist-memorializing intent. It is not that they actually are in favor of building a terrorist-memorial mosque. By intentionally blinding themselves to whatever conflicts with their presumptions, they know not what they do, which as the memorial debacle illustrates, is a prescription for Islamofascist victory.

The New Media (*Director’s Cut*)

An important part of the memorial story is the positive role of the Internet, which is systematically tipping the balance in favor of truth and sense. The ability of old media sources like the *Post-Gazette* to serve its partisan interests at the expense of truth depends critically on

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its ability to control information flow. Over the last five years, the volume of information that is flowing around instead of through traditional editorial bottlenecks has exploded. The partisan power of the old media is still immense, but as with any valuable product, the first increments of information flow around the old-media monopoly have an outsized importance, like the first canteen of water to a thirsting person.

The mainstream media can still dupe the people who trust them, but they can no longer hide the truth from anyone who doesn't trust them. They can no longer parch those who want to drink. "You may own the press," I said to Paula Reed Ward, urging her to publish the Mecca orientation of Murdoch's crescent before her reputation was destroyed, "but we go around you now, and we will go around you on this."

Just as important as the new opportunities for unfettered information flow are the vast informational and analytical resources that are now available online. Ten years ago, the poster-boards submitted by the five design finalists would not have been digitized and posted online. Only a few people would even have been able to view the Crescent design, and only a tiny fraction of those would have had the technical wherewithal to investigate basic facts like the Mecca orientation of the central crescent.

Great-circle calculations are complicated. Not only could few people do it, but achieving trust that such a calculation had been performed accurately used to depend on institutions like peer review. Other specialists had to put their stamp on it, within an editorial process established for applying such stamps of verification. Now, I just post a screen shot of an online calculator.

Sarah Wells' *qibla* overlay goes one better, obliterating the *Gazzettors'* phony excuse for not publishing the Mecca orientation of Murdoch's crescent. Forgot that thing about Muslims facing Mecca for prayer? Here is a reminder:



Figure 59: Sarah Wells' original graphic, posted September 10th, 2005 (3 days after the announcement of the winning Crescent design).⁹

According to Paula Reed Ward, the editors and reporters at the *Post-Gazette* looked at the blog posts on Mecca orientation. Presumably they saw this graphic of Sarah's, which came out three days after the crescent design was unveiled and four days before the Gazzeditors wrote "Arc of Reason." They need to look at the center of it carefully: Pittsburgh. That's you *Post-Gazette*. Sarah's graphic is the headlight of a freight train, coming to smash your stuck little pickup truck. Better get it in gear, old media, because the train is not stopping.

On any given day, there might be half-a-dozen top media stories (along with dozens of lesser stories) that are documented in the blogosphere to be deeply dishonest. Only the grandest perfidies become widely known even amongst blog readers, and only a few of those ever come back to bite the mainstream media (like when Dan Rather tried to tip a presidential election with forged documents), but the docu-

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mentation is all there, years of it now, and the ranks of the informed are growing rapidly.

Truth, Love and Liberty (Semi-bloat)

To understand the culture of truth-suppression, start with its opposite: the Enlightenment, or rationalism, or “modernism.” Modernism began with Freud, who added to rationalism an attempt to understand subconscious, emotional, and other non-rational faculties, but it was still in the tradition of the enlightenment and rationalist search for knowledge. The essence of this tradition is intellectual and moral honesty, honoring the limits of what one has grounds to assert, trusting that the truth is the best guide.

Trusting in truth leads to two things. It leads to love, because one’s eyes are open to what there is to love in the world, and the world is full of things to love. And it leads to the embrace of liberty, because all value comes through the efforts that people make to discover and pursue value, which depend entirely on their being at liberty to discover and pursue value.

The union of truth, love and liberty is what was demonstrated in the heroism of Flight 93. Faced with murderous enemies of liberty, they could not be duped by phony promises of negotiation, and despite being backed into the most limited of options, they still found a way to accomplish as much with their lives as anyone could hope, saving the lives of numerous others.

Thinking straight morally is not a rare achievement, but it is a high one, fraught with opportunities for failure. There is always a temptation to find some truths inconvenient, and set them aside when they stand in the way of what seems to be advantageous for oneself or for one’s chosen side. This truth avoidance is a trap. Presumptions maintained in the face of contrary evidence can only be wrong, and being wrong about which side to be on is devastating.

Paula Reed Ward thinks she should be on the side of the Crescent design, and hence hides the damning information about its Mecca orientation, not because any rational accounting of value places her on the side of the Crescent, but precisely because she is not proceeding rationally. She looks for excuses to dismiss any information that would tell her that her assumptions are wrong. She sees herself as defending her conception of right, and hence feels comfortable that she is doing right, but the means she uses guarantee that her conception of right will be wrong.

It takes learning to avoid this pitfall. Open-ended faculties of intelligence test every avenue of possible advantage. Of course they test the manipulative advantages of untruth, and the seeming advantages are large. Demagoguery is powerful. Much can be achieved through untruth, and that power is itself a lure. It takes a feat of wisdom to comprehend that what is achieved through untruth is worthless because the ends pursued are the wrong ones, arrived at by avoiding truth, not following truth. It takes a feat of understanding to realize that only the truth matters, and that whatever one pursues outside of truth can only be perverse, oblivious to the damage it does, as it fixes on some unreal vision of value in the world.

Muslim fanatics commit suicide in order to commit murder. Is it possible to live a *less* valuable life? The editors of *The New York Times*, leaking every national security secret they can get their hands on, come close. Good sense gets most people through, but good guidance is also important, and bad guidance can be ruinous. Unfortunately, there are some schools of very bad guidance abroad in the world.

Postmodernism (Semi-bloat)

The dominant ideology of mainstream left-elites today is the “post-modernism” that pervades Western academia. Postmodernism teaches that there is no such thing as fact, only interpretation; no such thing as reason, only manipulation and advantage; no such thing as truth, only power. In practice, this creates modern academia’s fixation on race, sex and class.

In a worldview where there is only power, manipulating others for personal or group advantage, those who have power must be oppressors. The “haves” must be victimizers, and the “have-nots” must be victims. The effect is to declare all gains to be ill-got, with the implication that all order should be overthrown. Thus the postmodernist ideal is to be “transgressive.” Gender bending becomes an obsession. Capitalism (economic liberty) is evil because, whenever people are free, *somebody* always comes out on top. America, as the most powerful country in the world, is seen by definition to be wrong. “The other,” being less powerful, is always seen as right, without any need to know particulars. Having less makes them by definition oppressed in the postmodernist worldview.

Using presumption to decide who is right and who is an oppressor, instead of being guided by the facts of how different parties have behaved, is the definition of bigotry and prejudice. Postmodernists

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think of themselves as opposing bigotry when in fact they are the textbook. But for many people, this bigotry is addictive. There is power in claiming victimization and demanding redress. There is power in granting oneself complete freedom to dismiss and distort reason and evidence however one wants so as to fashion the most effective accusations against who one *presumes* to be in the wrong.

Postmodernism may seem esoteric, but its day to day manifestation—politically correct multiculturalism—is pervasive. The “have nots,” the multiple cultures that subsist outside of the prosperous West, are valorized uncritically because, having less, they are defined to be victims, and hence are owed. Valorization is their redress. In contrast, the supposed mono-culture of the West is denigrated as the victimizer, the one culture that is to be spurned.

The name “multiculturalism” sounds benign. Shouldn’t we take the best from all cultures? Of course. But that meritocratic idea is the opposite of the “multiculturalism” of our left-elites. Meritocratic judgment of other cultures is explicitly rejected. Non-Western cultures are to be respected on their own terms. Only Western culture is to be looked down upon. And just as everything non-Western is valorized uncritically, so too is the West attacked just as uncritically.

Thus we get such spectacles as Yale University barring ROTC and military recruiters from campus because the military has the politically incorrect impertinence to ask its homosexuals not to flame, while at the same time Yale grants “special student” admission to Sayed Rahmatullah Hashemi, the public spokesman for the Taliban’s policy of crushing homosexuals to death.¹⁰

The upshot is a *religion* of partisan dishonesty. The premise that there is no such thing as truth, only interpretation, frees the postmodernists up to concoct whatever phony accusations and charges of victimization they can find a way to make stick in their constant search for manipulative advantage. That makes multi-culturalism a religion of false witness, a *pre-Ten Commandments religion*, akin in this way to the fascist interpretation of Islam.

False Witness and Political Correctness (Semi bloat)

Postmodernism’s proclivity for false witness is the origin of “politically correct” speech, with all of its cumbersome protestations of inoffensive intent. In a culture where anything that can possibly be misunderstood as offensive or bigoted is intentionally misunderstood so as to claim victimization and demand redress, the politically correct

must constantly add little markers of what they *don't* mean, in an attempt to limit the possibilities for attack. The elaborate qualifications that mar politically correct speech are a defense mechanism that the politically correct use to protect themselves against each other's ill will.

Comedians like to joke about politically correct speech, but the very fact that everyone gets it makes it not funny at all. Intentional misunderstanding has an inherent tendency to propagate. Wherever the culture of intentional misunderstanding intrudes, people have an incentive to take precautions against it, and so the language and presumptions of intentional misunderstanding spread, until it has come to infect much of our society.

Neither is this phenomenon limited to identity politics. Those who haven't figured out in one area that only the truth matters will be tempted to trade truth for perceived advantage in every area. Thus the spread of political correctness is a marker for the spread of partisan dishonesty generally. The power of this demagoguery should not be underestimated. The simple strategy of grasping at every excuse to claim victimization is the engine by which the left succeeded in taking over academia.

On the strength of something close to pure demagoguery, academia is now stacked with Women's Studies departments, Black Studies departments, and every kind of ethnic specialization, all dominated by leftists who give absolute priority to what doesn't matter (group affiliation) over what does matter (individual merit). Outside of these departments, affirmative action hiring requirements have been used to slant *all* hiring towards left-wing women and minorities. Such is the power of manipulative claims when the larger society does not resist.

From academia, the postmodern religion of false witness sends its graduates out to our left-elite institutions: most importantly our ever more radically left-wing Democrat party apparatus, and to our thoroughly postmodernist mainstream media.

Moral fundamentals like love, truth and liberty should not be a right-left thing. In a healthy society, there can be political differences where both sides trust in truth. Unfortunately, it *has* become a right-left thing. Western leftism has embraced its own perverse union of truth and liberty, where contempt for liberty (starting with contempt for economic liberty) creates contempt for truth (they already know which side they should be on), and where contempt for truth (finding excuses to avoid whatever information does not support their pre-

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sumptions) creates ever greater divorce from moral reality and ever greater contempt for liberty.

Obviously this is not a description of most Democrats, but it is an accurate description of the left-elites that control the Democratic Party, and which have taken over our academic and media institutions. This institutional power puts our left-elites in a position to dupe much of middle America, Democrat and Republican both. The authors of *The New York Times* know full well that they are maximizing every opportunity to shade the truth for manipulative advantage. If readers of *The New York Times* acclimatize to this, their concept of truth becomes twisted. Right just comes to mean the upholding of politically correct assumptions.

It is difficult enough to negotiate differences in understanding when everyone is trying to be reasonable. It is impossible when people are not reasonable. Trust in truth should be everyone's first allegiance. That means postmodernism has to go. The pre-9/11 mindset has to go. There is a reality out there, a very dangerous one, and we had better face it.

Takeover (*Director's Cut* bloat)

It isn't hard to see how the ideologically committed can take over institutions. Once they achieve a majority in key places, they can use that majority to control hiring.

A recent study found that college and university faculty in America self-identify as 50 percent Democrat and 11 percent Republican.¹¹ That five to one Democrat dominance is enforced by control over hiring, so that over time academia is becoming ever more monolithic. Self-identified "liberals" in academia are up from 39 percent in 1984 to 72 percent today.¹² The disparity in recent hires at Stanford and Berkeley is 183 Democrats to six Republicans.¹³

The same thing has happened in the news media, but the media leans even *further* left. A 1996 survey found that 89 percent of Washington correspondents voted for Bill Clinton in 1992 while 7 percent voted for the first President Bush.¹⁴ Similar ratios hold for other years.¹⁵ Statistically, our news media is a projection of our Democrat-left academia. Thus it is no fluke that a group of editors at the *Post-Gazette* would get together and decide to suppress crucial information. They are doing exactly what the postmodernist religion they learned in academia taught them to do. There is no truth, only interpretation.

There are no facts, there is only manipulative advantage for what one presumes to be right.

We are lucky with the Memorial debacle. This isn't a nuclear bomb that is about to go off in Pennsylvania. No one is going to die because of the fecklessness and irresponsibility of the Project leadership. Instead, we get to see up close the dysfunction that leaves us vulnerable to attack, and in a place where we still have time to get it right. There is time to expose this large swath of America that believes there is no such thing as truth, only interpretation, and to overrule it.

We couldn't learn that lesson from a bomb. The evidence would be destroyed, but Murdoch's Murdoch's art-attack leaves all the evidence completely intact. We can dissect it, learn from it, and hopefully reduce our vulnerability in the future.

