

Power Corrupts: The 1990s

By the early 1990s, UTD's power and political clout were without equal in the State of Florida, or anywhere in the South for that matter. We were the largest labor union, and our influence was felt far and wide, especially on important political races at election time. But a subtle, poisonous change began to creep into my thinking about myself and my position as leader of the union I so loved. Just as the union was first in my life, even ahead of family, I began to feel a sense of entitlement to perquisites and benefits that were unheard of for any union leader. Even more pernicious, I began to see myself and the union as one and the same, with no boundaries or separation. In many ways, I had set up a pyramidal structure to UTD that mirrored the patriarchal Italian-American family in which I grew up, with me as the patriarch at the top, allowing no dissent or criticism from staff or friends.

With this dangerous and unhealthy dynamic in place, I began to covet and to live a more extravagant lifestyle, unseemly and inappropriate for the leader of a public employees union, and rubberstamped by my staff as well as our Executive Board. Donna and I began to go on trips more frequently, sometimes with a union-related purpose, sometimes not. On the advice of Murray Sissleman, our financial expert within UTD, I had the union enter into a partnership with Nova University in Broward County, to give hard-working full-time teachers the chance to earn a Master's degree by taking Saturday classes at their campus. The arrangement was tax-free for UTD, and we received a portion of the tuition cost for each member who enrolled. It seemed like a great arrangement, a win-win program for all concerned.

From the funds we began to receive, we set up a special account called the Nova Educational and Travel Fund, to be used to pay for the travel expenses of trips to encourage other teacher unions to join the program. I was not overly concerned with the details, since our accountant, Grant Thornton, had advised us that this was entirely legal. We visited schools in many places, meeting with union leaders and government officials in Jamaica, the Bahamas, the Virgin Islands, Italy, Germany, England and France. My hubris as all-powerful leader had taken over, and I never bothered to check into the legal details.

A red flag should have been waving before me, but it never appeared. Still, all of my travel expenses paid for by the Nova Travel Fund were out in the open, known to my staff and our accountants. There was no secret or devious plan to defraud the union. What happened was the result of sloppy oversight and carelessness, not malicious intent. I cannot explain why I did not pay income taxes on these funds, since they were clearly a source of income. I simply chose to believe that the Fund was tax-free if used for educational or union-related purposes. Then how could I rationalize spending union funds for trips that were for my own pleasure, with no union pretext at all? I cannot explain this. It was a moral and ethical dark hole for me. But contrary to the media reporting, I was not given “lesser” charges based on only what could be proved. Embezzlers operate in secrecy; they do not want to be discovered, so they keep their activities hidden. But all of our travel expenses were out in the open, known to my staff. Yet no one ever raised an objection or worry, out of deference to my absolute power within the organization I had created.

Eventually, my sense of entitlement as one who had given so much of his life to the union led me into uncharted waters, abandoning any union pretext for vacation trips that were purely personal. For many years, Donna and I visited the San Francisco Bay Area to spend time with my son Louis, a hardworking schoolteacher there, always staying at the best hotels and enjoying the finest California cuisine at amazing restaurants. Nearly all of these expenses were itemized, and I did pay back to the union thousands of dollars, but it was a very sloppy process. And truthfully, after a few martinis, I often did not even notice which credit card I was using, my union or personal one. Hindsight can be very painful; while I could rationalize at the time that teachers’ union dues were not used for my pleasure, there is no way to justify spending union funds for personal enjoyment. I had lost my moral compass.

The political context of this scandal was that a few months earlier, an unrelated scandal had surfaced involving the leadership of the Washington, D. C. AFT local, where outright embezzlement of union funds was the case. The AFT national leadership was naturally nervous that the Federal government would tighten financial reporting procedures for public employee unions (which they in fact did), and I became an unwilling scapegoat. What better sacrifice than the controversial, outspoken leader of the fourth largest teachers’ union in the country? Neither AFT nor local prosecutors tried to distinguish between legitimate union-related expenses and

instances when I crossed the line into personal spending. Regardless, that does not excuse or rationalize my actions.

