

# CMU Memoirs

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In the beginning, there was the merger. Most departments were unaffected when Carnegie Tech and Mellon Institute got together in 1967 and were probably annoyed at the needless inconvenience of a name change. Not so for Chemistry. Federal funding of academic research in the sciences had increased dramatically in the ten years since Sputnik. With high hopes that an infusion of government money would support the high salaries, tenure was granted liberally to the fellows-turned-professors at Mellon, most of them chemists. It turned into a nightmare.

Funding flattened out. Faculty members lost their grants, and their research programs languished. The university could not support Chemistry's bloated size. The good people got offers of better support elsewhere and left. The less active faculty, with tenure and nowhere else to go, remained. New people were denied tenure. The stature of the department declined rapidly.

When I arrived in the fall of 1977, it appeared that the pruning process was over and it was time for the department to move ahead again. I was the young star with the right pedigree, fresh from a stint as an NSF postdoctoral fellow with Harry Gray at Caltech, who was arguably the best young inorganic chemist in the world. The department head was Bob Kay, a fatherly type who preferred giving advice to dealing with real problems. Insufficient set-up money from the university, only five to ten new graduate students per year entering the department — the obstacles were huge for someone obligated to establish an outside reputation as the prime criterion for tenure. And there to remind me at every turn of how bad things were was Walter Weddell, the assistant professor sharing my hallway on the fifth floor of Mellon Institute. I was the objective, detached scholar, willing to hear and weigh every opinion. Walter was the cynic, the aggressive young Turk, ready to relay his opinions to anyone who would listen. What the department needed, he constantly railed, were more bright, young, eager faculty ready to conquer the world and less deadwood taking two hour lunches to discuss their golf game. He was right, of course, but the university didn't have the resources to support the major rebuilding of Biological Sciences and Chemistry simultaneously. So President Cyert, in a holding pattern, supported Bob Kay, widely viewed as somewhat of a buffoon, and Chemistry languished.

Kay knew which side his bread was buttered on. He rarely made a decision without first consulting John Pople and Guy Berry, the best known and best funded faculty members. And he rarely consulted anybody else. We were lucky if we had two faculty meetings in a year. Few faculty committees were established, and they were just for show. Once, Kay put me on a search committee for a new physical chemist. I must have reviewed 100 files — long ones with detailed research proposals. Then when we finally had a candidate in to visit, I was told to leave the room because the appointment was being considered at a senior level (full professor), so that the presence of an assistant professor was inappropriate.

My frustration at the system was nothing compared with Waddell's, who, without tenure, could not coax the department out of its lethargy. Walter published 40 papers, had two major grants at once, put enormous effort into graduate student recruiting, and was an effective if hard-nosed teacher. The students either loved him or hated him. He demanded well over nine

hours per week for his 9-unit Organic Chemistry, but persistent students were rewarded with a hell of an education. Now I don't personally believe I have the right to demand unlimited amounts of my students' time, but you don't see computer scientists at CMU being fired for that sin. Walter was. When his annoyance with Kay turned into a feud, Kay started a file of letters from students disgruntled with Waddell's teaching style, and those letters were used to deny his tenure. The power play left Walter bitter, viewing Kay as the devil incarnate.

My tenure prospects were also bleak. I was isolated as the only practicing inorganic chemist on the faculty, with nobody to bounce ideas off and nobody to act as my spokesman and explain the significance of my work to the rest of the faculty. Despite a large and active grant from the Department of Energy, some very important research results from my student Mark Peterson, and teaching evaluations in the top 25% of CMU faculty, I was denied promotion in the fall of 1982 due to a shortage of publications. My colleagues at other universities expressed shock at the unfairness of the decision, but they always do that, and I was realistic enough to know that I had not worked as hard as possible, that I could have done better.

It is interesting that during that fall semester of 1982, what consumed me the most was not the promotion decision, over which I had no control, but a case that I took to the university disciplinary committee. A female freshman in one of my general chemistry recitations had coaxed a male sophomore into taking her exams, hoping that I wouldn't notice an extra face in a large lecture hall. I caught them red-handed, and the committee gave them each a one-year suspension. Afterwards, the guilty students apologized for offending me, as if that were their greatest crime. They offended not me, but their fellow students, many of whom struggled and failed the course, but maintained their integrity in the process.

In the early 1980's, the Chemistry Department reached its low ebb. We must have made six to eight offers for faculty positions, mostly to junior organic chemists. The only one who accepted was Kunio Sakan, and he committed suicide two years after he got here. The administration made a major commitment to rebuild Chemistry, but after long and exhaustive searches for a new department head to lead the way, first Sunny Chan of Caltech and then Ben Ware of Syracuse turned down our offers. Each time the administration upped the ante as everyone grew impatient and uncertain that the job could be done.

In 1983-84, two men were brought in who both wanted the job — Wes Borden, a theoretician from Washington, and Bob Birge, a two-photon spectroscopist from UC Riverside. Tony Streiff would also be retiring at the end of the year as assistant department head, the job of running the undergraduate program, so it was clear that major changes were on the way. Meanwhile, I was actively seeking employment while finishing my term as a lame-duck assistant professor. Foote Mineral was puzzled when I turned down their offer because it would mean leaving the department in March with nobody to finish teaching my Inorganic Chemistry course — why the loyalty, they asked, to an institution that was abandoning me? I got another offer from MSA which allowed me (and my wife, who was happy with her position at Westinghouse) to stay in Pittsburgh, and I accepted.

Of the four candidates for department head who came through over a three-year period, the only one who ever talked to me was Bob Birge. It was one of those flukes of fate — he ignored the seminar he was scheduled to attend and sat in my office for an hour and a half. We established an instant rapport. He was impressed by my candor, circumspection, and willingness to accept blame for what had gone wrong in my career. I was impressed that he had

the insight and the fortitude to do what was necessary to rebuild the department. When I mentioned my interest in taking over for Tony Streiff as assistant head, his eyes lit up.

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It was a crazy idea. Even in the best of circumstances, there were bound to be some residual hard feelings after a negative tenure decision. And my career, still salvageable as a research-active 34-year-old, could be dead after a few years at a desk job. But the allure was irresistible. Here was a job that combined all the things I was good at. The department, split between research labs in Mellon Institute and teaching labs in Doherty Hall, needed somebody to oversee the Doherty operation. I got along well with people, including most of the Chemistry faculty. The job description was enormous, including all of Tony Streiff's duties, a quarter of Ray Nether's and a full course to teach in the Spring, but I was full of energy. I could still teach Inorganic, I could stay active in research by collaborating with other faculty, and best of all, Birge and I shared a commitment to improve the undergraduate program. I no longer had to subordinate my love of undergraduates — I could let it all out as the major advisor.

The position was a three-year special faculty appointment. It was not in the tenure track. To me, that didn't matter. Tenure protects incompetence, and I object to people who hide behind the title of professor. My attitude toward teaching is that you have to go out every day and prove anew why you're the one at the front of the classroom. In this job too, I would prove my worth to the department every day, so there was no need for tenure. To students, who don't understand the tenure system and are too intimidated to ask about it, it was assumed that I had tenure, so I still enjoyed the professorial ego-trip of being treated as a demi-god.