Getting the truth-suppressors out of the many positions of responsibility they have insinuated themselves into in our society will be a long and difficult task. In a free society, they have to be out-competed, which is not easy when they constantly lie and cheat. But liars and cheaters cannot stand up to scrutiny. The crucial first step is to expose the problem. Then we have a fighting chance to overcome it.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DUTY TO WARN

INSIDE THE BROAD TWIST and turn of the Memorial story are a host of illuminating episodes. One of the people who Superintendent Hanley cc'ed her dismissive January 18th letter to was D. Hamilton Peterson, president of Families of Flight 93.¹ Since Hanley's dismissive front letter pretty much guaranteed that Peterson would not even look at the attached report, never mind distribute it to family members, I decided I had to distribute the report to the family members myself. They were aboard a hijacked Memorial Project. The idea that the Project was hanging up their warning calls for them was intolerable, so I ponied up twenty dollars and used Yahoo's Intelius service to look up addresses for as many of the families involved in the jury process as I could find. They had accepted responsibility for choosing an appropriate memorial and they needed my information.

When I followed up a week or so later, the response was markedly hostile. I don't blame the families for that. They were ensconced in a collegial process that used "proper channels" to arrive at consensus results. Now here was someone violating all the rules, telling them that crucial information had been systematically withheld from them by the very people they had gone through this whole emotional ordeal with. They had been grieving for four years, and I was trying to tell them that they needed to rip it all back open. Of course they didn't have to listen to me. I just had to give them the chance.

What was most interesting was Joanne Hanley's reaction. Her January 18th letter had been dismissive in a completely generic way. It did not refer to any of the substance or even the nature of my information. Now that she had the anger of the families behind her, this changed:

Your purported theories foster misrepresentations, lack factual basis, and they serve only to disturb family members. Our priority now is to move forward with the building of the memorial to honor the heroes of Flight 93, who gave their lives for this great nation.

She could not name anything I had misrepresented. Out of the fifty-five pages of factual analysis I had submitted, she could not point to a single claim that “lacked factual basis,” but now that she had the families on her side, she was willing to level the charge of misrepresentation. The families had been disturbed by “your efforts to invade their privacy,” wrote Hanley, and where it had only been implicit in her earlier letter that she was ready to move for final approval, she now boldly declared that her priority was to “move forward with the building of the memorial.”

My angering the families was Hanley’s “gotcha” moment. In her world, where there is no such thing as fact, only interpretation, she believed she had won the game. The families are against him! And if all that mattered was spin, she would be right. But ultimately, it is the spin that doesn’t matter.

Boy is Joanne Hanley going to be surprised to discover that there actually is such a thing as the truth, and that it is impervious to any gale of feelings and wishes. It is her world of manipulation and P.R. that is phantasmagoric. She spends her breath fogging up the windows of her car so that she can’t see reality, but reality is still out there, and when she runs into a tree at sixty miles an hour, having fogged up windows is not going to save her.

Just ask the NASA board that investigated the Columbia space shuttle disaster:

At every juncture of STS-107, the Shuttle Program’s structure and processes and therefore the managers in charge, resisted new information.²

Ostriches, it turns out, don’t actually bury their heads in the sand. Government bureaucrats, it turns out, actually do.

Western Pennsylvania Steps Up (*Director’s Cut* bloat)

The announcement for the Memorial Project’s February meeting promised a “major exciting announcement,” with architect Paul Murdoch in attendance. This seemed to imply a formal approval Murdoch’s Crescent/Bowl of Embrace as the design. There would still be

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environmental impact statements and other materials to work up before final approval could be secured from the Secretary of the Interior, but the Memorial Project's own formal approval would logically come first, and with Murdoch in attendance, no other "major exciting announcement" was plausible.

To mobilize opposition, I contacted everyone who had linked to my earlier blog posts, asking them to link my new "action alert." In particular, I asked if there were people from western Pennsylvania who could go to the meeting and distribute information. To get press coverage, there would have to be boots on the ground, raising the prospect of controversy at the meeting. I got a few nibbles, but only one bite. It would be enough.

I was contacted by a very conservative, very patriotic and very gregarious western Pennsylvanian named Bill Steiner, or "Big Bill Steiner" for long. It turned out that Bill and his wife Connie had visited the crash site in the summer of 2005, when the Memorial Project was soliciting comments on the design competition. Out of hundreds of comments on the crescent design, the Memorial Project claims that only one was negative. That would be Bill. His analysis is spot on:

All of the final entrants produced superior work in quality and presentation, but we were shocked to discover that the design entitled, "CRESCENT OF EMBRACE" features a perfectly shaped Islamic Red Crescent when viewed from above. An inadvertent coincidence, we are certain.

The crescent feature is the centerpiece in this design. It is perfectly proportioned to resemble those found on the minarets of mosques in any photo we have ever seen. Its shape is NOT that of a crescent moon, but more fully circular and precisely tapered to resemble the Islamic Crescent, a predominant symbol of the Islamic Religion. The horns of the crescent are pointed directly at the crash site!

If this design is chosen, it will contain not only the perfectly proportioned Islamic Crescent shape done in deciduous trees, which in Autumn, will turn brilliant red to be seen by everyone especially those in the air, but also, this design embraces the word "Crescent" as a primary word in name and theme.

For these reasons, my wife and I find the "CRESCENT OF EMBRACE" design entry, however well done, to be grossly inappropriate, disrespectful, and in especially poor taste, given the

religious background of the zealots who perpetrated this event and the worldwide conflict with militant Islamists in which we are currently engaged...political correctness be damned!

Bill Steiner, comments submitted to Memorial Project, July 31st 2005.

If the Project was looking for substantive criticism, instead of polling data, nothing more needed saying, but Connie knew better. She told Bill at the time that the crescent design would win. It was by far the most beautiful. Thus Bill and Connie knew what was coming, and when the initial controversy erupted, Bill started following the discoveries that bloggers, including myself, were posting online. When he saw my February appeal for boots on the ground, he knew this was his battle, and he put all of his patriotic gregariousness to work.

With me rattling the newspapers and Bill talking to police and firefighters and pastors in town after town, the State Police were not taking any chances, sending a contingent of officers up to the meeting, bracing for the worst. It just gave Bill and his little cadre of *Western Pennsylvania Compatriots* more captive ears to bend. Like Bill, the police arrived early, and by the time of the meeting, they had all pored over the graphical proofs of what Murdoch had done.

Almost everyone at the meeting got our handouts. Bill chatted up everyone he could. In the meantime, I also seemed to be making headway.

The Bureaucracy Produces a Hero

Two days before the Somerset meeting, I finally managed to get the attention of Mr. Gerry Gaumer in the Department of the Interior's Communications Office. I had been encouraging reporters to prod the Memorial Project and the Park Service for responses to my information and I figured the Communications Office might be ready to pay some attention. "You are facing a public relations nightmare," I told Gaumer: "Do you want to know about it?"

He listened as I explained the information we were going to be handing out at the Somerset meeting. "We have graphics that prove that the original crescent was oriented on Mecca," I told him, "and that the original crescent is still present in the redesign, still oriented on Mecca."

I also explained how a Mecca-oriented crescent is the central feature around which every mosque is built, and about the forty-four

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blocks. "All of these facts are trivially easy to verify," I said: "Many people have verified the Mecca orientation of the giant crescent, but not the Memorial Project. They have had a fifty-five-page report from me since early January and have refused to investigate any of it."

For twenty minutes, Gerry let me talk him through the appalling facts about what Murdoch had done: the star on the flag, the dozen mosque elements, with occasional details on how to verify my various claims. It turned out that Gaumer knew Reinbold. If my claims could really be verified as easily as I was claiming, he couldn't believe that Reinbold hadn't done it.

I told him the timeline, that I got the letter dismissing my report before Reinbold even had a chance to even look at it. "Ask him," I suggested, and Gaumer agreed to give Reinbold a call.

I guess he is a man of his word, because no "major exciting announcement" was issued at the public meeting. The only announcement was of a new fundraising head, but that announcement had already been made in the flyer announcing the meeting, where it was listed as a separate item from the "major exciting announcement."

Not that the failure to publicly embrace Murdoch's redesign would necessarily make any difference to the Project's plans. They could just go to work on their environmental impact statements and other final report requirements without ever announcing their acceptance of Murdoch's redesign. At the time, however, it seemed that our activism might have accomplished something, and my follow-up call to Gaumer reinforced this impression.

He said he couldn't talk to me. "Well, when *can* we talk?" I asked. He responded with the most insistent whisper he could muster: "I CAN'T TALK TO YOU."

That didn't work for me. "If I have succeeded in exposing Murdoch," I said, "that makes him a wounded animal. He is never going to work in this country again, and a wounded animal is dangerous. I need to know what is going on."

"All I can say," Gaumer whispered, "is that a LOT of people are looking at your report."

Good. So the story would have at least one hero. Gerry had not hung up my warning of terrorist attack, but had passed it on. Good man.

Mary Bomar

Imagine my surprise then, at the letter I received the next week from Mary Bomar, director of the Park Service's Northeast Region. Bomar just repeated Hanley's boilerplate:

All who have participated in the design process agree that the recommended design was not intended, either intentionally or coincidentally, to hold any religious symbolism...Our priority, now, is to move forward with the building of the memorial.³

This made no sense. How could "a LOT of people" look at my information without a single one of them bothering to verify a simple direction to Mecca? Were "a LOT of people" all just doing P.R. assessments to figure out if they could get away with planting a terrorist-memorial mosque on the crash site? They couldn't actually look at my information and still go forward, could they?

One part of the letter detailed what Bomar had apparently been told by Hanley:

Superintendent Hanley responded to your letter on January 18, 2006 after extensive consultation with the leadership and members of the Flight 93 Memorial Project partners, including the Families of Flight 93, numerous National Park Service (NPS) staff, and several scholars.

This was Hanley falling into her own trap, as I outlined earlier. Any consultations that had actually taken place could only have taken place *after* the January 18th letter was sent.

Why would Hanley make such reckless claims? Apparently my conversation with Gerry Gaumer, and the buzz he got started, put Hanley on the hot seat, where her reaction was to double her bet. Instead of admitting she hadn't investigated my information, she concocted tales about how thoroughly she had had my report vetted by outside experts.

Of course I let Mary know that Joanne was lying. If Joanne wanted to raise, I'd go all in. That's the advantage of trusting in truth. It is easy to play poker when you know that your opponent's only hope is that the cards don't get turned over. My bet would pay off. A month and a half later, Mary Bomar would assign Chief Ranger Jill Hawk to investigate my claims.

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"Even if we *were* to verify your facts, we would *never* publish them!"

Joanne Hanley is not the only one who doubles her truth-suppressing efforts when she is caught suppressing the truth. Paula Reed Ward showed the exact same mentality.

After Paula admitted that she was wrong to think there is no such thing as a direction to Mecca, I started pressing her again on the newsworthiness of the Mecca orientation of the original crescent, and the continued presence of the original crescent in the Bowl of Embrace redesign. "Come on," I said to her, "this is huge. The crescent is oriented on Mecca??? Now that you know that you were wrong to dismiss this information earlier, surely you will want to publish it now."⁴

"No," she said. "I can't just publish your views. You have to be a newsmaker. Go make some news. Then I might be able to write about it." That was exactly what we were planning on doing at the public meeting that week, but being ornery, I couldn't accept Paula's "you have to be a newsmaker" rule. "Isn't it a reporter's job to investigate facts and break stories? Why do I have to break the story?" "I love facts!" Paula insisted. "I love a story where I can check facts! But it is not going to happen in this case."

I have to admit, I like this girl. She doesn't back down from an argument. She can be arguing completely untenable positions, but she doesn't run, or get angry. She just keeps on spilling the beans.

"If you don't investigate these facts," I said, "wouldn't that be like the passengers on Flight 93 hanging up the phone when they were told that terrorists were flying airplanes into buildings? You can't turn a blind eye to evidence that the memorial is being hijacked." But Paula could not be so easily bullied into doing the obviously right thing, not when there were still excuses she could muster.

"Why don't *you* report it to *your* local newspaper?" Paula countered. "Because they do what *you* do," I said. "They only report what "newsworthy" people say at "newsworthy" events. They only report other people's views. They don't investigate facts." Not when the facts do not support their favored conclusions.

Our newspapers are perfectly willing to investigate facts when they think the facts are on "their" side. If not, they find people who will state the newspaper's position and treat them as "newsworthy." Paula and her cohorts flip back and forth between these modes depending on which serves their partisan interests.

Paula's pretense of journalistic rules is as transparent as Hanley's pretense that it would be improper for her to hear evidence that the

Crescent of Embrace is a terrorist memorial mosque without the Flight 93 family members hearing it at the same time. Nevertheless, we critics of the Crescent design had no choice but to play by the rules set down by the pro-Crescent newspapers, and we did our best. With the Steiner crew going to the meeting, we would have both newsworthiness *and* the facts on our side. Take your pick, Paula. Follow either rule, or follow both.

She knew the facts. She knew the Mecca orientation of the crescent. Didn't she *have* to cover it? I did my very best to paint her into a corner: "If we put out enough criticism at the meeting, if we turn the Mecca-orientation of the crescent into a news event, *then* will you investigate the facts? *Then* will you verify the Mecca-orientation of the crescent?"

"We might cover the event," Paula answered, "but we won't investigate the facts." I pretended incredulity: "Even if they are completely unambiguous? I can walk you through it."