Beginning in the early 1990s, Donna and I took more and more trips for rest and relaxation. We visited wonderful and exotic places, like St. Petersburg, Russia, Bora Bora, New Zealand, Sydney, Australia, the California Wine Country, and Africa. Some of these trips had an important union purpose, but some did not. The larger truth here, though, is that if we had lived a less extravagant lifestyle, we would have been able to live within our means, with my large salary and expense account as head of UTD. At the time it seemed only natural to me that since I had given so much to the union, I deserved the hotels, the dinners, the pleasure trips. The arrogance that comes with absolute power had warped and distorted my thinking, and led to taking from the very union I had created. In other words, I forgot my first priority, as caretaker and steward of my union members, responsible for their welfare, their servant, not their boss.

I kept careful records of our many trips and how they were paid for, and I would guess that over half were financed from the Nova Travel Fund. Many had no other purpose than personal pleasure and relaxation. For example, in May, 1995, Donna and I spent a week at a resort on the Caribbean island of St. Baarts, paid for by the Travel Fund; in June, just three weeks later, we spent the weekend at the Pierre Hotel, one of the most elegant and expensive hotels in New York; a month later we left for a safari in Africa! On this three-week excursion, one week was a legitimate conference of international union leaders in Zimbabwe, but the preceding and following two weeks were added on by me and again paid for by the “travel fund”. The pattern of abuse is crystal clear.

In October of the same year, we spent a week of rest and relaxation first in Canada and Vermont for our nephew’s wedding, and just three weeks later flew to California for 1 ½ weeks. This trip actually had a union-related purpose, the AFT State Presidents Conference in Monterey, but we added on extra days for pleasure so we could spend time with my son Louis in the SF Bay Area. From California we flew straight to Atlanta to visit my daughter there, then on to Washington, D.C. for AFT business, then to Venezuela for a weekend of deep-sea fishing off the coast, again paid for by the travel fund. And these are just some of the excursions for the year 1995! Every few weeks we were off on another trip, usually combining business with pleasure, but at the union’s expense. Had we lived within our considerable means, we would have been able to take one or two special trips each year, like most normal people.

The experiences we had on these trips were unforgettable: sailing up the Amazon to the port of Manaus; soaring five hundred feet over the Napa valley in North America's largest hot-air balloon, seeing the gold and orange of grape vines ready for harvest; watching the huge waves of the blue Pacific crash to shore at Mendocino State Park; seeing the coral bay of Bora Bora from our cruise ship by moonlight; visiting the legendary Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia; sitting at the Summer Olympics opening ceremony in Sydney; watching "The Lion King" musical on Broadway; watching the cascading spray of Yosemite Falls from our room at the Ahwahnee Hotel in Yosemite Valley; standing in front of the Taj Mahal. We had experiences most people can only dream about, but at what cost and to whom? The union I had so carefully built paid the price for my extravagance. I somehow rationalized that I was merely spending union funds, not actual teacher union dues.