Birge was named department head, and he soon convinced the Dean Sekerka to formally offer me the position of assistant head. The dean assured me that, even though it was not a tenure track position, the job security was at least as good as in industry. I accepted and wrote a nice letter to MSA turning down the job I had already accepted, a tactic I thoroughly discourage all my students from using. But I was too excited about the prospect of doing a job I could be really passionate about. I owed everything to Bob's faith in me. Such loyalty was unusual for me — loyalty to somebody generally means you have to lie, cheat, and steal for him, and that would bother my conscience too much. But Bob knew full well that I had an independent, skeptical head on my shoulders — that I would not be a yes-man — and he seemed to like that quality, so I took my chances.

On July 1, 1984, Bob Birge, Nancy Jenkins, and I took over the reins of the Chemistry Department. Nancy came in from Computer Science to be the department administrator, responsible for balancing budgets. (Several months later, I met Nico Haberman, head of Computer Science, at a luncheon. "Oh, yes, Nancy Jenkins went to your department," he volunteered. "Good with numbers, not so good with people.") In those first few months, Bob, Nancy, and I developed a closeness, a oomeraderie. The job of building this department would not be easy. It was us against the world, and we intended to win.

I had been at the February faculty meeting at which the faculty voted on Birge versus Borden for the new department head, and one of the first things Bob wanted to know was the names of those who had voted against him. He was ready to prepare his first enemies list. (Fortunately, I forgot most of them.) I passed along a quote from Bob Stewart that he found so amusing, he couldn't take offense. "I voted for Borden because I'd rather ruin the career of a

good theoretician than a good two-photon spectroscopist.“ You see, theoreticians (like Borden) are a dime a dozen, while innovative experimentalists (like Birge) are not. The implication was that the administrative burden of being department head would be so overwhelming, the scientific career would be ruined.

Stewart needn't have worried. Birge delegated to me and Nancy so extensively, he made Ronald Reagan look like a hands-on manager. Birge's talent as a manager was nil, and he was the first to admit it. Department heads are brought in from outside (*i.e.*, stolen from other universities) at great expense, and the main criterion is not good management skills. They must be effective at bringing in top new faculty, large research grants, and favorable exposure to the outside world. Bob was good at all of this. In return, he got the power, prestige, salary, and discretionary authority of being department head. If anybody ever accused him of being a lousy administrator, he would simply resign and fall back on being a research professor. Nobody called his bluff.

When you were listening to what he was saying, Birge resembled nobody so much as Walter Waddell. He had never seen a faculty like this, he said. So many people who didn't have grants, so many who refused to even apply for them, a bunch of prima donnas unwilling to give of themselves for the good of the department. But his message sure didn't come across like Walter's. In contrast to Waddell's abrasive style that offended everybody, Birge had charm and charisma. Who could dislike somebody who took your drink order (martini, red wine, beer, or soda) before you could even sit down in his office? He even showed that touch of class that sets CMU apart from those proletarian state schools: he established a house wine for the department.

Late afternoon was a great time for staff meetings. Bob had already had a few by then. He knew his limit and always stayed within it, but the style was wide open, full of off-color jokes. We managed to conduct about ten minutes' worth of business in an hour, but we met several times per week, and the communication channels stayed wide open.

These meetings were Birge's spoils of victory. As time went on, I began to view him as the hero of a Shakespearean tragedy. He had a mandate from the administration (a divine right) to shake things up, and the meetings amounted to one decision after another whose main design was to make things miserable for those for whom he had no use. His arrogance (*hubris*) was astounding. His fatal flaw would be greed.

Bob gave me budgetary authority, faculty teaching assignments, a vote at faculty meetings, and a seat at College Council. He kept saying that my star was rising and that once this became apparent to people, they wouldn't like it at all. This gave him great comfort, since it was another way to tweak people he had no use for. If it was supposed to comfort me, it didn't. I knew all too many unpopular administrators, and I didn't want to be one of them. I had earned a reputation as a good teacher by getting excellent evaluations from not only the A students — anybody could do that — but also the C and D students. I wanted to do the same as an administrator — to make no enemies no matter what my personal opinion of somebody.

So as Nancy and I gathered in Bob's office several times a week for staff meetings, we resolved the issues of the day. Usually that amounted to Bob pondering each issue for a few microseconds and then calling the affected faculty member, or Betty Maurer (the dean's money person), or whomever. And then he lied. Bob lied to everybody. He could always find a way to

change the truth in order to make his argument more persuasive. It was pathological — after a while, I don't think he realized he was doing it. One day, he said to the phone, "Yes, son, I'm leaving the office right now. I'll be home in 15 minutes." Then he poured himself another martini.

Bob's other primary management tactic was what I call blame-shifting. For example, he actively solicited my suggestions for how to improve the undergraduate program and shake things up. Did I ever respond! I must have sent him 20 memoranda per month. But the message was often offensive to those affected, and my position was too vulnerable for me to take the blame. So he would have me ghost-write memos that came from him. For example, Walter Waddell and I had always objected to the fact that Miguel Llinas got tenure without ever having any success at teaching an undergraduate course. It had seemed a double standard that foreigners, unfamiliar and uncomfortable with the American educational system, could teach small graduate courses and concentrate on research, while American-born faculty had to be good at both teaching and research. Birge agreed. So he told Miguel that he would never support his promotion to full professor until he consulted with the teaching center and proved he could teach undergraduates effectively. Blame-shifting was wonderful! I could have power without the accompanying responsibility. Or so I thought.

Bob blame-shifted whenever possible. He took the blame for actions that were not his. He blamed the Dean for actions that were his. Even if there was no obvious advantage to doing so, he shifted blame.

If all this sounds so deceitful as to make my job unbearable, nothing could be further from the truth. Bob and I shared the same goals — strengthening the department by building the faculty, the graduate program, and the undergraduate program simultaneously. And besides, only the most naive person would think he could find a workplace free of politics and manipulation. My wife's stories from Westinghouse were worse than any I could tell. Except, that is, for the money laundering.

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Our ruling triumvirate took over on July 1, 1984. And from day one, Bob ordered Nancy to launder money into an outside bank account. It would be our little secret. All the best chemistry departments did it, he claimed. It was the only way to have the flexibility to do what had to be done. Once you had a few \$100,000 accounts stashed away, you could use the interest to support a couple of extra graduate students. And if you got caught, you just apologized and begged ignorance of the rules, and then started another account elsewhere.

Where would the money come from? After all, you can't just transfer money from an official CMU account to a bank account. It would have to come from checks made out directly to the department, which could be shunted around the Warner Hall bureaucracy. Payments for the computer code for Pople's molecular orbital calculation program. And payments for API Standard Reference Materials. That was the small company I ran as part of my job. And that was why I had to be part of the laundering scheme.