My continued optimism that I might be able to tempt her to tell the truth struck her as incredibly dense. How could I be such a dunce? "You are *not getting it*," she finally blurted in exasperation: "Even if we *were* to verify your facts, we would *never* publish them!"

I'm convinced.

Freedom's Angels (*Director's Cut* bloat)

It is impossible to miss the large number of truth-challenged women in the memorial story, but not all the girls adhere to the no-such-thing-as-truth ideology.

Immediately after 9/11, Lei Hennessey, a tall, slim, curvy, blonde artist from Washington State, started work on a set of large steel angels, "freedom's angels," to overlook the three sites where America had been attacked. In particular, she felt called to the Flight 93 crash site. A patriotic truck driver named David Owen volunteered to drive Lei and the angels across the country, resulting in a name change: Lei Hennessey Owen.

"I climbed in, and I wasn't what he expected. That's the story," Lei told reporter Kecia Bal: "We would never have met any other way."⁵

Lei and David set up their Flight 93 angel adjacent to the crash site and bought a house nearby.

Big, garrulous Bill talked to Lei, as he seems to talk to everybody, and found that she had her own interesting experiences with the Memorial Project. Bill put us in touch, and we shared information. At the

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unveiling of the original Crescent design, Lei had been stunned by its overt Islamic iconography. She always felt that the insignificant changes made in the redesign (consisting mostly of re-coloring the publicity shots), left this iconography much too intact. Having her intuitions confirmed by my information, she protested by putting her Flight 93 angel up for auction and donating the proceeds to soldiers and children's charities.

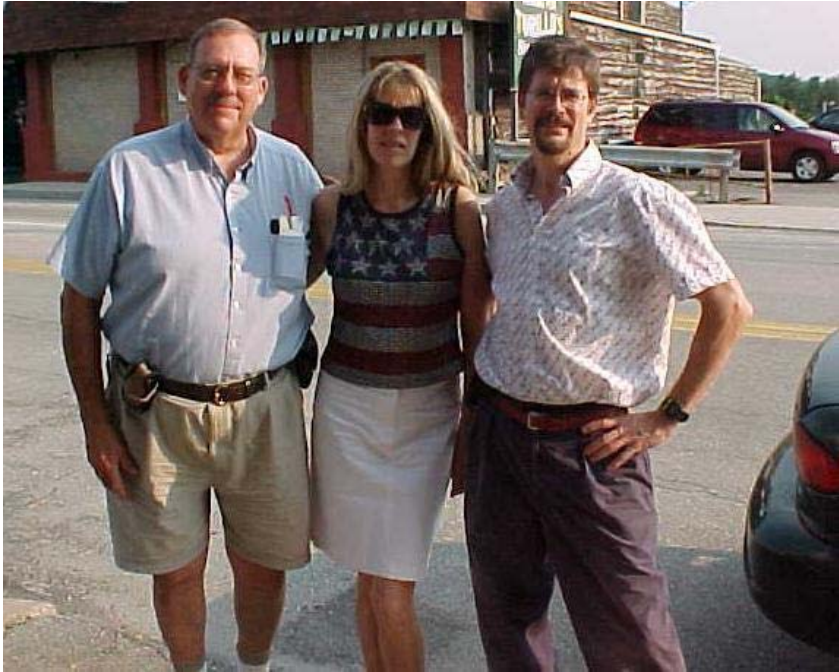


Figure 60. Bill Steiner, Lei Hennessey and Alec Rawls in Jennerstown Pennsylvania.

"We don't want her in the middle of all of this," Owen told reporter Kecia Bal. "I still think the design is controversial. I don't think the changes have addressed all the concerns." Lei and David expressed strong mixed feelings about making the Freedom's Angel into a protest, but such are the consequences of being able to comprehend what was in front of their eyes. The Memorial Project, as usual, was unconcerned. Despite extensive efforts on Lei's part to contribute to the Memorial Project process, they had always pushed her away.

Apparently the decisions about who would participate in the Memorial Project all stemmed from the Somerset County Board of Commissioners. It was all local politics, Lei told me. That sounded odd, but Googling "Somerset County Board of Commissioners," I dis-

covered that they were indeed responsible for appointing the membership of the Flight 93 Task Force.⁶

According to the Project's enabling legislation, the Task Force would in turn recommend who would be appointed to the Flight 93 Advisory Commission, which would provide assistance to the Task Force.⁷ Thus the Task Force would be the seat of power, but the enabling legislation is silent on where the Task Force would come from. Somehow this ultimate power landed in the lap of the county commissioners.

There is nothing necessarily wrong with that. There is no reason to think the Commissioners of Somerset County would be prone to any particular bias. They and the people they appointed to the Flight 93 Task Force deserve every thanks for all of the hard work they put in to produce the best memorial they could. Still, local politics might explain how a particular viewpoint could come to dominate the process.

Like Minds (*Director's Cut* bloat)

Lei Hennessey is a professional artist who had already shown extraordinary dedication to the memorialization of Flight 93. She did everything she could to participate in the Memorial Project process, getting herself formally nominated, and submitting top level recommendations. Yet this conservative patriot was excluded, while design professionals of a leftist bent were embraced.

One of the Stage I jurors is Richard Haag, a landscape architect from Washington State who is a passionate advocate for letting the homeless take over Seattle's city parks, attacking efforts to reduce homeless encampments with histrionic charges of "social cleansing" (drawing an intentional parallel to "ethnic cleansing").⁸ Try to make the parks in your city usable by families and children, and Mr. Haag will in-effect accuse you of genocide. Lei drove herself down from Washington State to try to participate, but the Memorial Project went to Washington and got this Haag instead.

Stage II jury member Tom Sokolowski is lauded in art circles for using the Andy Warhol museum to make political statements.⁹ Others think he abuses art for political purposes. After the nation's newspapers spent months running the iconic Abu Ghraib photo of the Iraqi prisoner standing on a box with phony electrodes attached to his fingers (without informing the public that the prisoner was being spoofed) Sokolowski decided that these photos needed further exposure as art. Veterans were not amused.

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Joseph Dugan, president of the Soldiers & Sailors National Military Museum & Memorial, told reporter Mike Crissey that it was “appalling” to pass these photos off as art:

“They are trying to call somebody’s amateur photographs of some lower personnel’s actions artwork,” Dugan said. “It is a disservice to all the veterans who served...This should not be used as an art exhibit.”¹⁰

Abu Ghraib was the biggest nothing in the history of war, serious only as a breakdown in military discipline. It was mostly panties on the head, combined with a few incidents of real sexual abuse, spun by the American media into six months of slander against our entire war effort. After the first time the photo of the electrodes-on-the-fingers spoof was published, it was never again identified as a spoof, only as a source of outrage.¹¹ Pure disinformation.

“Can we believe we are a more noble nation at war than other nations?” asks Sokolowski about the Abu Ghraib photos.¹² How about: “Can you believe there really are people who can witness the most extensive measures ever taken to avoid civilian casualties, in a war to free a people from the grip of an insane mass murderer, yet pick out a grossly anomalous but still very mild breakdown like Abu Ghraib, and ponder whether we are really any different than the 9/11 terrorists?”

Not that a politically left figure like Sokolowski should necessarily be kept off of the Memorial Project because of his psychotic hatred of the military, but one has to wonder whether the patriotic Christian “angel lady” might have been excluded because of *her* politics. The famous collegiality that the jurors all talked about might have been disrupted if they let aboard someone who would stick her finger down her throat at the moral-equivalence and blame-America-firstism of a moral-grotesque like Sokolowski.

Follow the Money (*Director’s Cut*)

Tom Sokolowski says that his mission is to be “a catalyst for change in the culture of western Pennsylvania.”¹³ The problem, obviously, is that it is much too *red* for Mr. Sokolowski’s tastes. Charles Humphrey, former board member of the Warhol Museum, says that this impetus to change the culture comes in part from the museum’s funders:

Funders and the public really are demanding that visual arts organizations become more proactive places where meaningful

dialogue takes place. The Warhol happens to be on the front bleeding edge of it.¹⁴

Which funders are out to change the culture of western Pennsylvania? When I mentioned Sokolowski's jury position to Richard Dillon, a videographer from PC-TV Pittsburgh who had come out to tape some of my information, word-association popped out of his mouth: "Theresa Heinz Kerry money." Sure enough, it turns out that Heinz Kerry made a surprise visit to the Warhol Museum in 2005 where she wrote a check for four million dollars.¹⁵

Could that be part of the story? Heinz Endowments was the first major private backer of the joint public-private Memorial Project, providing a grant of \$500,000 to fund the design competition.¹⁶ Did the Heinz money come with strings attached? The Heinz fortune comes from western Pennsylvania and the Heinz Endowments part of it is mostly spent in western Pennsylvania.¹⁷ Thus it is certainly plausible that the Heinz Endowments might be influential with a local political board like the Somerset County Board of Commissioners.

This is not to cast any aspersions. There is hardly a better cause to fund than the Memorial Project, and political pull is not in itself untoward. The aspersions are cast by the truth-avoiding behavior of the Memorial Project itself. If political pull has anything to do with how the Project came to be dominated by truth-avoiders, that would interesting to know.

CHAPTER EIGHT

DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE

WHEN MY EXPOSÉ of the phony Bowl of Embrace redesign was getting a lot of web traffic, I used my referrer-logs to find where the traffic was coming from, so that I could visit and answer questions. On occasion, it was a real trip through the rabbit hole, popping up in some very funny places. Who knew there is a huge online community gathered around the glories of getting vomitting drunk and having bad sex with beautiful girls? (Hey, in virtual-reality everyone can be beautiful.) It's like driving across the desert and happening onto Las Vegas. Only in America!

That was the Tucker Max site, which sent a thousand readers over one afternoon. Most peculiar of all was *TBogg* land. *TBogg* himself seems to be "...a somewhat popular blogger" (his tag line) of the link-editor variety on the left-wing "moonbat" side of the blogosphere (as opposed to the "wingnut" side of the blogosphere).

"Nuts. Just plain nuts," was the commentary with *TBogg*'s link to my exposé.¹ Not quite as terse as Glenn Reynolds' signature "heh," but close. When I started adding my two cents, the moonbats passed the word around that I was in attendance and the comment thread turned into a two-day event, blowing up to thirty thousand words, or about a third of the length of this book! The left is definitely online. (*TBogg* has removed the comment thread from his website, but anyone who wants to view it can find a copy at CrescentOfBetrayal.com.)

The *TBogg* event is worth exploring because it exposes the truth-avoiding mentality in the most naked detail, showing not just the blatant truth-avoiding excuses of the individual actors, but also a weird collective mentality, where the assembled number of truth avoiders somehow think it makes a difference that it is hundreds of them against one me. If only they can be united in thinking, for instance,

that there is no such thing as a direction between two points on planet Earth (how does that even occur to people?), that is sufficient for them. Their idea of reality is whatever they all agree to say. They literally do not believe that there is any such thing as the truth. *TBogg*-land is postmodernism personified.

In addition to being illustrative, *TBogg*-land would actually turn out to play an important part in the Memorial Project story. One of the anonymous *TBogg* commentators would eventually trace back to the Memorial Project leadership, and become central to the Park Service’s internal investigation.

30,000 Words

When I happened onto the *Tbogg* comment thread, it was nothing but a handful of ignorant assertions. No one knew any facts about the Crescent of Embrace design so I began by challenging the *TBoggers* to check the Mecca orientation of the giant central crescent. I gave them the coordinates of the crash site, the coordinates of Mecca, a link to a great-circle calculator, and a link to my analysis of the orientation of Murdoch’s crescent. Spend a few minutes fact-checking fact one I suggested, then we can go from there.

The first person to respond was “Pere Ubu” (a media professional from South Carolina, he claims). Mr. Ubu actually did plug the coordinates I gave him into the great-circle calculator and reported back that the calculator gave the direction to Mecca as 317.5° from north, which is way off from the 53.5° degrees from north that, according to my analysis, a person facing into Murdoch’s crescent would be facing. How had “Pere Ubu” managed to come up with a different answer? To get a clue how the *TBogger*’s mind works, look at a screenshot of the KATV calculator:

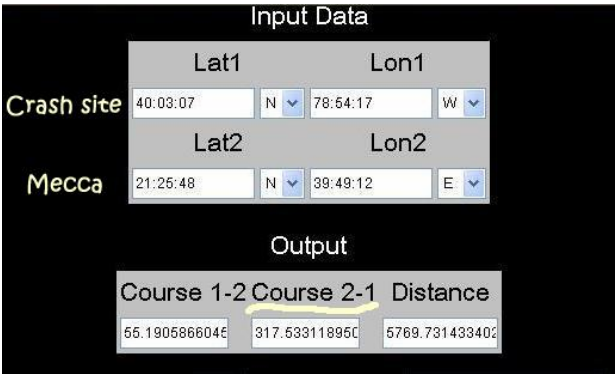


Figure 61. “Course 1-2” gives the direction from the crash-site to Mecca. “Course 2-1” gives the direction from Mecca to the crash-site.

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“Pere Ubu” punched in the latitudes and longitudes correctly, but instead of reporting back the crash-site-to-Mecca direction, he reported the Mecca-to-crash-site direction, even as the direction that corresponded to my analysis stared him in the face. This would be the pattern for the next two days. If there was any possible way to misunderstand rather than understand, the TBogg mind lunged for it every time.