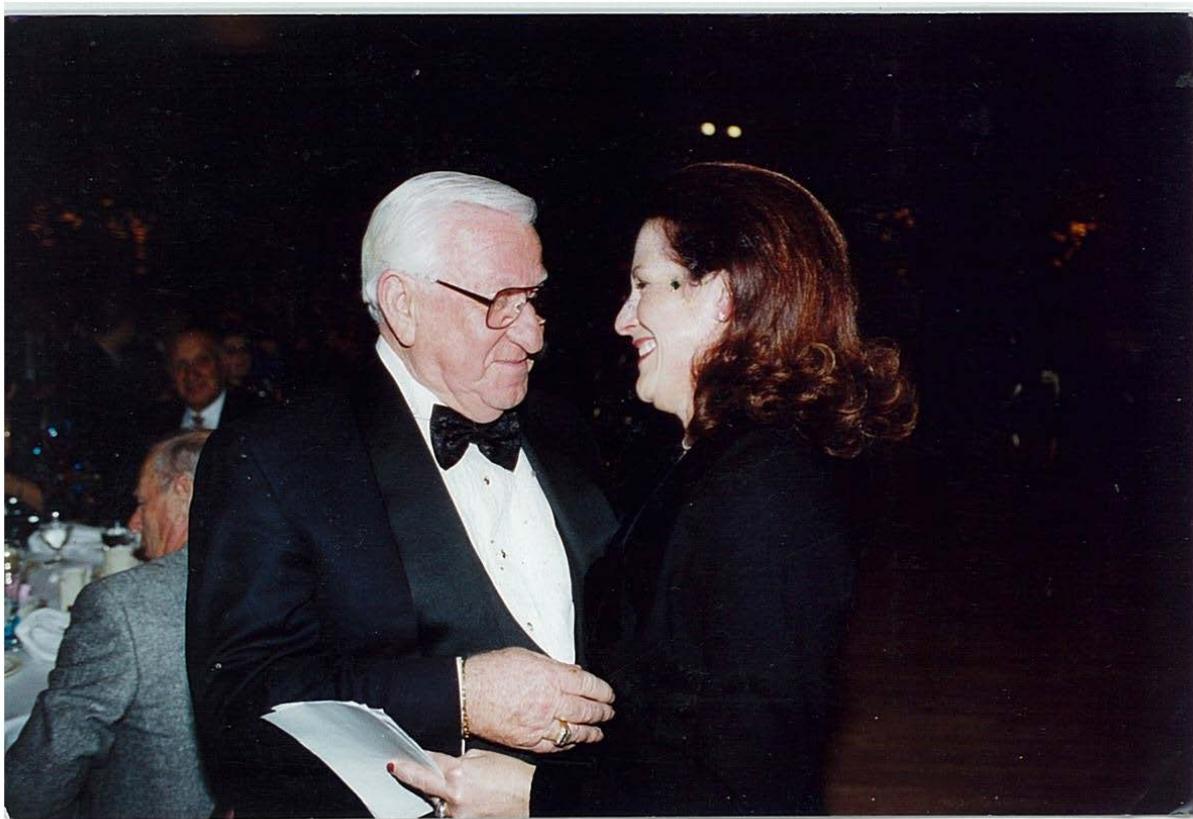
In January, 1997, we spent a weekend in Cancun, courtesy of the Travel Fund, followed by Atlanta in February, a week at St. Baarts in June, a weekend at the extremely elegant Peninsula Hotel in New York in July, another weekend at the Peninsula in September, a week in northern California in October including stays at the beautiful Post Ranch Inn at Big Sur, one of the most remote and picturesque stretches of the California coast, then a few days at the Mandarin Oriental hotel in San Francisco, and finally five days back at the Peninsula in New York seeing Broadway museums, museums and shopping. All of these trips were paid for by the Travel Fund, with no union purpose at all. This pattern of behavior continued right up until my arrest on April 10, 2003.

Memory: On February 5, 1995, we had a very special event, my mother's 90th birthday party. We decided to make it an all-out celebration of my success and acceptance into Miami's power elite, so we invited not only family from far and wide but my UTD staff, close friends, local politicians and business leaders as well. To accommodate the crowd, we put a tent over our backyard. Delicious Cuban food was catered by my friend Manny, who worked for UTD, and we provided cases of ice cold beer as well as a full bar with every drink imaginable. All of my five children were there and their children, four generations of the Tornillo family. As I mingled with the crowd, I reflected on how our family had prospered in America. I felt this must surely be our high point, from our roots in the poverty of Newark's First Ward to this pinnacle of power and influence in Miami and Florida. I looked over at my mother sitting at the far end of the family

table, her face reflected by the burning torches we had set up to keep the mosquitos away; We were both flushed with mutual pride, sitting on top of the world.

In December, 1998, a dinner in my honor was organized by longtime staff, friends and supporters. It was called “A Gathering of Eagles”, and was held at the Fountainbleu Hotel on Miami Beach. My entire family gathered for the occasion, including my son Louis who flew in from California, and my mother flew down from New Jersey. The dinner had an important purpose, to raise money for the Pat Tornillo Scholarship Fund, which I was creating for promising low-income high school seniors wanting to become public school teachers. Old friends also flew to Miami from all over the country, like Dr. James Fleming, Superintendent of Capistrano School District in California, with whom I had worked as Asst. Superintendent in Dade.