Throughout the 1950's, the American Petroleum Institute funded a large research program at Carnegie Tech to purify hydrocarbons from oil. When the funding stopped, the API let us keep the chemicals and market them to the research community. Tony Streiff ran the

company for 20 years and then left it to me. Sales ranged from \$20,000 to \$40,000 per year, and after subtracting about \$15,000 for a fraction of my salary, a part-time secretary (Selma Wekselman), and other expenses, there was a tidy profit every year to supplement the Chemistry Department budget. Bob knew that as long as the official CMU account for API didn't run a deficit, nobody would notice the reduced revenues, so he had me send the checks we received to Nancy. He assured me that the API account would be reimbursed by journal entries from other accounts and that I retained full spending authority to use the surplus to enhance the undergraduate program, but I had Selma keep a detailed record of what she was sending over. Sure enough, Nancy made no effort to keep an accounting of these checks, and there was no reimbursement.

That amount, in the first year, was a bit over \$5000. In addition, Bob had spent the last \$6000 from my expiring DOE research account on the condition that I would be able to spend an equivalent amount for educational purposes. Despite my persistent efforts for over a year, Nancy would not provide an accounting of these funds and Bob would not order her to do so. After a year of this I finally got the API money (probably transferred from the renovations account) but not the DOE money, and my persistence earned me a lot of ill will in the process.

In the summer of 1985 Bob told me that he had used the laundered money to cover the deficit in his regular accounts, that the outside bank account was closed, but yes, keep sending the checks. Translation: the laundering would proceed, but I was being dealt out. For a year and a half on the job, through the end of 1985, this was the main problem in an otherwise fulfilling period. I worked 60-hour weeks and loved every minute of it. I was a memo-writing machine, actively proposing improvements across my entire range of responsibilities. Curriculum development was my forte, not only the innovative new computer science track in chemistry, but also major revisions in general chemistry and physical chemistry. I introduced initiatives to improve the teaching program and continually improved my own teaching. I was active and imaginative in recruiting new students. I supervised a staff of six and, at Bob's request, the special faculty. And I got along famously with the new faculty we were hiring, who appreciated my emphasis on research to the undergraduates. But administrators are magnets for trouble.

The demands of the job were overwhelming at first, so Bob told me to delegate more duties to my staff. By November of 1984, my secretary Ellen was said to be on the verge of transferring to another department and other staff members were complaining that communication was poor. Bob sent Nancy over to patch things up, and she was great. She asked the staff to give me a chance and to try to adapt to my style. She asked me to hold regular monthly staff meetings (and to bring the donuts) and more frequent meetings with key people. And she put me in contact with Pat Smith, a very capable woman in Personnel who opened up my life to job descriptions, performance evaluations, staff handbooks, and other aspects of civil working relationships. At the time I was very grateful to Nancy, but in retrospect, it was one of the worst things that could happen to my career at CMU.

You see, Bob had sent Nancy over to quiet things down, not to establish civil working relationships. To him, unpopularity was a badge to be worn proudly. We were there to shake things up, to make the hard choices necessary to improve the department. If people hated you, it was proof you were making those hard choices. To be thought competent in this environment, you had to be constantly criticizing others' incompetence. My new-found popularity with my staff did nothing for that image. If I was told to fire an employee, I pointed out that without a written record of poor performance documented in the employee's file, we could be sued. To Birge,

those words just made me sound less loyal to his shoot-from-the-hip juggernaut for change and more like the bureaucrats and union workers who were in his way.

In the spring of 1985, storeroom manager Lisa Sikora began showing signs of mental illness — her performance lagged and she openly threatened suicide. Bob wanted me to fire her, but I got her to a psychiatrist and forced her to take a medical leave of absence, promising that her job would be there when she recovered. Four months later, the old Lisa returned, crediting me with saving her life.

But while Lisa was gone, it was time to put in the big summer bid order, and none of us had ever done it before. That's when we order in bulk at a big discount, both to stock the storeroom for subsequent sales to other departments at a profit, and to run the undergrad labs for another year. I was seriously overworked, teaching one and a half courses and learning every detail of my job for the first time, so I put Irene Anderson, a lowly stores clerk, in charge of the bid order. She was hopelessly overmatched. The order exceeded \$45,000, and there was no way to break it down between storeroom and labs, so there was no way to know whether we would go over the \$26,000 lab budget. Naturally, the bureaucracy would not allow me to credit the salary savings due to Lisa's absence toward any possible deficit.

Later that summer, Irene stole \$500 from the safe, then destroyed the evidence so we couldn't prove it. When she took a medical leave soon thereafter for her bad back, we used it as an excuse to get rid of her by a "reduction in force." She was never replaced. The next year I would lose another stores clerk. Nobody had the management skills to figure out how we were supposed to run the operation without these people, but everyone agreed that we seemed overstaffed, so the positions just disappeared.

Those were the sorts of changes that Tony Streiff, my predecessor, used to fight tooth and nail. He would march right into the Dean's (or even the President's) office. My situation was different, though. Going over Birge's head would be the kiss of death. And after all, I did owe him my job, so I remained loyal in hopes he would return the loyalty.

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Things took a turn for the worse in the spring of 1986. Once again I was teaching one and a half courses. The teaching labs were understaffed, and I took the heat when things went wrong. We added three new faculty members, and I was on the search committee for the inorganic chemist (Jim Whittaker) and was also involved in recruiting one of the others, Larry Sita, a former student of mine. On top of the stress of all that work came the most diabolical student I have ever known, Tom Gillespie. Tom was going to try to cheat the university out of a degree in chemistry without doing any work. His parents knew it, I knew it, he knew it. Tony Streiff had warned me about him. Every semester, he ran up a series of incompletes, then somehow got them replaced by B's and C's by writing a paper six months later, after the instructor forgot the situation. In the fall of 1985, he was on probation, in danger of being suspended if his grades fell below 2.0. He solved the problem by not registering until finals week, so that nobody could find out his grades until after the notification period for suspensions! In the spring, I was ready to enforce the registration deadline. Armed with a memo from the registrar saying that students who were not registered could not attend class, I walked into the Tech IV lab in early March to kick him out. In the circus that ensued, Bob Kay, the instructor, insisted that he stay! I pleaded that he be expelled from the class. Kay shoved me. Gillespie

marched out and went straight to President Cyert's office to complain. The message came down from the President to the Dean to Birge to find out what was going on. And what was going on was that Bob Kay wanted me out of my job. I didn't sleep for a month. Bob Birge took on my defense, since he had no love for Bob Kay, who was taking up a faculty slot without doing any research. He had me write an apology for what was the main issue here: breaking into Kay's classroom and not allowing him his prerogative as the professor. Then he took the case before the faculty. I was not there, but from what I heard, it was not the sort of defense I would have been proud of. True to Birge's style, the truth was irrelevant and loyalty was everything. Yes, Richman was motivated by the fact that Kay was department head when he was denied tenure, Birge said, but I need him as my assistant for at least one more year. So the faculty voted to give me one more year beyond the June, 1987 expiration of my contract. I asked Birge if I could have that in writing. He countered that if I couldn't accept his word, then we were in trouble. We were in trouble.