I just acted as if Pere Ubu’s mistake was innocent.

317.5 is the direction from Mecca to the crash site. So good! Mr. Ubu punched the numbers into the calculator correctly. He just looked in the wrong heading box for the result.

Taking the Mecca-orientation of the crescent as verified, I tried to get the TBoggers to take the next step:

Do you know what a crescent that people face into to face Mecca is called? It is called a *mihrab*, and is the central feature around which every mosque is built.

Surely that would cause some people to think, and it did, but not the way normal people think. It only prompted the TBoggers to think of how to defend their presumptions against this next bit of information. Pere Ubu fired back with what would become one of several mutually exclusive running themes amongst the TBoggers for the next two days:

Your point is? There’s a EEEEEVIL Islamic Conspiracy to align the memorial with Mecca to channel the earth energy and revive the Elder Gods? The Black Magic Islamofascist symbolism is going to turn us all into Muslim fanatics? What?

He accepts that the crescent is oriented on Mecca, but only for purposes of calling it superstitious to objection to an Islamic religious structure on the crash site. In TBogg-land, any *and every* excuse not to think straight is embraced. “Sarah” chimed in with the all-purpose *ad hominem* excuse:

I’m a psychiatric social worker who often works with individuals with fixed delusions. To them, their perceptions and interpretations of events around them make perfect sense, and everyone else is crazy, irrational, ignorantly unconcerned or part of

the conspiracy. Sorry, Mr. Rawls, but I'm getting a pretty strong sense of the delusional disorder from you.

She sees how Pere Ubu, faced with a great-circle calculation that verifies the Mecca orientation of the crescent, absurdly picks the course direction that gives him the answer he is looking for (the wrong answer), and she decides that it is *me* who is crazy. She is Pere Ubu's intellectual twin, jumping to whatever conclusion allows her to defend her presumptions, no matter how idiotic. And so it went, through five hundred comments.

Strength in Numbers of Errors (*Director's Cut*)

To a rational person, one error sinks you. If there is a flaw in your logic, then you can't trust your conclusions. Thus rational people are careful to vet what they embrace. It all has to make sense. But the TBoggers are trying to avoid making sense. Their goal is to avoid letting anyone checkmate them into acknowledging any fact that they consider inconvenient, and for this purpose, they find it useful to embrace every irrationality they can find. An interlocutor might be able to shoot down some of their errors, but they know that, if their errors are prolific enough, no one will be able to correct all of them, which in their strange world view means that they win!

It is like a Gulliver's travel, landing on the shore of this strange land where the denizens assiduously pack more and more errors on to their bodies like some kind of protective mud. A partial litany is both entertaining and informative.

Quick to raise its head was the claim that there is no such thing as a direction on planet earth. Apparently weak minds think alike. It is certainly not an obvious dodge. Where does such an idea even come from? A commentator named Jennifer tries to explain:

...you can draw a line that bisects any circular or semicircular, arced or crescent-shaped object, pavement pattern, wall, street curb, etc. that points to Mecca. Or for that matter, a line that points to ANYWHERE. The curved end of my bathtub can be bisected by a line that points to Mecca.

No, Jennifer. That would require that your bathtub actually be pointed towards Mecca.

I gently correct her mistake, offering my encouragement that at least she seems open to the idea that orientation towards Mecca might be a problem, if I could convince her that there *is* such a thing as an

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orientation towards Mecca. To my surprise (and I did remain constantly surprised), a half a dozen commentators responded to my correction by repeating Jennifer's no-such-thing-as-a-direction-to-Mecca error. It reminded me of the joke " $2 + 2 = 5$ (for really big values of 2)." The commentators seemed to think that if they were all on the same side, that made them right. It is postmodernism to a "T" (Bogg). There is no truth, only power.

A poster named RobW accused me of "cherry picking" my definition of the crescent so as to come up with an orientation on Mecca. He suggested that instead of using the end of the giant entry portal wall to define the upper tip of the crescent, I should have used the last the last red maple tree on top. Since I hadn't used that definition, RobW assumed that it must yield a crescent that points further from Mecca, and hence that I had "cherry picked" the crescent.

As it turns out, RobW's way of defining the crescent yields an orientation *closer* to Mecca than my way does. The last red maple on top sits between the ends of the inner and outer entry portal walls. Thus using the last tree as the upper crescent tip means moving halfway from the inexact Mecca orientation of the crescent (defined by the end of the inner wall) to the exact Mecca orientation (defined by the end of the outer wall).

Interestingly, RobW's way of defining the crescent is actually the one that was used by Jonathan Haas, the first blogger to calculate the orientation of the crescent mathematically back on September 11th, 2005.² Haas decided to define the "red-maple crescent" by the furthest extents of red along the crescent structure. Going from the last red maple at the top of the Crescent of Embrace to the last red maple on the bottom of the Crescent, Haas found that the Crescent pointed a mere .62° north of the exact direction to Mecca.

I refined this in my September 24th post by noting that the crescent tip had to be on the circle that the crescent partly inscribes. Since the last red maple tree on top was outside of this circle it couldn't be the crescent tip. Rather, the logical upper-tip is the end of the giant wall that follows the circle of the crescent, and projects out a bit past the last red maple. The result is an orientation 1.73° north of Mecca.

So no, I explained to RobW. I had *not* cherry picked. If I was cherry picking I would have chosen *his* definition of the crescent, which orients less than 1° off Mecca, instead of the geometrically logical definition, which orients almost 2° off Mecca.

We'll have Lobotomies All 'round, Please (*Director's Cut*)

Just as the TBoggers had sided with Jennifer on the “no such thing as a direction to Mecca” meme after I had debunked it, they also stuck with RobW’s “cherry picking” accusation after I had debunked it, and this was just the few who were presenting themselves as serious. The surrounding thread was a circus of childish satires and *ad hominem* attacks.

Enter the very sober sounding “Qwerty Bob,” claiming to speak authoritatively as “a Stanford engineering alum”:

...as Rob W pointed out, you had to game the data significantly to even come up with the 2 degree error, and ...as Jennifer pointed out, any point on a sphere can be connected with any other point with an arc and there are an infinite number of arcs that be constructed to connect two points on a sphere.

That is awesome, baby. This is what credentials are for in *TBogg* land: to put the stamp of authority on the most moronic errors. Indeed it is possible to draw “an infinite number” of arcs between two points on a sphere, but there is only one shortest-distance line between two points (the “great-circle” line). Still, it wouldn’t surprise me if “Qwerty Bob” really *is* a Stanford engineering alum. The issue here isn’t whether a person *can* understand something. Everyone *can* understand that there is a direction from home to work, or from Shanksville to Mecca. The question is whether they will *let* themselves understand, and leftists don’t *let* themselves understand anything that might threaten their presumptions.

A parade of inane dodges was put forward, each one becoming a meme, parroted henceforth as an established talking point, no matter how obviously wrong, and regardless of whether I bothered to smash it like a bug on an anvil: denial that the crescent in the Crescent of Embrace is a crescent; denial that Islam uses the crescent as a symbol; denial that a Mecca-oriented crescent has any religious meaning; denial that anyone but a bigot would care if the centerpiece of the memorial *was* an Islamic symbol.

They are right about one thing. I *can't* force them to think straight. Packing their bodies and minds with the mud of error *is* an effective defense against ever having to admit anything. By eschewing reason and evidence completely, they can even manage to avoid comprehending how irrational they are. That didn’t stop me from trying to explain it to them:

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What you are saying is “You can’t MAKE me think straight. Nyah nyah. I win!” You don’t win, you frickin morons, you lose. You’ve lobotimized yourselves.

On a conservative website, errors of fact and reason are constantly exposed and purged. A conservative blogger or commentator would lose his reputation on the spot if he proclaimed a blatant idiocy, or repeated known errors, or failed to renounce an error once it had been exposed. The TBoggers, in contrast, just suck every error in, like a snowball rolling downhill, getting bigger and bigger.

I’d come back every couple of hours, read the *ad hominem* attacks and all the other excuses for avoiding inconvenient truths, then issue some new challenge: “Is there a single reader of this blog who thinks there is anything the least bit inappropriate about planting the central feature of a mosque on the graves of our murdered heroes?” One commentator did at least summarize the comment thread accurately: “Number of posts agreeing with Rawls: zero.”

Actually, there was one commentator who admitted that there might be something untoward about a Mecca-oriented crescent (but only for purposes of argument, as he was denying that there was a Mecca-oriented crescent). There was also one commentator who had to admit that there actually is such a thing a direction on planet earth, but he still thought it was *me* who was crazy, instead of all the people who were denying it. That was enough TBogg land for me. I prefer reality, at least where there is anything important at stake.



Figure 62. Looking back up towards the drag-lines from inside of what will be the men’s prayer area of the Crescent mosque. The water on the right will form the “head” of the male shaped ablution pond.

Loose Change (Director's Cut)

Visit almost any Democrat-left website and you will see the same rampant manipulative dishonesty. The TBoggers are actually fun because they are not the angry left. The scene gets much uglier at activist sites like *Democratic Underground*, *Daily Kos* and *Huffington Post*, where it is simply a given that the Bush administration has already usurped our democracy and that every step Bush takes to protect America from the Islamofascists is just one more part of his totalitarian plan.

Worst of all is the “9/11 Truth” movement of 9/11 conspiracy theorists, whose presentations are nothing but one glaring misrepresentation or logical idiocy after another. They all see strength in numbers of errors, no matter how easily exposed. Witness the *Loose Change* video, which began as an explicitly fictional exercise, cherry-picking quotes and images out of context to try to compile a fictional story about the Bush Administration being behind the 9/11 attacks. As *Loose Change* author Dylan Avery wrote in an email (posted on his website):

It was that month that I began writing ‘Loose Change,’ a fictional story about my friends and I discovering that September 11th was not a terrorist attack, but rather, an attack by their own government.³

When conspiracy mongers started declaring their first short video believable (not quite the same thing as believing it), Avery and his friends decided to capitalize on the apparent market by claiming to have discovered that the fiction was all true:

Upon researching for the movie, it became apparant [sic.] that the subject matter may not have been entirely fiction.

So they kept doing what they had been doing, pulling quotes and scenes out of context, until:

Over two year's time, adding more and more information, the fictional movie evolved into what it is today; a documentary.

They are just TBoggers! The more error they can pack on and call it “truth,” the more secure they feel in having a defensible position. Debunkers have exposed scene after *Loose Change* scene to be completely dishonest just by putting it back in the context from which the authors knowingly plucked it, but most people who see the *Loose Change* video don't see the debunking (and don't want to see it), al-

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lowing deliberate disinformation to make headway in the battle for “truth.”⁴

Democrats made Michael Moore rich for doing the same thing. From beginning to end, Moore’s pseudo-documentary *Fahrenheit 911* takes snippets of broadcasts, commentary, and other bits of information out of context to create intentionally false impressions.⁵ Disinformation content is maximized, just as one would find in *The New York Times*, but without regard for credibility. Moore knows he only needs to create the *appearance* of credibility because his audience does not want to know the truth. They only want effective propaganda against their domestic political opposition, creating a market for Moore’s malicious disinformation about the nation’s war efforts.

For this perfidy, Moore was rewarded with a place of honor at the 2004 Democratic Convention, seated beside President Jimmy Carter. The *Loose Change* morons are achieving some of the same success. The numbers are astounding. If the polls are to be believed, a full third of the country suspects that the Bush administration was complicit in the 9/11 attacks.⁶ That would be *most* Democrats. There is also a high level of youth involvement in the “9/11 truth” movement. Thank our value-free public schools and an academia that is dominated by postmodernist claims there is no such thing as truth, only interpretation, motivated by interest.

By freeing themselves from all requirements to conform to any actual truth, postmodern academics think they can win the battle for interpretation. All they need is the majority, right? And in academia, they have it. They have the power which, according to their ideology, is all that matters. Students who fall for this pre Ten Commandments religion of false witness go on to become eager dupes—“truthers” or TBoggers—unable to think their way out of a paper bag. I tried to leave the TBoggers with a map to freedom:

For any who realize that there might possibly be something wrong with this subculture of lame excuses for avoiding reason and evidence, getting out of the bubble is as easy as can be. Just think frontwards instead of backwards. Just follow reason and evidence, instead of starting with preferred conclusions and looking for excuses to avoid contrary reason and evidence. Nobody needs to be stuck in this hellhole of brain-dead stupidity. Just. Get. Out.

Our universities sink young adults into the tar pit of backwards thinking through the social pressure of political correctness at a time when they are particularly vulnerable to social pressure. Students live in dorms, for Pete's sake, constantly surrounded by gossip. Where that can be used for indoctrination, it is difficult to overcome. Yes, a strong mind ought to be able to escape a paper bag, but there is no reason why lesser minds should be condemned to leftist delusion.

The Memorial Project Pops up in *TBogg*-land

To write the *TBogg* material above, I went back at the beginning of April 2006 and reread the *TBogg* comment thread. My eye was caught by a lengthy last comment, about six hundred words, written as a semi-formal assessment of my analyses. Most curious, this last comment mentioned a part of my analysis (about the shapes of the trees used in the Crescent design) that was included in my hard copy report to the Memorial Project, but was never posted online. Whoever wrote that last *TBogg* comment had seen a hard copy of my report!

TBogg comments are not dated, but could tell from the accumulation of comment spam that this last comment must have been posted not too long before my April re-reading. At that time there was no comment-spam posted after the six-hundred-word comment, while in the twelve weeks between the original *TBogg* event and my rereading, spam-bots left six porno ads. In subsequent weeks, spam-bot droppings would continue to accumulate at a rate of about one every two weeks. This suggests that the last *TBogg* comment was placed in the second half of March, or possibly in very early April.

There was a rough sense to this timing. It had been about a month since I told Joanne Hanley's boss, Mary Bomar, that Superintendent Hanley had lied about acquiring outside assessments of my report before dismissing it. I did not know yet that Bomar was assigning Chief Ranger Hawk to investigate my accusations, but if Bomar was doing anything, she would be asking Hanley to produce these outside assessments she claimed to have. Now here it was a couple of weeks later, and a fresh assessment of my hard copy report was being posted online.

It would soon turn out that this assessment had indeed been commissioned by Superintendent Hanley, probably not long before it was posted. Having it in my hands gave me an interesting jump on the Memorial Project's internal shenanigans. I knew what their outside

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assessment *actually* said. For the most part, it was classic *TBogg*, claiming that I was simply seeing whatever I wanted to see:

Rawls has a fundamental flaw in his reasoning, namely: just because something is “similar to” something else, does not make it the “same.” I doubt that anything I, or any except in Islamic architecture or mosque design, could say would satisfy him. [sic.] A typical example of this is where he gives the shapes of two maple trees and says that because the shape is vaguely similar to the space created by an arch, they are the same thing.⁷

Actually, this is not a typical example at all. The way the particular tree shapes used in the Crescent design might be seen to enhance the Islamic symbolism is indeed a trivial point, which is why it was buried in an addendum at the back of my report (and never posted on my blog). What about all the clear factual claims in my report, like the Mecca orientation of the giant crescent?

Interestingly, the Memorial Project’s mystery *TBogger* admits the Mecca orientation of the crescent, likening it to the Jerusalem oriented prayer-niche in a synagogue, only to dismiss this likeness to a *mihrab* on the grounds that no one has ever seen a *mihrab* anywhere near this *big* before:

The biggest hole in his argument is that all of the elements he points to are common architectural features that one would find in a church or synagogue. The *mihrab* originated in pre-Islamic buildings and can be found in temples, churches, and synagogues around the Mediterranean.

1. Muslims did not invent the arch, the pillar, the sundial, or any of the features [Rawls] points to. The earliest *mihrabs* were just blocks that indicated the direction of prayer.

Many Synagogues have niches that point in the direction of Jerusalem (which, I think, would be roughly the same as the *qibla* from that point in Pennsylvania)...

2. Secondly, *mihrabs* (although not universally found in all mosques) take many forms not just the semi-circular shape...

3. Thirdly, most *mihrabs* are small, rarely larger than the figure of a man, although some of the more ornamental ones can be larger, but nothing as large as the crescent found in the site design. It is unlikely that most Muslims would walk into the area of the

circle/crescent and see a *mihrab* because it is well beyond their limit of experience. Again, just because it is similar does not make it the same. (A goat and a lion are similar in many respects but no one would confuse the two.)

Somebody in an airplane might see the giant crescent as a *mihrab*, but on the ground? *Pshaw*. It's too *big* to recognize!

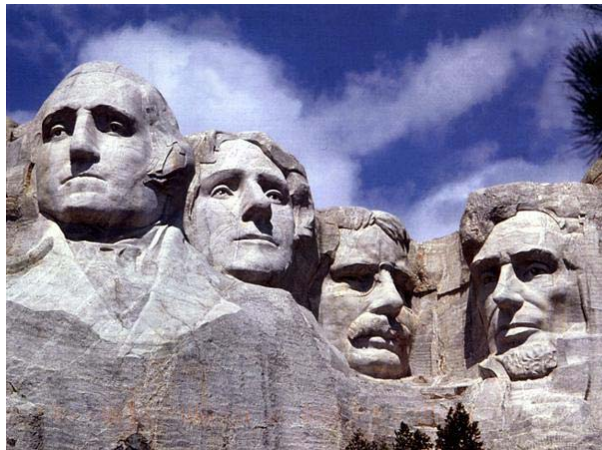


Figure 63. I can't recognize George Washington. His size is well beyond the limit of my experience. Is that Gulliver on the right?

Murdoch Gets Careless

Before April 2006, I never tried to make contact with Paul Murdoch. Throughout the fall, I figured that only Internet-savvy people would know of my online efforts to expose Murdoch's Islamofascist design. That is a pretty small fraction of the population, so Murdoch might well not know what I was doing. Given that his memorial design is a terrorist-memorial mosque, I didn't want to be the one to tip him off. Besides, I knew from what he told the press about his crescent being geometrically different from an Islamic crescent that he is a willing and able liar, so what was the point? Thus through the Winter of 06, surprising as it may seem, I had not yet tried to contact Murdoch. Murdoch, it turns out, was claiming otherwise.

In early April, I finally succeeded in making contact with Ron McRae, the "street preacher" from western Pennsylvania who Tom Sokolowski had called "asinine" for seeing Murdoch's giant crescent as a symbol of Islam.

McRae's criticisms of the crescent design back in September 2005 were perfectly sound:

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The crescent is as much connected to Islam as the cross is to Christianity.

This is a memorial to the terrorists who killed those people, not a memorial to the folks who died there innocently.⁸

"I think it is shameful," McRae told reporter Kirk Swauger: "These people were killed in the name of religion."⁹

McRae and I played phone tag around the time of the February meeting in Somerset. When I finally connected with him in April, he described several conversations he had with Murdoch during the fall where Murdoch agreed to make changes that, as far as McRae was concerned, altered the Crescent of Embrace enough that it was no longer an Islamic crescent.

"He says he also had extensive discussions with you," McRae told me, "trying to satisfy your concerns about the forty-four blocks, and the other features you criticized."

"What??? When did he say that?" I asked.

"At the February meeting," McRae continued: "I spent about forty-five minutes with him before the meeting began. He brought your name up and wanted to talk about you, but I said I wasn't interested in any of that. I only cared about the crescent. I didn't want to get distracted by other stuff."

"Ouch," I thought to myself, "Murdoch wanted to blab, and you shut him up!" "But he did say that he had tried over and over again to accommodate your concerns," Ron told me. "He said you couldn't be appeased, no matter what changes he offered to make."

Shades of that mystery *TBogg* comment, with its garbled opening remark:

I doubt that anything I, or any except in Islamic architecture or mosque design, could say would satisfy him. [sic.]

Fill in the missing grammer:

I doubt there is anything that I could say, or that anyone who is not an expert in Islamic architecture or mosque design could say, that would satisfy him.

Not only is that language quite personal, but it is exactly what McRae was claiming that Murdoch had said to him. Had Superintendent Hanley, under pressure to produce an assessment of my report, gone to Murdoch himself for assistance? I couldn't help thinking of

Project Manager Reinbold's excuse back in December for not worrying about my information: "We asked the architect about it." Now, desperate to cover up how they had covered up for Murdoch's terrorist plot, it looked like Hanley and Reinbold might have gone back to Murdoch again. Yikes.

Murdoch also seemed to be showing a bit of carelessness, lying to Ron McRae, and maybe even posting his excuses on the *TBogg* site. I wondered if he might have been even *more* careless. Had he told Hanley and Reinbold what he told Ron McRae: that he had talked to me? If so, perhaps I could get Hanley and Reinbold to realize that they were being lied to. I couldn't get them to look at the facts of Murdoch's design, but maybe I could get them interested in something that was up their alley: interpersonal manipulation.

The Merry-go-round Becomes a Centrifuge

To this point, neither Hanley nor Reinbold had ever been willing to talk to me about my report. The phone call in December where Hanley had squawked "I can't hear this!" was the closest she had ever come to listening, and after causing the stir in February, I was also shut out at Interior. Several times I emailed Joanne and left her phone messages, pleading that I was trying to save her life—that she would be ruined if she did not pay attention to my information—but I never could shake her trust in Murdoch. Now finally, my accusation that Murdoch had lied about talking to me yielded a call back.

"Can you join Joanne Hanley and Jeff Reinbold for a conference call this Friday at three?" It was Joanne Hanley's secretary calling from Pennsylvania.

Our hour long conference call was a fiasco. The following account is reasonably accurate paraphrase, written from notes and recollections immediately after.

Hanley began by repeating her boiler plate about how sincerely Murdoch's design was intended to honor the heroes of Flight 93. For ten minutes I couldn't get a word in edgewise. When Hanley's spiel was finally spent, I went back to square one: "Have you investigated the Mecca orientation of the original crescent yet?"

"There *is* no crescent anymore!" Hanley cried. Couldn't she get this guy to understand *anything*?

"You never looked at how the original crescent was defined," I explained. "That is why you don't know that it is still there. The tips of the original crescent were the last red maple at the bottom, and the

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end of the giant entry portal wall on top. All the redesign did was add some trees out beyond the end of the wall on top, but since the upper crescent tip was not defined by trees, adding trees does not affect the upper crescent tip."

"Now, see right there," Hanley answered. "You talk about the last red maple tree at the bottom of the crescent. We don't even know where the last tree is going to go yet. We haven't even started on the engineering drawings yet. All of that might change."

Holy cow. Now she was denying that the plan was the plan.

"The plan tells us what Murdoch *wants* to do," I said. "That is what we are talking about. What is Murdoch trying to do?"

"But all of it is all still open to change," Hanley insisted.

In one ear and out the other, just like a TBogger. If a person's goal is to avoid comprehending something that would support the "other side," there is no way to make her comprehend. Still, as long as Hanley and Reinbold were willing to have it out, I was willing to have it out. Hey, I pressed the TBoggers for two full days. Besides, I was glad to have Jeff and Joanne distill their most recalcitrant truth-avoidance for me. After all, I did have a book to write.

Joanne brought up the "you can draw all kinds of lines between any two points," meme. Where had they all gotten that the idea that there was no such thing as a direction on planet earth? Was she talking to Paula Ward? Had she been reading TBogg's blog? Had some prankster, or Murdoch himself, been going around planting this absurdity in receptive minds? It really is a mystery. How could so many different people come up with something that stupid all on their own?

"It has to be Exact"

"And it [the Mecca orientation of the central crescent] is not exact," Hanley said. "That is one that we talked about. It has to be exact."

Suddenly she was admitting the Mecca orientation of the crescent, on condition that it still not matter. And they had talked about this???

I wonder if the Flight 93 families would agree that "it has to be exact" before they would care that Murdoch's giant crescent is oriented on Mecca. I wonder how they will feel about being told that my information had been debunked, at the same time as Project leader's were admitting in private that the Mecca-orientation of the crescent is indeed almost exact, just as I had told them. Certainly apologies are due to Gordon Felt, who was sent out by the Memorial Project to tell

the press at the February meeting that my information had been debunked.

Joanne Hanley has hidden behind the families throughout, saying that all the decisions have been theirs; that she, Joanne, really doesn't have any power.

Just the power to determine what information the families hear.

"The design also includes an *exact* Mecca-orientation," I continued, "created by the forty-fourth glass block on the flight path. Draw a line from the last maple at the bottom through the large glass block at the end of the entry portal walkway, and its perpendicular points exactly to Mecca."

"There is no forty-fourth block!" Hanley cried.

Of course we had to fight over that too.

"It's not the same as the others," Reinbold observed. "If we are going to count the giant glass block at the end of the entry portal walkway along with the small glass blocks in the Memorial Wall, then we have to count the windows in the Visitor Center too."

Amazing. They had actually understood my information, and come up with these absurd dodges.

"The windows in the Visitor's Center are not on the flight path," I explained.

"Flight-path schmlite-path," Reinbold didn't actually say, but that was the gist of his knee-jerk dismissal.

Again, this should have been for the families to decide. *They* need to know that the forty-fourth glass block on the flight path defines an exact Mecca orientation of the giant crescent/*mihrab*. It isn't for Hanley and Reinbold to falsely tell them that my information has been debunked, when really they are just making excuses not to pay attention to it.

Man to Man?

After forty-five minutes, Joanne had to go to the bathroom. I seized the possible chance. "Jeff," I said, pumping Reinbold up man-to-man "you are the project manager. You have the ability to analyze plans. Have you investigated the Mecca orientation of the central crescent for yourself?"

"Is it in your report?" he answered.

Duh. "Yes, it is in my report..."

"Then I looked at it."

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Looked at it, but didn't investigate it, but I pretended otherwise: "And the Mecca orientation of the crescents of trees that surround the Tower of Voices. Did you ever investigate that for yourself?"

"I won't go that far," Reinbold answered, "because I don't buy into your assumptions."

Assumptions? What assumptions does the direction of a line across the most obtruding tips of Murdoch's crescents of trees depend on? It is a simple fact, one I had been trying to get the Memorial Project to investigate for six months, so they could start to understand what Murdoch had done.

"When the Tower crescents repeat the Mecca orientation of the central crescent," I instructed, "that is proof that neither is an accident, and it doesn't depend on any assumptions at all. It's a fact."

Joanne evidently caught the end of this exchange, and was able to grasp Jeff's meaning about not "buying into my assumptions."