The notion that my future was being decided by a vote of the faculty was also disturbing. I had been told all along that I reported directly to Birge, not to the Chemistry faculty as a whole. There was a fundamental conflict here. I was Bob's henchmen — I helped to implement his policy of making life difficult for faculty he wanted out. Now, when he asked for a vote of confidence, it was not at all surprising to find a wellspring of resentment among the older faculty. To whom do I report, I asked Bob, you or the faculty? He wouldn't give me a straight answer - it was just one of those unresolvable conflicts. A conflict, it turned out, that would cost me my job. Had my loyalty been misplaced?

Bob said that one of the faculty members who had spoken up against me had been Mark Morgan, Professor Emeritus who was teaching organic chemistry. Mark was one of the special faculty reporting to me. He had claimed that I never seemed available to talk to him about his problems. (That's because when he finished teaching and wanted to talk at 9:30, I had to prepare for the class I taught at 10:30. 70-year-old professors don't want to be told to make an appointment.) Bob urged me to find a way to get rid of Morgan for saying that! It was quite a commentary on our differing styles of administration. To Bob, the prime condition of employment was loyalty. To me, free speech was protected at a university more than anywhere else. Morgan would be evaluated on his competence to teach and nothing else. While his teaching left something to be desired, according to student evaluations, he was the best I could find until permanent faculty were hired. I stuck with Morgan.

While this was going on, Lisa Sikora was cleaning up her storeroom when she found some items in the safe made of gold, silver, and platinum — electrodes, crucibles, and such. Nobody used them, and she considered them vulnerable to theft. I had her weigh them, then I had some samples analyzed at Mellon Institute. The gold was worth about \$500, the silver \$200. Not worth the assay charges. The platinum was worth \$ 15,769. I sent it off to Englehard, and they sent me a check about a month later. Birge was anxious to get his hands on that check. But it didn't belong to him, it belonged to Lisa's storeroom! If she could be blamed for running a deficit because the bid order was too high (thus accumulating inventory), then she should get credit for selling off old inventory. When the check came, I delayed, hoping Birge would forget about it. He did, until Purchasing called him to find out if we had received the check from Englehard yet. When Birge called, the lies flew hot and heavy, and I tried to call his bluff. "Send me the check," he said. *Just tell me what CMU account it goes to, and I'll deposit it directly,* I said. "Betty Maurer is asking questions about it, so I need the check." *I'll give it directly to Betty.* "Just send me the check!"



Since it was clear I would be fired if I refused, I sent him the check. A month later I got copies of the front and back of the cancelled check. It was deposited by Nancy Jenkins into account #1860-11681 at First Federal Savings of Pittsburgh, at the Fifth Avenue branch in the Webster-Hall, across the street from Mellon Institute.

I was ready to come forward to report the whole sordid mess. But when? Birge was exploiting my political weakness in the aftermath of the Kay-Gillespie affair. He portrayed himself as the only thin thread keeping me in my job. I decided to wait seven months, until after my own reappointment went through, so I could come forward from a position of strength.

I was growing further and further apart from Bob and Nancy. When I filled in for Bob at the 90-minute College Council meetings that department heads are required to attend (but Bob never did), he no longer even wanted the three-minute executive summary. There were no more staff meetings, even when I specifically requested them. Bob visited Doherty Hall no more than once a year. I told him matter-of-factly that I thought most of the world's problems were due to lack of communication — I had never known anyone to disagree with that. He said no, most were due to incompetence. Bob was running a pecking order instead of a meritocracy. My only consolation was that I was higher than most people in the department, notably Bob Kay. Unfortunately, my major source of grief was that I was below Nancy.

Nancy never had to put up with the ambiguity that I had concerning whom she reported to. She did what Bob said and nobody else. And he protected her even more fiercely than he protected me. There's only one person in each department who can approve Personnel Action Notices (for hiring and firing), journal entries (for transferring money between accounts), computer accounts, and a number of other money matters. It's a disaster when that person is uncooperative, and we had a disaster. The best word to describe her seemed to be vindictive. Almost everybody had a horror story to tell. My own favorite occurred when I made the travel arrangements to give a talk about the computer science track at a regional meeting in Milwaukee. I discovered that if I made the flight arrangements 14 days in advance and stayed over a Saturday night, the cost would be \$100 instead of \$400. The meeting was three weeks off. I had my secretary Ellen fill out the travel form and I personally handed it to Nancy, explained the situation, and asked that it be processed promptly to get the lower fare. "Sure, no problem." A week later, the form showed up in my mailbox unprocessed, because it was the wrong form. Same information as the right form, but Nancy's secretary Anna sent it back instead of retyping it. I called Anna to complain. Thirty seconds later Nancy called me. She yelled and screamed and scratched and kicked. I could not get in a word edgewise. Ellen had to learn how to fill out these forms, she said. (Never mind that Ellen has never needed to fill one out before or since.) And I had no right to criticize her secretary so I should just butt out. Click. By this time I knew better than to complain to Bob. This was an issue of pecking order, not right and wrong.

Nancy's job was to monitor the Chemistry accounts, and all that seemed to mean was putting them into Lotus 1-2-3, projecting current spending patterns to the end of the fiscal year, and reporting those that were headed for deficits. That was worthless for our storeroom budget, where we bought everything at a discount on the summer bid order and then tried to sell enough at a profit to break even by the end of the year. Nevertheless, her only advice for balancing our budgets was to do the accounting the way she did and stop spending when the money was all gone! When it ran a deficit, she suggested raising the markup from 30% to 40%. A 15-minute examination of accounting sheets revealed that the profit that would generate from \$22,000 in

annual sales would still not cover the \$10,000 in annual expenses. Since the market was captive and price-insensitive (mostly Metallurgy and Chemical Engineering research accounts), I raised the mark-up to 100%. That solved the problem. So much for the advice of our financial expert.

Nancy's other duty to the department was to oversee renovations of lab space for the new faculty members. And with all the new people we were bringing in, that was no small feat. Bob would bring that up — and what a fantastic job of it she was doing — every time he had to apologize for her anti-social behavior. I had no way to verify the quality of her work, but one new faculty member told me that Nancy was providing virtually no oversight of his renovation work and was of no assistance whatsoever in speeding things up to meet schedules.

Meanwhile, Nancy had developed a reputation among the secretaries as being difficult to work for. The turnover was high and stories abounded of secretaries leaving her office in tears. I thought that was especially ironic since it had been Nancy who taught me and my staff how to get along.

Perhaps my view of the situation was distorted, since it was based on hearsay and my own limited experience. But from everything I heard, dissatisfaction with Nancy was widespread. So why did Bob keep her atop the pecking order? The answer seemed all too obvious: because she was the one laundering his money. In retrospect, that may be just a bit simplistic. In Birge's world, the distinction between right and wrong was blurred beyond recognition, and it was Nancy's blind loyalty — her willingness to follow all orders and question none — that made her so valuable. By the same token, my stature in Birge's eyes moved perceptibly downward the more I selectively questioned his orders. That I only questioned the illegal ones was irrelevant.