"We don't know where the ends of those arcs of trees are going to be yet!" Hanley insisted. "A line across those crescent tips could point anywhere."

Oh my lord. Not that one again! So this was the "assumption" that Reinbold would not buy into: that we should actually look at the plans.

"That's right," Reinbold chimed in. "Those trees could move fifty feet, or three hundred feet."

"Oh come on!" I said in disbelief. "You won't even look at the plan!" Actually they *had* looked at the plan. They were admitting that they had seen the Mecca orientation of the Tower crescents and were making up excuses not to comprehend it.

TBoggers are pikers compared to these two. It was the Night of the Living Dead, where every inanity kept coming back to pseudo-life.

Pipeline to Murdoch

What about those lies that Murdoch told to Ron McRae about having talked to me many times, trying to accommodate my concerns? It turns out that the first thing Joanne did when I told her Murdoch was lying is call Murdoch and tell him of my accusation. Instead of trapping him by just asking him if he had talked to me, she told him that word had come through Ron McRae that he was saying he had talked to me, and that I was denying it. "I asked Paul Murdoch about it." i.e. She told him exactly what he needed to make up a story for, and dutifully passed on the resulting evasion.

"He said that McRae must have misheard," Joanne told me. "He says he only told McRae that he tried to meet your concerns, not that he talked to you about them."

And McRae?

"That's not the way he remembers it," she admitted. "He said it could have been that Murdoch was talking about emailing you rather than talking to you..."

Nope. I hadn't had email contact with Murdoch either, but I wasn't about to tell Joanne that. No more information for Joanne, ever. It just goes straight to Murdoch. As far as she is concerned, Murdoch is the good guy and I am the bad guy, and no facts can ever intrude on her presumptions.

"What do you mean," she asked with an edge of hostility in her voice, "when you keep saying you are trying to save my life? What do you mean when you say I am in danger, and my life could be ruined if I don't listen to you?" Her tone made clear that she was half accusing me of threatening her.

Poor deluded creature. Her unwillingness to consider the possibility that I might be telling the truth is so complete that the implications if I *am* telling the truth never dawns on her. Even when I tell her that she is on a hijacked airplane, she can't figure out what that would mean, no matter how I spell it out. All she can imagine is that the danger comes from me.

This would be a repeated theme. Person after person would regard warnings as threats. No, you cadre of self-lobotomized TBoggers. A warning is *not* a threat. A warning is to *protect* you from a threat.

The truth avoiders are not just oblivious to warnings of terrorist attack. They are actively, personally, emotionally, *hostile* to such warnings. Wherever these people are in positions of responsibility, America is in danger.

CHAPTER NINE

THE INTERNAL INVESTIGATION

During our conference call, Superintendent Hanley insisted that she really had sent my report to the Flight 93 families. Yes, I knew that. She sent it with a dismissive front letter that insured it would not be read. She also insisted that she really did send my report out for expert appraisal, and to prove it, she started reading the text of an appraisal that she happened to have with her:

...just because something is “similar to” something else, does not make it the “same.” ...

A typical example of this is where he gives the shapes of two maple trees and says that because the shape is vaguely similar to the space created by an arch, they are the same thing...

Our mystery TBogger again! So I been right about where the *TBogg* comment came from. Sometime in March, Hanley had gone begging for an assessment of my report, which the author, possibly Murdoch himself, could not resist posting online. Ha ha ha. Superintendent Hanley only read me select parts, but I had the whole foolish thing, complete with its admission that the crescent is oriented on Mecca.

That also pointed to Murdoch, because Joanne knew about the Mecca orientation. If she asked Murdoch about it, what he would come up with is an excuse for not caring, just as the *Tbogg* comment provides: the crescent is too *big* to be recognized as a *mihrab*.

Joanne wouldn't name the author, claiming he had not given permission. Of course he hadn't, but an odd tidbit from Hanley added yet more evidence that it was Murdoch. She prefaced her reading of the

assessment by saying it had come from “our caller,” as if she had actually transcribed it over the telephone in preparation for our conference call. Well, I *did* know who she had just been on the phone with. The proximate cause of our conference call was Hanley talking to Murdoch about what Murdoch had said to McRae.

I asked for clarification, trying to pin down that she was claiming to have gotten this feedback in the tiny window between when she received my report and when she dismissed it: “You say this feedback is in response to my report? So it isn’t from *earlier*? It isn’t in response to my blog posts from the fall? You didn’t actually have it *before* I sent you my report?”

“We got your report, what, at the beginning of February?” Joanne answered: “We did our consultations, and responded to you in the middle of February.”

January actually, but I knew what she meant. She was saying that she had this feedback before she sent out the January 18th letter dismissing my report. She was presenting it as evidence that she wasn’t lying when she told Mary Bomar that the January 18th letter was based on extensive consultations with outside experts.

Given my suspicion that the quoted assessment was from Murdoch, I wondered if Superintendent Hanley had any *other* assessments of my report. Joanne admitted that she did not have any that are written down.

“This is the only written response to my report that you have?”

“Yes.”

Even after all the warnings, it seemed that Hanley and Reinbold were still limiting themselves to asking the accused terrorist what he thought of the evidence against him. Can we get this pair a Darwin award?

Chief Ranger Hawk

When I heard that National Park Service Director Mary Bomar had assigned Chief Ranger Jill Hawk to investigate my information and Joanne Hanley’s handling of it, I figured something might actually come of it. I was even more optimistic after talking to Jill. She seemed to be a straight shooter: a real law enforcement officer. Surely she would be capable of believing her own senses.

She declined my initial offer to help her verify for herself a few of the main facts about Murdoch’s design. She could look at my informa-

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tion for herself, she said, and we would talk regularly about the progress of her investigation.

I told officer Hawk about the *TBogg* comment that Hanley had admitted was the only written feedback about my report. Without giving Jill the details, I told her I had reason to believe that this lone piece of feedback may have been written by architect Paul Murdoch himself. Jill would be able to investigate this. Joanne Hanley could deny *me* the provenance of the *TBogg* comment, but she could not deny it to Jill Hawk.

"Don't just ask her who wrote it," I advised. That would give Hanley the chance to concoct a story about it coming from some source other than Murdoch. Instead, it might be smarter to ask Hanley whether she had shown my report to architect Paul Murdoch, and whether she had gotten any feedback from him about it. If she forked over the *TBogg* comment, then we had her.

Chief Ranger Hawk did not follow my advice. Instead, after four weeks of trying to get an answer from Hanley about the source of her lone assessment of my report, Hawk finally came back with the news that the assessment was written by a university professor who was not Paul Murdoch. Not that that was impossible, but since Hanley had been given plenty of time to concoct such a ruse, I pressed Hawk to contact the professor directly and verify that he/she had in fact written the attributed comment.

She agreed, but six weeks later had still not been able to make contact. On the other hand, it seemed like she might be doing *something*. She told me that she "did not contest" the Mecca orientation of the crescent, but wanted to talk to someone more knowledgeable about what to make of it.

"Everyone can have their own interpretation," she said, which was fine with me. Such an attitude does not by itself imply the post-modernist view that there is no such thing as truth, so long as people "are not entitled to their own facts," as Senator Moynihan used to insist. Indeed, I was eager to move on to the subject of interpretation. In particular, I continued to press for the Flight 93 families to be told about the Mecca orientation of the Crescent/Bowl of Embrace, so that *they* could consider the possible interpretations for themselves. This was not something for experts to be deciding behind the families' backs. The families were the ones who were supposed to be making the decisions. They needed to know the facts.

Jill was unwilling to take it upon herself to pass any information to the families. Her job was to report back to regional director Mary Bomar. But she did offer me a crack of an opportunity to reach the families myself.

The Crash-Site Meeting

After I found out that Murdoch was claiming to have talked to me, I started trying to contact him. He would not talk to me, but emailed that he would be visiting the crash site in July and offered to meet me there. Shortly thereafter, the Memorial Project announced a July 20th open house. Ranger Hawk was good enough to set up a meeting at the crash site between herself, myself, Paul Murdoch, Jeff Reinbold, and one of the Flight 93 family members. “I included a family member,” Jill told me, “because of your concern that information has been kept from them.”

It wasn’t much. The families should have been informed authoritatively that my information was sound. But at least this was something. It would all depend on the particular family member. If the Mecca orientation of the crescent was disturbing news to him, he could press Murdoch and Reinbold: had they known about this? Why weren’t the families told before? What did it mean? I could tell him, if he wanted to know.



Figure 64. The crescent points that-a-way. Alec at the Somerset Pennsylvania Days Inn, getting the word out to local Johnstown television station WJAC. (Photo by Bill Steiner, 2006.)

The purpose of the open-house meeting was to collect feedback on whether to proceed with the Crescent design, or opt for a “no action” alternative. If the no-action alternative was chosen, there would be no

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memorial built without new enabling legislation from Congress. In preparation, I put together a blog post delineating some of the key features of Murdoch's terrorist-memorial mosque and urged people to submit feedback. The Western Pennsylvania Compatriots helped in contacting the media, and another link from Little Green Footballs brought a flood of feedback to the Project.

As the crash-site meeting approached, Jill Hawk was worried about confrontation and wanted to make sure that my expectations for the meeting were reasonable. "I just want to get to the very first issue," I said, "the Mecca orientation of the original Crescent of Embrace. Then we can hear how Murdoch explains it." Jill expressed a similar desire: she wanted to hear everyone's interpretation. Perfect.



Figure 65. Un-natural beauty: historic drag-line on the way down to the crash-site, seen through the haze of summer heat.

When we got to the crash site, neither Murdoch nor the family member would shake my hand. Murdoch announced that since I had used my blog to rally comment against his design, he was no longer agreeing to talk to me. Jill totally let me down. Afraid that the situation would become confrontational, she set the condition that we would not talk about any of my criticisms of the design.

I challenged her rule on the spot. “We aren’t going to discuss the Mecca orientation of the giant crescent? I thought that is what we were here for.” But Jill said “no, we aren’t’ going to discuss that.” Murdoch would only point out where on the landscape the various parts of the memorial would be built. That took about two minutes. Then he left.

The family member was itching to leave as well, but I jumped in to try to hold him. I said how I was afraid that the families had never been told about the Mecca orientation of the original crescent. Did he know about this? He just repeated Superintendent Hanley’s boiler-plate: that the design had been selected through an open and democratic process and everyone was pleased with the process and the result. So no. He did not seem to know. Hanley’s telling everyone that my report was bogus seemed to have worked. This family member, at least, had not even looked inside my report.

I explained that no blame was being placed on the jury process. No one at the Memorial Project knew anything about the Mecca orientation of the giant crescent before the Crescent design was selected. The orientation was not discovered until after the design was unveiled in September. This was *new information* that the families needed to know about.

The family member asked what difference it made if the crescent was oriented on Mecca, so I told him: that a Mecca-oriented crescent is the central feature around which every mosque is built. The Crescent of Embrace was a design for the world’s largest mosque.

Reinbold interjected that the families had already seen my information. “But do they know that it is correct?” I snapped back at him. Jill refused to back me up, remaining mum about the Mecca orientation of the crescent, and the family member left.



Figure 66. A portion of the Temporary Memorial, adorned with personal tributes from responders and visitors.

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I pushed Jill afterwards to confront Murdoch herself. I understood if she wanted to avoid questions at the crash-site for fear of confrontation, but surely Murdoch's pretext for refusing to answer questions could not stand. The architect could not refuse to respond to the fact that his giant crescent is oriented on Mecca just because someone had the gall to point it out. If she wasn't going to let *me* get a response from him, she had to do it herself.

Jill denied that she had any grounds to press Murdoch. "I do *not* know that the crescent is oriented on Mecca." What??? The reason she "did not contest" the Mecca orientation of the crescent, she was now saying, was because she had never checked it. Impossible! A top law enforcement officer, personally assigned to investigate a highly specific warning of terrorist attack, and after two and a half months, she hadn't checked fact one? I had given her graphical proof after graphical proof. All she had to do was look. I had offered over and over to walk her through the analytic geometry if she wanted to verify it that way. She always said no.

Now it turned out that she hadn't bothered to check anything for herself. She hadn't checked the geometry. She hadn't contacted the professor who was the supposed author of the Project's lone piece of feedback about my report (the Memorial Project's mystery TBogger). What in the world *had* she done?

This has been the hardest thing about this process for me. Every time I would encounter another person in a position of responsibility, I have rooted for them to be the hero they are placed to be, or at least not act so irresponsibly as to ruin themselves. Jill more than anyone. She is an absolute sweetheart. If she would just do her job, she could be America's hero/darling. I wasn't asking her to believe me. I was just asking her to check the facts, and she wouldn't do it.

Maybe she just doesn't know what it means to conduct an investigation. Maybe she was instructed *not* to conduct an investigation. Maybe she is just another congenital truth-avoider. I can only leave it now for her to explain.

America's Heartland (*Director's Cut*)

Rural western Pennsylvania in Summer is a revelation: endless miles of forest, with little coal-patch towns nestled throughout the hills and little farm towns laid out in the valleys. Everything is lush, the trees parted only by cleared fields, thick with crops. Each little four-

bedroom house coming in and out of each little burg has a half acre of lawn cleared for the kids. What beautiful country.

Lei Hennessey Owen bought a fixer-upper Victorian in Shanksville for ten thousand dollars. Despite my training as an economist, I can't figure out whether that makes Shanksville one of the poorest places in the country or one of the richest, but it does help me understand what people mean when they call this the heartland. Almost every undeveloped expanse here would be an ideal expanse to develop, and most of it is undeveloped. This is heart muscle, reserve strength, and it goes on forever, for thousands of square miles, not just through western Pennsylvania, but down into West Virginia, over into Ohio and up into New York.

There isn't as much green in the entire Middle East as there is in western Pennsylvania. Pittsburgh alone produced six of America's greatest fortunes: Carnegie, Westinghouse, Frick, Heinz, Mellon and Scaife. But just as the land does not have to be expensive to be rich, so, too, the ordinary folks have their quality.

There was an incident at the open house meeting that told it all for me. Bill Steiner, Richard Dillon and I had spent the afternoon trying to tape an exposé of the crescent design. We took the camera with us up to the meeting and set up a display off to the side of the entrance. Nothing pushy. We weren't there to interrupt anyone, but anyone who was interested could come on over and look at our information. The Memorial Project was videotaping feedback inside, so Richard offered to do the same for anyone who wanted to comment on our information outside.

I went into the open house to video-tape my comments and when I came back out, there was Bill in heated debate with a young man, maybe twenty years old, in front of our display. Richard was videotaping, but this wasn't the kind of taping we had planned on. When I asked Richard about it, he explained that the young man insisted on having his criticism of our information put on tape. But then what was Bill doing, talking over the fellow, not letting him make his criticisms?

I probably should have stopped the taping, but when I heard Bill react angrily to the suggestion that we were motivated by bigotry, I instead jumped in: "Wait a minute Bill," I interjected: "It is perfectly reasonable for him to think that we might be motivated by bigotry."

The young man went ahead and got his word in edgewise: "There is nothing in what you've got out here that says that the orientation of the crescent on Mecca is anything but coincidence."

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Yay, western Pennsylvania. This fellow had grasped that the graphical demonstration of Mecca orientation was sound. He was also spot-on about our not addressing intent. The only goal at the meeting was to show that a person facing into the planned crescent would in fact be facing Mecca. I hadn't put out the graphic that shows how the Mecca-orientation of the central crescent is repeated in the crescents of trees that surround the Tower of Voices, but I did have it in my backpack. Given the young man's acuity, I decided to pull out the Tower-crescents graphic for him.

As I reached for my backpack, the young man's father ordered him to come away. Somehow the small group of onlookers had transformed into a crowd. I was suddenly stricken by how young the young man was, and there was Richard still videotaping. I immediately deferred to the father. He was doing exactly the right thing. I just gave him a nod, said "right," and ushered the boy past.

Richard was annoyed that the father had interrupted his son "at the moment of enlightenment," but of course the father was right. His son should not be videotaping comments on a controversial subject with someone else in control of the tape. Imagine if the boy had said foolish things in defense of the crescent. When the truth about Murdoch's design comes out, such a tape could be devastating, if we were to use it unscrupulously.

Later the father came back to Richard and extracted a promise, backed by threat, that none of the footage of his son would be used. Awesome. It does not matter if the son is technically an adult. A father's love for his son does not stop at age eighteen, or twenty-one. The father's threat? "I'm a miner." The Heartland goes down four hundred feet.

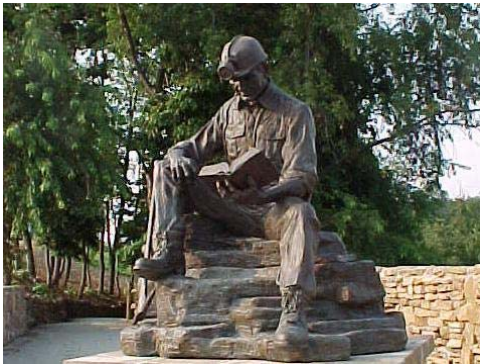


Figure 67. A miner, a gentleman and a scholar: statue commemorating the Quecreek mine rescue, July 2002, Somerset County PA. All nine souls saved.

Phil Sheridan and the TBogg Comment (*Director's Cut*)

Interestingly, the *TBogg* comment that the Memorial Project admits to be its lone piece of feedback on my report seems to be the source of the statement that Park Service spokesman Phil Sheridan made at the July meeting that: "Mr. Rawls sees a mosque or Islamic designs because he wants to see it there." Here is the last paragraph from the *TBogg* comment:

Rawls sees a mosque because he wants to see it. This is the power of symbols. A symbol, generates powerful "moods and motivations" that are culturally entrenched and interpreted (see Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in *The Interpretation of Culture* [Chicago: Basic Books, 1973], 90). These symbols have vastly different meanings depending [sic] on where one stands, the ideas that form an individual's worldview, and the aspirations one has for themselves and their communities.

As the paragraph continues in this vein, it completely contradicts the reviewer's earlier assertion that the giant Mecca-oriented crescent is too *big* to be interpreted as a mihrab:

If one wants to interpret the structural elements of the design as symbolically referring to a mosque (and for Rawls, therefore, a symbol of evil) then there is no arguing against that interpretation. If one wants to interpret those very same elements as symbolically referring to a church or to nature then that is how you will interpret it. According to Geertz, the more central the symbol becomes to the culture or sub-culture of the interpreter, the more powerful the moods and motivations become.

Got that? The giant crescent is too *big* to be recognized as the central feature of a mosque, but if you want to, you can easily see it as Christian symbol. *Eeehaw!* If you don't limit yourself to making sense, you can argue whatever mutually exclusive idiocies you want.

And let's be clear: it is not every mosque that I take to be a symbol of evil, only a *terrorist-memorial* mosque.

Whether the *TBogg* comment was written by architect Paul Murdoch himself or by a typical left-wing academic, its intentional misdirection is overt. Still, that is good enough for the Memorial Project. Even though the comment confirms the one fact we were trying to get into the news at the July meeting (the Mecca orientation of the crescent) Phil Sheridan still invoked its claim that I am imagining things.

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The Press (*Director's Cut*)

I also met a couple of beautiful girls at the July meeting: Kecia Bal, reporter for *The Johnstown Tribune-Democrat*, and Tiffany Wright, reporter for the *Somerset Daily American*. Because I arrived late, then spent most of my time manning the display outside, I did not even know that Kecia and Tiffany were there until they were leaving. They would have gotten by me then too, except I decided to break my rule and impose on a passerby's attention, just because they were both so pretty. When I found out they were reporters, I gave a brief run-through of the few facts we were hoping to get into the news. They seemed kind of interested, and that was that.

The only mention I got in Kecia's story was how this ballyhooed intruder had showed up late.¹ I chuckled at the thought that this little beauty seemed to feel that I had stood her up. I didn't even know we had a date. Tiffany's story was more substantive, getting the Mecca orientation claim into her report.² Good girl. I hate to admit that I would later bully both of them. It wouldn't even be their fault. How could they know that a colleague of theirs, Jennifer Reeger at the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*, would actually try to investigate my information, and would bumble across perhaps the most incomprehensible character in the entire Memorial story?

To investigate my information, Jennifer somehow managed to locate a professor of "geo-spatial information." Who knew there was such a thing? But if anyone should be able to verify whether or not Murdoch's crescent is oriented on Mecca, a professor of geo-spatial information certainly sounds like the guy. Daniel Griffith of the University of Texas would turn out, most emphatically, *not* to be the guy.

I said earlier that no one has ever even contested any of my factual claims. Griffith left that record intact. He verified that Murdoch's crescent is indeed oriented almost exactly on Mecca, but that is not what he told Jennifer Reeger at the *Tribune-Review*.

Jennifer did a great job, publishing both the Mecca-orientation claim and the likeness of this Mecca-oriented crescent to a giant Muslim prayer rug. This was followed by Doctor Griffith's assessment:

I am unconvinced that the mathematical arguments put forth by the bloggers have much merit," Griffith said. "In other words, the mathematics employed does not bolster a case for a conspiracy, oversight or insensitivity."³

“Unconvincing?” What in the world does that mean? If he checked the mathematical arguments at all, he either verified that Murdoch’s crescent is oriented almost exactly on Mecca or he verified that it is not. He wouldn’t be “unconvinced.” I thought Jennifer must have misquoted him, conflating remarks about the Mecca orientation with remarks about what could be *inferred* from such an orientation. “No,” she said, she had quoted Griffith’s written comments verbatim.

I contacted Griffith. Did he want to have his reputation destroyed? How could he deny that the Crescent of Embrace is oriented on Mecca? Any idiot can verify the orientation in ten minutes. “I never denied the Mecca orientation of the crescent!” Griffith insisted. “Well that’s sure how you were quoted,” I told him.

With persistent prodding, I got him to send me the assessment that he sent to Jennifer Reeger and it is every bit as misleading as the mystery *TBogg* comment. The first thing Griffith analysis says it that he finds blogger Jonathan Haas’ calculation of the Mecca orientation of the crescent to be accurate within .02 percent, except he veils this verification of Haas’ calculations behind the most abstruse language imaginable, without ever being clear what he is referring to, then states his conclusion in wholly negative terms, making it sound as if he has debunked the Mecca-orientation claim, instead of verifying it to within a very high degree of accuracy.

The assessment does the exact same thing through several more points, verifying claims while making it sound as if he is debunking them, arriving finally at the dismissive sounding but actually nonsensical lines quoted by Jennifer. It’s like the guy can’t even tell the truth to himself. For those who want to dissect the truth-avoiding mind in its most twisted manifestations, Griffith’s analysis, and my response to it, are both included in Addendum Ten (at *CrescentOfBetrayal.com*).

The upshot is that, for the second time, success in getting the first facts about Murdoch’s design into the news were countered with pure disinformation. First was Gordon Felt, claiming in February that the Memorial Project had debunked my information when it had done no such thing. Now here was Dr. Daniel Griffith, professor at the University of Texas at Dallas, lying about his own findings! What a moral imbecile. How can a professor of geo-spatial information not trust in truth, even about geo-spatial information? Just tell the damned truth, you stinker!

Faced with Griffith’s perfidy, I bullied the girls, and a lot of the boys too. I compiled the simplest possible graphical proof of the

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Mecca orientation of the giant crescent and the simplest possible graphical proof of the repetition of this orientation in the Tower crescents (the demonstrations included in Chapter One) and sent them to everybody whose job it is to check the facts of this story: both the reporters who had been covering the Memorial story, and a half dozen Park Service personnel. I promised to expose them all. They would either check the facts, and inform the public if I was right, or they wouldn't. Either way, we were all be on this hijacked airplane together, and the world would find out here what each one of us is made of. The world is going to find out here what a *lot* of people are made of.

Interior Concludes its Investigation

My last communication with Chief Ranger Hawk came a couple of weeks after the July meeting. I was continuing to push her to verify the authorship of the anonymous *TBogg* comment, which she was still acknowledging to be the Project's sole piece of feedback about my report. She answered by email that:

... we have verified that the written assessment (that was posted on the blog) was completed by a religious scholar that the NPS contacted for their review. I am also working with our GIS specialist in regard to the mathematical formulas/plotting that was used in your documents.

So now their lone source of feedback about my information (especially critical, since they had refused to investigate my information for themselves) was no longer just a "university professor." Now he was being called "a religious scholar." What religion I wonder? Had they consulted a jihad sympathizer?

But except for the "religious scholar" tidbit, this was exactly what Ranger Hawk had told me three months earlier when she told me she had verified that the comment was written by a "university professor." On that first go-round, it turned out she hadn't actually talked to the person, so I asked her again: had she actually talked to this religious scholar? And what about the date the comment/assessment of my report was written? Hanley told her boss Mary Bomar that she had it before January 18, 2006. Hawk's whole investigation was sparked by my telling Bomar that Hanley had lied to her, that she couldn't have had it before January 18th. Had Hawk asked this person about the date? She never answered either question.

On September 19, 2006, I received a letter from Chrysandra Walter, Deputy Regional Director of the Department of the Interior, concluding the Department's investigation into my information. (For the full text, see Exhibit Five in Addendum Ten.)

Walter's letter claims that the Ranger Hawk asked "scholars" plural to: "address your stated 'fact' that that the national memorial design is in the shape of a crescent that points 'almost exactly' to Mecca." Apparently they still only have the one response, however, because Walter then proceeds to refer to the response of only one scholar:

The scholar's response to this specific question was that the mihrab orientation either points to Mecca or it does not and that is [sic] cannot be off by "some" degrees. ... Based on the information provided by these subject matter experts we do not agree that the National Memorial design points to Mecca. Therefore, whether or not your "accurate calculations" are accurate is not relevant.

Imagine thinking that an orientation "cannot be off by 'some' degrees"? To be charitable, maybe the "scholar" meant that a *mihrab* that is not precisely oriented on Mecca cannot function as a proper *mihrab*, in which case he knows nothing about Islam (or nothing he wants to be honest about). *Mihrab* orientations are often far from precise. (All this, of course, is to say nothing about the exact Mecca orientations that are also included in the Crescent design.)

At least it sounds like Jill Hawk actually did contact her lone "religious scholar," since she got some feedback from the scholar that did not appear in the *TBogg* comment:

In addition, this scholar states that Mosques are not in the shape of a crescent or circle as this would defeat the purpose of lining up the worshipers [sic] parallel to the Quibla wall, which, according to the scholar, is typically a rectangular shape or a square.