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In May of 1986 Bob put in his recommendations to the Dean for salaries for the next fiscal year. He told me that he had argued persistently and successfully for an above-average increase for me. He said the Kay-Gillespie affair had blown over and was no longer an obstacle, so he would again try to promote me from assistant head to associate head. This was the closest I ever got to an annual performance evaluation. Naturally, none of it was in writing. Mainly because, with the exception of the pay raise, none of it was true.

The beginning of the end came with a series of memos we exchanged in June. They were really between me and Nancy, but Bob used the familiar blame-shifting technique to have her ghost-write memos that he signed. So I had to treat the memos as if they were from him. That meant that I could not carry on an intelligent conversation with him about the facts, because he was neither interested in nor informed about the facts. Nancy told him we were over budget and it was Richman's fault, so the memos were written.

The memos were titled "Fiscal Responsibility." The implication that I was fiscally irresponsible was annoying, since I had developed quite a reputation as a tightwad, routinely refusing requests to spend money. Given total control, I could have run the program on a lot *less* money than we were spending. We had more teaching assistants and more salaried staff than we needed. Money earmarked by the Dean for undergrad instrumentation was generous and highly appreciated, but without a corresponding increase for upkeep, it only served to further squeeze the working budget allocated by Birge. Helium for the new mass spectrometer

was running at \$1500 per year, and Hewlett-Packard wanted to sell us a maintenance contract for \$5000 per year. A high profit item, no doubt, but probably reflecting real long-term repair costs of at least half that much.

The memos defined my budgetary responsibility in writing for the first time — a good thing since our previous oral agreement led to a serious misunderstanding. Not that it made much sense. I was responsible for all photocopy expenses for undergraduate courses in Mellon Institute (where I could not control them), but not those in Doherty Hall (where I was located). I was responsible for \$1000 in telephone charges of Ken Schad (my electronics technician) but I none of my own. And I was responsible for all the costs of running the labs — chemicals, glassware, instrument repair, you name it. For this, "all costs associated with the operation of the undergraduate program, excluding salaries," I got \$26,000 per year, "more departmental support than any other undergraduate program in the College," and I was \$12,000 over budget. All true. But by conveniently separating salaries, it ignored the \$14,000 stores clerk position I had given up. And it ignored the fact that we had never in recent memory run the labs on that little. And of course, it ignored the platinum money and all the other laundered money to which I supposedly had access.

But the things that were written in memos paled beside those that were spoken. If Lisa can't balance her budget, she should be fired. My discretionary money could not be spent on such routine budgetary expenses; rather, I must propose special new projects that improve the program. No matter how many salaried positions I was willing to give up, salary money could not be used for lab supplies. Bob claimed he had checked around, and no other school except Caltech spent this much on undergraduate labs, so there was nothing I could do to get more money. In fact, the schools that I checked (including some of much lower quality than CMU) charge lab fees that are higher per student unit of enrollment than what we were spending. This was my first clue that he was trying to put me in an untenable situation to force me to resign. A job that started out by giving me freedom without responsibility was now giving me responsibility without freedom. And Bob's wholehearted support for the undergraduate program was now an issue of pecking order: in competition with requests from other departments, he provided strong support, but in competition with other ways to spend Chemistry's money, he slashed viciously.

Bob wanted "a proposal listing the ideas of cutting costs and, if necessary, instituting dry labs." "If it becomes necessary," he wrote, "I will be glad to assist you in enforcing these rules." And he repeatedly stressed in conversation that he would take the heat for whatever cuts were necessary. So I spent the entire month of June talking to people, analyzing numbers, and finding things to cut. There was very little waste and inefficiency — these would be real cuts. The biggest question was just how much of the deficit was due to Irene's excessive bid order. Lisa was not paid to do significant accounting, and it was impossible to answer that question with the numbers she gave me.

Bob's fiscal responsibility memo had ended, "If you do not feel that Lisa has the experience or the background for the responsibility of this internal accounting system, send her to some staff training sessions on campus or have her spend time with Nancy." I decided to do both. But Nancy wouldn't even return Lisa's phone calls to make an appointment. I was persistent. I told Bob that if he wouldn't honor his side of the bargain, then I couldn't honor mine — to balance the budget. They obviously resented this infringement on Nancy's valuable time, but they relented. Lisa went over for her first training session in September. Nancy spent a full hour yelling and screaming, berating Lisa for her failure to balance her budget, a task that

appeared nowhere in her job description. Lisa sat through this totally unwarranted and unprofessional performance stoically and managed to keep her sanity, but barely. Then the accounting lesson began. Two weeks later Nancy was praising Lisa as a fast learner. Not a bad recovery for someone who was threatening suicide just a year earlier.

On October 1, I called a meeting of the lab instructors and other interested faculty to discuss curriculum and budgets. I laid out my budget for everyone to see — no tricks, no mirrors. It was down a third from the previous year. If we failed, people would be fired. And since there was little fat, real meat must be cut. Each instructor would be held to his lab spending budget and then cut off. There would be only a small allotment for innovative new ideas. Lab students would be charged a mark-up for breakage, paying about 50% more than simple replacement cost. Teaching assistants who looked the other way when breakage occurred would be charged for uncompensated breakage. Bob had already approved these changes; in fact, he had suggested most of them. I rejected his most radical idea — to institute dry labs in place of real experiments. These changes were not greeted warmly. The faculty seemed to realize I was not responsible for the budget cuts, but since they had no idea about the money laundering, they didn't blame Bob either. They blamed me for the suddenness, even as I explained that I hadn't been given the luxury of a year to change things gradually. They said TA's couldn't afford charges and it would ruin their morale — I agreed but gamely defended Bob's idea. Stu Staley even faulted me for not being more upbeat! I couldn't think of a good response to that.

The meeting had one positive result of lasting value. The lab instructors admitted for the first time that they could survive without a full-time stores clerk in each lab. So the faculty suggested I make one more attempt to exchange salary money for supply money. Two weeks later I had a comprehensive proposal on Bob's desk to replace the stores clerks with a lab director who would supervise work-study students. It was one of the most innovative proposals I had ever made, saving money and improving efficiency, and it was ultimately adopted almost in full.

At the next faculty meeting, Bob recycled his argument that no other Chemistry Department except Caltech's spent as much as we did on the undergraduate program. It was a ridiculous assertion, since nobody else allocated expenses in the peculiar way that Nancy did, and Bob was almost totally unaware of how she was doing it. I challenged him in public to substantiate his claim with facts, which he had never been able to do in private. I couldn't bear him defeating all of my reasoned arguments with a simple lie, but my lack of loyalty in public was certainly risky.

Bob had me present the policy changes. On charging TA's for breakage, he defended my position (which was good, since it had been his idea), but then he put it up to a faculty vote, and it was defeated. On requiring faculty to do their photocopying in Doherty, he opposed the change! He put me in front of the faculty to do his dirty work, then left me high and dry. That was also defeated. He made no attempt to solicit alternatives for cutting costs. That meeting was the real turning point, where it became crystal clear that Bob was intentionally placing me in an untenable situation, hoping I would resign.

In November, the undergrads got wind of the changes. The chemistry majors circulated a petition complaining about the labs not being able to reorder supplies if they ran out and about paying a markup for breakage. I had 50 angry students on my hands. They sent a letter to Birge

and nearly drafted a delegation to march into President Cyert's office. I called a meeting of the Student Advisory Committee and other interested students. I told them about the budget crunch but also pointed out areas — new faculty, instrumentation — where we were spending a lot of money on their behalf. I used Bob's idea to respond to their first criticism — don't complain about a lack of supplies in the lab until it actually affects you — this policy is simply an incentive for instructors to watch costs. I used my own idea for their second criticism — we must order ahead to anticipate breakage, we might not anticipate with perfect accuracy, so we must cover our inventory expense like any other store on campus. That was qualitatively but not quantitatively correct — you couldn't justify a 50% markup on that basis. It was the ultimate in job dissatisfaction — I had lied to the students out of loyalty to Bob. I succeeded in defusing a potentially catastrophic situation. But I got no credit.

The clearest example of Nancy's exalted status came in December. I had succeeded in getting Bob, Nancy, and me together for a staff meeting — our only one of 1986 (a far cry from 1984!). The issue was that Bob had ordered me to establish a separate budget for each lab course so I could more closely monitor spending, but Nancy absolutely forbade Lisa from doing separate accounting, course by course. It seemed a relatively straightforward issue. Nancy went into a temper tantrum, just like the ones she was renowned for, right in front of Bob! It was an amazing sight. I just sat there spellbound. Then she stormed out of the room. What happened next was just as amazing. Bob shrugged, said how overworked Nancy was, and went on to the next issue as if nothing had happened.

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If it seems that the fall of 1986 must have been truly miserable, that's not exactly true. Wall Street analysts refer to a "rotating correction" as a stock market in which, after a period of euphoria, some stocks come down to reality, but the market as a whole doesn't go down because other stocks are still going up. I was having a rotating correction. While my relationship with Bob was degrading, my relationships with all the new faculty members were outstanding. Dave Bocian, Stu Staley, Jon Lindsey, Gary Patterson, Chris Matyjaszewski, Barbara Imperiali, Larry Sita — I had helped to recruit some of them, my wife and I had had several over to our house for dinner, and we had a mutual admiration society. And I still considered my relationship with the more veteran faculty members to be fairly strong.

One day in September I came up with my best curriculum idea ever — better than the computer science track, where I was more of a conciliator and workhorse than an idea generator. I got up at 4 a.m. one day, and by the time I arrived at work, I had the whole outline developed for the honors program. As I expected, Stu Staley loved it. We were quite a team. He took the high road, handling PR and getting people excited. I worked in the trenches, attending meetings, hammering out compromises, and producing rewrites. It took six months, but it passed, and it's destined to have a lasting impact on the quality of students we attract to the department.

I was up for reappointment, so in October, Bob established a committee to evaluate me and the Doherty Hall operation in general. He put Staley, Patterson, Bocian, and Lindsey on the committee — "all of your biggest supporters in the department". (What he neglected to add is that they were also among his biggest supporters.) They interviewed me first, when everything was rosy and there was no question that they would recommend reappointment. I was predominantly upbeat, but I asked them to define for me more precisely to whom I actually

reported. Birge would order me to do one thing; the faculty usually wanted the opposite. Birge gave the orders, the faculty evaluated the results, but their recommendation to Birge was not binding. It certainly seemed like a conflict to me. I thought I had made my point pretty clearly, but phrased as it was in terms of job descriptions and reporting structures, it struck Bob as nothing more than the union mentality he was trying to drive out of the department. He perceived that I was now unwilling to do anything that wasn't in writing, unwilling to be flexible or do the hard things that had to be done to build the department. Nothing could be further from the truth. I just wanted some assurance that the people having the hard things done to them didn't control my destiny. No such assurance was forthcoming. That, he said, was part of being an administrator.

The committee then went off on their own and never consulted me again. That's not to say communication lines were shut. Stu Staley, the chairman of my evaluation committee, was also my collaborator on the new honors program, so we took the opportunity at our frequent luncheon meetings to discuss my role in the department. They were honest and forthright discussions, some of the best I've ever had. I tried to impress on him the magnitude of a one-third cut in a budget that has very little fat. And my frustration that, for Bob, the principle was that we should be able to run the program on \$27,000, so any savings I could achieve elsewhere could not be transferred to my operating budget. I thought I could convince him I was right with one hand tied behind my back. It hurt deeply not to be able to tell him everything, because nothing is more important to me than integrity. It hurt most when he gave me the perfect lead-in, and I could do nothing but utter a silent scream.

Some of his lead-ins, with silent screams in italics: "One of the worst things that happened while I was on the faculty at Nebraska was that the department's administrative assistant laundered the money collected from student breakage into her own pocket. At least we don't have to contend with that here." *But we do!* "We all know that Bob shoots from the hip. Part of your job is to protect him from himself." *That's what I'm doing now, by keeping the laundering secret!* "Half of the things Bob says don't make any sense. It's your job to know which orders to follow and which to ignore." *I stopped laundering money for him, and look where it got me!*

Staley's committee issued its report on January 9. They recommended that I not be reappointed. Bob accepted the recommendation. He stressed that the report came from my biggest supporters in the department, so the conclusion couldn't be biased. If I didn't know him better, that would have been a terribly depressing thought. But I knew all along that if he was going to get rid of me, he would use blame-shifting.

I asked Bob about his previous oral promise to extend my contract to June of 1988. He said the Dean wouldn't agree to it. He said he could extend the contract only to December of 1987 and *only* if I balanced my budget. That effectively gave him the power to dismiss me whenever he chose.

But Bob also thanked me for all the help I had been to him and offered to write me a strong letter of recommendation and contact his colleagues to find me a new position. He seemed sincere. So I had a dilemma. I had promised myself to report Bob's money laundering in January of 1987, but now that could damage my chances of finding a new position. I consulted a respected professor friend from another department. He advised me to look out for my own future first. So I held it back. I lost a lot of sleep over the next few months, and I was

never quite sure if it was the normal depression from losing a job or the anxiety over not being able to liberate my conscience.

\* \* \*

The Staley committee report was tall on generalities and short on specifics. I suppose that's necessary to protect the confidentiality of the sources, but it made it impossible for me to respond adequately. I asked for specifics, and Bob urged me to talk with Stu about it. I did. Stu had decidedly mixed emotions about this. He thought a lot of my abilities, and said he was sure he could work with me if he were department head. The few specifics Stu gave me were not convincing.