Actually there *is* a prayer-area in Paul Murdoch's mosque design that lines up worshippers to face the *qibla* wall (not face parallel to it). That is the *women's* prayer area, which is situated behind the *qibla* wall (the Memorial Wall). The men, in contrast, pray in front of the *qibla* wall and face into the *mihrab* to face Mecca. That is appropriate, since the *mihrab* takes priority over the *qibla* wall as a Mecca-direction indicator. The *mihrab* is a specialized adjunct to the *qibla* wall, typically

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faced into by the imam in leading prayers. Thus the men are both in front of the women, and they get the higher priority Mecca-direction indicator, in accordance with their higher status within Islam.

Either the Memorial Project's lone "religious scholar" is not much of a scholar, or he actually is knowledgeable and is just *pretending* not to appreciate the Crescent design's thorough conformity with Islamic principles.

What about that "GIS specialist" Ranger Hawk was working with to check the Mecca-orientations in my report? Chrysandra Walter's letter repeats Superintendent Hanley's absurd dodge that because the plans are not yet finalized, nothing can yet be analyzed or concluded:

...from a Geographic Information Systems and construction perspective... there is not currently enough available data, or even articulation of the site design, to determine whether the proposed site features coincide, or almost coincide, with the Qibla direction, as you maintain, because none of the data or imagery used to develop the site plan has been geo-referenced.

Actually, it has been. Recall that the raw property-plan on which the Crescent plans are drawn has topo lines on it. That means it was excerpted from a topo map (probably supplied by the Memorial Project). A topo map *is* a geo-referenced map (with north at the top). So long as the property-plan was not rotated, the site-plans will also be perfectly geo-referenced (with north at the top). Alternatively, the property-plan could just be put back together with the topo map from which it was excerpted, or it could be put together with a *different* geo-referenced map.

A visitor to my blog actually pursued this last option and posted the results at his *Hound Dog Hangout*.⁴ Using the "overlay" feature of Google Earth, Hound Dog was able take the Bowl of Embrace site plan and fit its border roads exactly to Google Earth's satellite map (see Figure 21, at the end of Chapter Two). He then used Google Earth's line projecting tools to see where the various crescents pointed. His projection of a line across the fat rear part of the central crescent hits the White House lawn, while his projection of the bisector of the central crescent passes 110 miles from Mecca.

These results differ slightly from what I get using great-circle calculations. I get that the fat rear crescent points a little closer to the Pentagon than to the White House, and that the crescent bisector points a little closer to Mecca than Hound Dog found, but the differences are

all within a few tenths of a degree. The point is, these orientations are real. Anyone who can come up with a valid way of checking them will verify them (to within a couple of tenths of a degree). The Memorial Project and the Department of the Interior just never tried to verify them, despite being shown multiple ways to do so. They didn't have to be brilliant like Hound Dog. They just had to want to know the truth, and they didn't.



Figure 68. Hound Dog's overlay of my Crescent of Embrace detail, on top of the Bowl of Embrace site plan, on top of Google Earth's map of the crash site. The other end of the white line across the tips of the fat rear crescent hits the White House lawn. Upper right inset shows Google Earth's projection of the full crash-site to White House line.

Take your Country Back

If Chysandra Walter's letter is the last word on Interior's oversight, then Paul Murdoch's crescent-and-star-flag-mosque will be approved for building, leaving it up to you now America. Your representatives have failed you. To overturn the crescent-mosque, you are going to have to speak for yourselves, a full majority of you, enough to carry an act of Congress.

This is not just something we need to do for Flight 93. It is a last service that Flight 93 is doing for us: requiring that we come together to defeat the enemy that murdered them. If we meet this challenge, if we come together here, and wake up to the lesson here, then manipulative dishonesty will be disempowered for a generation, a crucial generation, where in order to survive we must be united in never sacrificing truth for demagogic advantage.

NOTES

Chapter Six Notes

¹ "Flight 93 memorial still an Islamo-fascist shrine," Alec Rawls, *Error Theory*, November 30, 2005, <http://errortheory.blogspot.com/2005/11/redesigned-flight-93-memorial-still_30.html>.

² "Flight 93 meeting may face protest," *Johnstown Tribune-Democrat*, February 18, 2006.

³ "Flight 93 Memorial design spat continues," Jennifer Reeger, *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*, July 20, 2006.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ This debunking was first amassed in an article ("9/11: Debunking the myths," *Popular Mechanics*, March 2005, <<http://www.popularmechanics.com/science/defense/1227842.html>>, which has been expanded into a book (*Debunking 9/11 Myths: Why Conspiracy Theories Can't Stand Up to the Facts*, edited by David Dunbar and Brad Reagan, Hearst, 2006).

⁶ "Press conference of the President," White House press release, March 21, 2006, <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/03/20060321-4.html>>.

⁷ This account of my conversation with Paula Ward is what I would call a reasonably accurate paraphrase, drawn from the account of our conversation that I wrote immediately afterwards, and from my further recollections as I entered my account on the computer. As of this writing, my recollections of the main points of our conversation are still clear, and I can state with a high degree of confidence that nothing in the account here is significantly distorted. The same goes for all of the conversations recounted in this book. All were either written directly from fresh recollections, were written from recollections penned at the time, the main components of which were still recollected when they were put in book form.

⁸ "Arc of reason: this memorial is about the innocent, not the guilty," by the Editors, *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, September 14, 2005

⁹ Sara Wells, "Biting on Tinfoil," *op. cit.*

¹⁰ "Taliban man at Yale," John Fund, Opinion Journal, *The Wall Street Journal*, March 23, 2006, <<http://www.opinionjournal.com/diary/?id=110008127>>.

¹¹ Stanley Rothman, Robert Lichter and Neil Nevitte, "Politics and Professional Advancement Among College Faculty," *The Forum*, volume 3, issue 1, article 2, March 2005, <<http://www.bepress.com/forum/vol3/iss1/art2/>>.

¹² The 1984 figure is from a study by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The 72% figure is from a 2005 study by Robert Lichter of George Mason University. Both are cited by Howard Kurtz in his article "College faculties a most liberal lot, study finds," *The Washington Post*, March 29, 2005.

¹³ "How many Democrats per Republican at UC-Berkeley and Stanford? Voter registration data across 23 academic departments," Daniel B. Klein, Andrew Western, forthcoming in *Academic Questions* (abstract: <http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=664045>). Also available as Working RATIO Working Paper #54, <<http://swopec.hhs.se/ratioi/abs/ratioi0054.htm>>. For an anecdotal report on how extreme the bias is, see *The New York Sun*'s story about the inability of Mark Moyar, a leading young historian of conservative bent, to get an academic job even at lower tier colleges and universities, despite an unrivaled publication record. ("Mark Moyar, Historian of Vietnam, Finds Academe Hostile to a Hawk," Gary Shapiro, April 30, 2007.

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¹⁴ See Elaine Povich, 1996. "Partners and Adversaries: The Contentious Connection Between Congress and the Media," Arlington, VI: Freedom Forum. Cited in Groschlose and Milyo, "A measure of media bias," December 2004, <<http://www.polisci.ucla.edu/faculty/groschclose/Media.Bias.8.htm>>.

¹⁵ Also cited by Groschlose and Milyo, *op cit*. MediaResearch.org has a page of citations of media voting patterns at: <<http://www.mediaresearch.org/biasbasics/biasbasics3.asp>>.

Chapter Seven Notes

¹ Cc'ed were D. Hamilton Peterson, President, Families of Flight 93; Patrick White Esq., Co-Chair of the Flight 93 Memorial Task Force; Judge Kim Gibson, Co-Chair of the Flight 93 Memorial Task Force; and John Reynolds, Chairman, Flight 93 Federal Advisory Commission. Scan of letter in Addendum 6.

² COLUMBIA Accident Investigation Board, Volume 1 August 2003, p. 180-81, <<http://www.dcfp.navy.mil/library/dctricks/DCTrick022.htm>>.

³ A facsimile of Mary Bomar's letter is included in addendum 10, available on the CrescentOfBetrayal.com website.

⁴ Again, these are reasonably accurate paraphrases, constructed with the help of notes taken at the time, and still clearly recollected.

⁵ "Memorial controversy compels artist to pull crash site angel," Kecia Bal, *The Tribune Democrat*, March 18, 2006.

⁶ "Co-chairs announced for Flight 93 national memorial task force," News from Congressman Jack Murtha, December 13, 2003, <<http://www.house.gov/murtha/news/nw021213.htm>>.

⁷ "Flight 93 national memorial act," Public Law 107-226-September 24th 2002, 116 Stat. 1345, <http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=107_cong_public_laws&docid=f:publ226.107.pdf>.

⁸ "Contested terrain," Susan Hines, *Landscape Architecture Magazine*, May, 5, 2005, <http://www.tclf.org/news/lam_may2005_hines.htm>.

⁹ "Like Warhol himself, the museum aims to provoke as well as educate," Patty Tas-carella, *Pittsburgh Business Times*, April 15, 2005, <<http://www.bizjournals.com/pittsburgh/stories/2005/04/18/focus3.html?page=1>>.

¹⁰ "Veterans groups criticize Warhol Museum plans for Abu Ghraib photo exhibit," Mike Crissey, Associated Press, September 10, 2004.

¹¹ On the media's disinformation campaign to mislead people into thinking that the electrodes were real, see my post: "Got full information?" Alec Rawls, Error Theory, June 24, 2004, <<http://errortheory.blogspot.com/2004/06/got-full-information.html>>.

¹² This statement was attributed to Sokolowski in paraphrase by reporter Diana Nelson Jones: ("Reactions strong to Abu Ghraib show at the Warhol," *The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, September 21, 2004.

¹³ "Like Warhol himself, the museum aims to provoke as well as educate," Patty Tas-carella, *Pittsburgh Business Times*, April 15, 2005, <<http://www.bizjournals.com/pittsburgh/stories/2005/04/18/focus3.html?page=1>>

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ "Heinz Endowments' Boards approve Fall grants," News, The Heinz Endowments, May 11, 2004, <<http://www.heinz.org/K.asp?loc=K,K2026&whr=c>>.

¹⁷ According to *Access Philanthropy*: "The Heinz Endowments concentrates its efforts and resources in southwestern Pennsylvania." At: <<http://accessphilanthropy.com/funderinnews.php?funderID=587>>.

Chapter Eight Notes

- ¹ "Lunacy abounds," Tbogg, February 6, 2006, <<http://tbogg.blogspot.com/2006/01/lunacy-abounds-nuts.html>>.
 - ² "It points towards Mecca," Jonathan Haas, *op. cit.*
 - ³ Avery has the email posted on the Loose Change website: <<http://www.loosechange911.com/company.htm>>.
 - ⁴ An annotated debunking of the video is available at the Screw Loose Change website: <<http://www.lolloosechange.co.nr/>>.
 - ⁵ David Kopel has compiled a list of disinformation contained in Fahrenheit 911: "Fifty-nine deceptions in Fahrenheit 911," Independent Institute, November 12, 2004, <<http://www.davekopel.org/Terror/Fiftysix-Deceptions-in-Fahrenheit-911.htm>>.
 - ⁶ From a Summer of 2006 Scripps Howard/Ohio University poll. ("Poll: Third of U.S. trust 9/11 conspiracy. Hatred of government seems to fuel belief that attacks were 'inside job' to cause Mideast war," Thomas Hargrove and Guido H. Stempel III, Scripps Howard News Service, *Detroit Free Press*, August 4, 2006,
 - ⁷ Full comment is included as exhibit 6 in addendum 10. The comment has its own url: <<http://tbogg.blogspot.com/2006/01/lunacy-abounds-nuts.html#114322875059110249>>, but as of the end of 2006, the entire comment thread is at least temporarily unavailable. A copy of the comment thread can be found at CrescentOfBetrayal.com.
- As for the idea that the space between the trees creates an arch shape, my hard copy report actually made a significantly different point. I was referring, not to the space between the trees, but to the shapes of the trees themselves, and their likenesses to a *mihrab* shape. But the space between the round-topped maple trees *does* have an arch shape, enhancing the likeness to a traditional *riwaqs*. Was the Memorial Project's *Tbogg* commentator correcting me on the implication of the tree shapes? If so, that would point to Paul Murdoch himself as the author. As will be seen later, there are further hints of the same.
- ⁸ "Flight 93 memorial challenged," Kirk Swauger, *Johnstown Tribune-Democrat*, September 9, 2005.
 - ⁹ "Concerns over memorial grow," by Kirk Swauger, *Johnstown Tribune-Democrat*, September 10, 2005.

Chapter Nine Notes

- ¹ "Flight 93 Memorial blueprint draws support," Kecia Bal, *Johnstown Tribune-Democrat*, July 20, 2006.
- ² "Flight 93 discussed," Tiffany Wright, *Somerset Daily American*, July 21, 2006.
- ³ "Flight 93 Memorial design spat continues," Jennifer Reeger, *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*, July 20, 2006.
- ⁴ "Is the Flight 93 Memorial a Islamic Prayer Center?" *Hound Dog Hangout*, July 13, 2006, <<http://hounddoghangout.blogspot.com/2006/07/is-flight-93-memorial-islamic-prayer.html>>.