No doubt there was truth to some of the charges in the report, but I could get precious little substantiation. Then came the smoking gun. The major problem, Staley said, was my poor working relationship with Bob. That was the single most important factor. (Funny, that didn't show up anywhere in the report.) "He claims he spends a lot of time covering up for your mistakes." *But that's because I'm doing what he asks me to do.* "Bob does not need someone who follows orders. He needs someone who uses judgment. If Bob were pissing off half the faculty and the Dean, we might be forced into an either-or situation, but that's not the case. " So there it was. Stu Staley, somebody who thought the world of my abilities, had been convinced by politics, by loyalty to Bob, by believing a few more of Bob's lies, to be the ax-man.

Few good leaders are good managers and vice versa. Bob Birge was hired to lead, not to manage. He has been extraordinarily successful at that. Could anyone else have been just as successful at rebuilding the department, given \$5 million in resources'? I think not. His upbeat tone and can-do attitude made a big difference in hiring new faculty and forging new research initiatives. The administration would undoubtedly argue that that compensates for all the poor management skills in the world, and I would probably agree. But it does not justify abuse of power. In the end, Bob's manipulative, Machiavellian approach toward issues, his vindictive treatment of people, and his ends-justifies-the-means morality probably did more harm than good.

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So now for the question I have avoided to this point — what did Bob and Nancy do with the money they laundered, perhaps \$50,000? I have no idea. Indeed, it is the purpose of money laundering to hide the answer to that question. I seriously doubt that it went into their pockets, but I equally doubt that it was used simply to cover deficits in the regular accounts. I suspect that whatever has been spent went to restock the bar in Bob's office and other such pseudo-legal costs that could be justified as entertainment expenses, given the nature of the job and Bob's personal style. There should certainly be a thorough investigation to discover where the money went. But to let him talk his way out of this situation would be totally irresponsible, and to exonerate him for spending the money properly would miss the whole point of this essay. How Bob *used* the money financially is less important than how he *used* the money politically, to bypass departmental approval to steal from the undergraduates, to make a scapegoat of Lisa, to test my loyalty, and ultimately, to force me out of a job.

I have not commented on my own behavior, but I am not blameless. Situational ethics always look better at the time than in retrospect. Had I reported the money laundering

immediately in 1984, I would have lost my job then, and Bob would have been back in the laundering business within weeks.

As my rebuttal to the Staley report implies, the department broke every rule in the book in getting rid of me. As I have learned from Personnel, you can't fire a staff member at CMU without first giving notice of weaknesses (in the form of a written performance evaluation), giving the employee a chance to improve, and giving him a chance to respond to criticism that he considers invalid. Alas, special faculty members have fewer rights than staff members. You also can't fire someone for refusing to break the law. I could attempt to get my job back on that basis. I might even win.

It would be a hollow victory. Who would want this job if it were coupled with the resentment of the entire faculty? And think of all the money wasted in litigation. I give money to colleges like CMU. I still feel a loyalty to the university and the Chemistry Department. Suing the institution seems an inappropriate response to the excesses of one man.

But the major issue to me is not that of keeping my job — I could have blackmailed Bob with this story months ago if all I wanted was job security. The issue is integrity. If I could get students suspended for cheating after I was denied tenure, if I could get rid of an employee for stealing \$500, then my conscience would never let me rest for allowing this to pass. What I want is justice.



## Postscript

March, 1988

Before August 28, 1987, Dick Cyert probably would not have been able to identify Bob Richman without help. He can now. I returned to Pittsburgh from my new position at Mount Saint Mary's College for a long weekend, to finish cleaning up my office and say good-bye. Half a dozen students took me out to lunch and gave me a going-away present. At 4:15 p.m., I gave CMU a going-away present. As I walked toward the sixth floor of Warner Hall with considerable apprehension, there was a large bolt of lightning from an approaching thunderstorm. It missed me.

I delivered a memo to President Cyert's secretary — a two-page synopsis of my memoirs — and a copy to Fred Rogers, Vice President for Business. It didn't take long for them to respond. Tom Criste, an internal auditor and special assistant to the president, called me Monday morning at Mount Saint Mary's.

The administration was initially skeptical of the charges. Bob Birge was Cyert's darling. He had just given a command performance to the Board of Trustees. But the cancelled check with the bank account number gave them an easy lead to follow. By Tuesday Criste had verified the existence of the account. On Thursday morning he was in my office at Mount Saint Mary's taking my statement. He taped the conversation with my permission and sent me a copy of the transcript. Some excerpts:

Criste: Do you think (Birge) was overtly aware that (the outside account) was against university policy. . . ?

Richman: He knew it was wrong and certainly Nancy Jenkins knew it was wrong. Her job was the fiduciary responsibility for the department. . . . Things were fast and loose and probably still are.

Criste: Who do you think knew other than you, Bob, and Nancy? Anyone?

Richman: My opinion is that nobody knew.

Criste: Who maintained the checks and made the deposits? Was that strictly Nancy Jenkins?

Richman: I never knew whether or not his name was on the account.

Criste: She did maintain the bank statements and the checks?

Richman: Yes, I am sure that she did.

Criste: You indicated in your letter something in reference to Nancy Jenkins's future at the university. Could you elaborate on that in terms of what you meant?

Richman: I don't know what the university policy would be — whether she would be retained at the university — if it is discovered that, in fact, the money was used properly. But the fact that she was doing this at the request of Bob Birge demonstrated a great deal of loyalty to him at considerable jeopardy to her. It is my experience that he runs a pecking order over there, and she is at the very top of the pecking order. The reason for that is the loyalty that she has shown, which includes diverting money and other things. And I think, for example, when she comes up for a promotion, whenever that may be, that he won't allow a full forum of opinions about

how she performs her job. If you consult with representative people in the department, graduate students, secretaries, and faculty, then you will get a true picture of her performance.

Criste: Was her job as administrative assistant for the whole department, or was she more or less administrative assistant to Bob Birge?

Richman: I would say, in her mind, the job description was very clear that she reported to Bob Birge and did not serve other people.

Criste: Do you know whether or not research money was involved?

Richman: Not to my knowledge. I don't believe it was. Certainly for anything that would be part of federal auditing procedures, they wouldn't touch that, I don't think.

I would like to ask you a question. I am not sure whether your main purpose is to just follow the paper trail of the money or whether you are also interested in other things. To me there were some breaches of personnel policies that were as serious as the money problems. Are you interested in pursuing those as well?

Criste: We are also interested in that. I think President Cyert and others are concerned if people in the Mellon College of Science or anywhere else are not being treated properly as employees. That is extremely important.

Richman: Well, let me tell you this. This is important. At the end of my letter I said I had other information that was not as well documented. You said you wanted to ask about that. So I had better tell you about that now. The two-page memo that I sent to President Cyert is pretty objective and factual and straightforward. It is a synopsis of a 16-page document that I wrote in March and April summarizing all of my experiences. That 16-page document, which I refer to as my memoirs, goes back to when I started at CMU, but it is primarily the past three years. That document is subjective, blunt, opinionated, and probably libelous. I don't think you'll find any more information in there to help you follow the paper trail of the money. But you'll find a lot of information on the personnel issues, and on motivations of why I did things when I did them.

Criste: I'm not an attorney, but I can . . . review it with attorneys before I show it to anyone else to make sure there isn't something in there that could cause you a problem such as libel. is that acceptable? Or do you want me just to keep it to myself?

Richman: No, I would like President Cyert to see it. I am not sure that procedure still protects me from the law on libel. . . . I would like a request for it in writing so that it doesn't look as if I went out of my way to give you libelous information. You solicited my opinions and I gave you frank opinions. . . . I would really prefer the request to come from President Cyert and we would deliver it to him. It's a normal part of his job to solicit people's opinions about things like that. . . . If you are in a hurry, you could have (a written request from President Cyert) ready for my wife and just hand that to her and she could give you the memoirs.

Criste: What about the Lisa Sikora episode. is she still with the university?

Richman: No. She took a course in Japanese at CMU. There was a very talented woman teaching this course for a couple of years. She was also very adept at finding people positions in Japan. Lisa is over there for a couple of years teaching English at a university. It's a great job — especially from a start as a stores manager, I think it is quite a step up. . . . Lisa was threatening suicide about two years ago, and

I was the one that got her to a psychiatrist, made sure it was taken care of, and held her job for her. At the time she credited me with saving her life. And I got zero credit for that. And, in fact, Nancy and Bob started making things hard on her. As I said, they ran a pecking order, and whoever was at the bottom of the pecking order became a scapegoat. I thought it was an unconscionable personnel policy.

Criste: How was it that you and Lisa came to be held accountable for budget deficits as opposed to Nancy?

Richman: Chemistry at CMU ever since the merger has been in the unique position of being a split department. There has never been an adequate way to manage that. Before Birge took over, Nancy Jenkins's equivalent, Ray Nether, was in Doherty Hall, in a position where he could locally monitor the lab budgets and the storeroom budgets as well as research budgets. Birge wanted that position moved to Mellon Institute, which was a reasonable thing to do. But then Nancy was remote from what was going on in Doherty Hall. So they just decided that was one of my responsibilities. Even though I had no training in it, and Lisa had no training. I said that we should therefore hire someone as storeroom manager who had an accounting background, and he refused.

The next day, Friday, September 4, Criste and Dean Sekerka paid a visit to Bob Birge. They asked him if he knew of the account. He was evasive. They asked where the records were. He volunteered to run down to Nancy's office to get them. They said no thanks and went directly to her office. Bob and Nancy were asked to resign their administrative positions. New locks were put on her office, and a guard was posted. The department was in turmoil.

Such action cannot escape public notice. It was the lead story in The Tartan, CMU's student newspaper, on September 22.

On Friday, September 4, Chemistry Department Head, Robert Birge, and his Department Administrator, Nancy Jenkins, were suspended after outside bank accounts associated with the Department of Chemistry were discovered. Both Birge and Jenkins have since resigned their positions.

"A University auditor, an internal auditor, is examining some of the accounts in the Chemistry Department and associated with the Chemistry Department," said Mellon College of Science Dean Robert Sekerka. Sekerka refused to specify the number of accounts under investigation.

"It was discovered, I would say, through serendipity and later by hunting around that there existed some outside bank accounts associated with the Department of Chemistry. It is against University rules to do such a thing, and once it was discovered such an account existed, naturally questions had to be asked," continued Sekerka.

The story continued at some length. But somehow the university controlled the damage. There were no further Tartan articles. And, to my amazement, the story was never picked up by the local media.

The administration had honored my request for anonymity, and Criste told me on Saturday, September 5, that Birge never suspected that I was the whistle blower. He also told me what they were finding in Nancy's office. Envelopes full of cash. Evidence of other accounts. A cancelled check for \$15,000 to a piano store. That's where the platinum money went. That's what had caused me all that grief. A piano store.

September 5 was an eventful day for my wife and me, and we went to dinner to celebrate. We toasted the house in Frederick we had just visited for the first time, the house we would ultimately buy. We toasted the Westinghouse job in Columbia that my wife had just heard about, the job that she would ultimately accept. And then we toasted pianos. It was a bittersweet moment.

As the investigation progressed, things got worse for Bob Birge. He had solicited grant money from Kodak, Mobay, and Alcoa, and signed off on the proposals as an official of the university. Then he put the checks into outside accounts. Some of the money went for graduate student support and other legitimate expenses. Just the same old game of trying to avoid the university's exorbitant overhead charges, his supporters maintained. The rest of the money went for a boat, jewelry for the secretaries who helped launder money, bonuses for Nancy. A bit tougher to justify. It was no longer just money laundering. It was embezzlement.

Bocian, Staley, and the rest of Birge's inner circle mobilized. Contrary to what I guessed in my memoirs, they had known about the money laundering all along — Bocian even contributed some grant money — but considered it a harmless slush fund. They portrayed the situation as purely political and tried to unite the Chemistry faculty against their enemies in the administration. They ran into a stone wall when they got to Pople's office. He was furious that Birge had laundered the income from his computer program (which was known from my first memo to Cyert) and was not in a forgiving mood. In any case, the five administrators privy to my memoirs and the daily accounting discoveries by Tom Criste were not impressed with that argument.

Nancy knew the score right away. She resigned and offered to pay back the university. She was said to be living in fear of imprisonment. Bob tried to pin the blame on Nancy and claimed innocence. He hired a lawyer. The university brought in its lawyers.

Birge continued to claim that there was no foul intent, just ineptitude. He brought in his wife to testify that she handled all the money at home because Bob could never balance a checkbook. Then Criste showed her cancelled checks signed by Bob, to piano stores and the like. They both became ashen. He apparently did not know that banks maintained such detailed records. She was said to be shocked. So Bob's lawyer tried a different approach. He claimed the university was responsible, since the administration must have known about his alcoholism but did nothing about it. That didn't work either.

Around December 8, Bob Birge signed an agreement that severed his relationship with CMU. He agreed to resign from his tenured professorship and to return all the money, including legal fees. (The amount was "in six figures, and the first one is not a one," said Criste. Translation: about a quarter million dollars.) CMU agreed not to press criminal charges and not to divulge the details of the crime. If you call the university and ask what happened to Bob Birge, the call will be directed to Dean Sekerka, who will read a short statement: "Bob Birge and the

university disagreed on accounting practices. if you want any more details, you will have to ask him about it."

Why did the university agree to the deal? To avoid adverse publicity, no doubt. Since my only consideration was justice, I considered going to the district attorney to press charges myself if the university would not do so. But the administration had other reasons. Legal precedent suggested that Birge would not be severely punished for a first offense. So there seemed little reason for any of us to go through the hassle.

Nancy Jenkins was last seen waiting on customers at Kaufmann's department store. Bob Birge has accepted a position as professor of chemistry at Syracuse University. He earns a salary estimated at \$100,000 per year.