Seated at the tables that night were a cross-section of Miami’s business and political elite, school board members, judges, CEOs, political consultants, State legislators, a Congressman, former Lt. Governor Bill McKay. President Bill Clinton, one of my heroes, sent a letter praising my achievements on behalf of public education, and I was given a plaque proclaiming me “Florida Educator of the Century”. It meant a great deal to me to be recognized foremost as an educator rather than a mere union leader. It was a night of all nights. But my colleagues and friends, my family too, all thought I would be announcing my retirement this night. To their great dismay, I did not. Instead, I declared defiantly that I would continue leading UTD forward into the 21st century. If only I had stepped down that night...



Donna and I at the Gathering of Eagles dinner

By the 1990s, the energy it was taking to keep UTD at the pinnacle, to make further gains and keep from losing ground, was taking its toll. I was exhausted mentally and physically more and more of the time. During the Reagan and Bush years of intense anti-union sentiment, funding for public education decreased, and Florida had no mechanism in place for raising enough revenue to guarantee a minimum dollar level for public education. This same problem had existed for decades since the 1968 teacher strike, and it had never been resolved. It became harder and harder to negotiate pay raises for teachers, and often we felt good about simply not losing ground to inflation and the rising cost of living. Still, during these difficult years of shrinking funds, my staff always found ways to lighten the stress with humor, like the time I walked into my office to find a life-size poster of myself propped up behind my desk, and my entire staff sitting around it wearing Pat Tornillo masks!

I could not see that in UTD I had created a monster, an organizational structure with a culture of no accountability for the few at the top, basically Murray Sissleman and myself. I had given Murray carte blanche to supervise UTD's finances, which I rarely monitored. This led to the mindset responsible for our disastrous financial decisions. A good example of my arrogance and lack of accountability is the story of Janet Reno's campaign for the Democratic nomination for Governor. In 2002, Jeb Bush, my long-time antagonist, ran for re-election as Governor of Florida. I was very concerned that the Democratic Party oppose him with the strongest possible candidate. My old friend Janet Reno was the front-runner for the nomination. Our relationship went back over 25 years, to her first campaign for State Attorney. I had supported her in that race and every one thereafter. We were close personally, and she was a champion of public education. I also believed she had been a great Attorney general. But my dilemma was: I did not believe she could win an election for Governor of Florida, especially against Jeb Bush. I was convinced she carried too much political baggage, was too liberal for such a conservative state, and wouldn't be able to overcome the negative press from the Elian Gonzalez incident.

I had always liked to believe that nothing was as important to me as personal loyalty. First during my early years in Newark, then on into adult life as a teacher and finally leader of UTD. I expected absolute loyalty from my friends and co-workers, and believed I owed them the same. I knew that Janet would be coming to me soon to ask for my support in the fight for the nomination, and I was in a terrible quandary. In the end, I decided there was nothing as important as defeating Jeb Bush. I believed that Jim McBride, a little-known attorney from Tampa who had never run for office, would be a stronger candidate. Over the course of several meetings, I convinced him to try for the nomination. I liked his honesty and his willingness to take the risk of running for Governor, so I promised him that I, UTD, and the state teachers association, would support him all the way, certain that I could work my will as the leader of these organizations and secure these endorsements.

Soon afterward I met with Janet Reno in my new office, a meeting I dreaded. Janet's eyes grew wide and I could see the sadness in them when I told her why I did not think she could beat Bush. I felt a pang of conscience that I was betraying our friendship, but I felt it was for the greater good. Janet was very quiet. Finally she said how disappointed she was, and that I was wrong, she could win. We'll never know, she could have been right. It was close, but Jim McBride did beat Janet Reno for the Democratic nomination. I went all out in his support, even

donating \$1,000,000 from UTD funds to his campaign. I made this decision myself, unilaterally, not even bothering to bring it to our Executive Board for discussion. Hardworking UTD members had no inkling that this was being done with union funds which came primarily from their dues. The arrogance of unlimited power led me to top-down decision-making with little or no accountability. The mindset which allowed me to justify giving a million dollars of union funds to the McBride campaign is really hard for me to explain. The power to influence who the Democratic nominee for Governor would be should have brought a humbling sense of responsibility, but it didn't work that way. Absolute power really does corrupt absolutely.

By 2002, I knew I was slowing down. A persistent voice in my head kept telling me it was time to let go, after a career spanning forty years, but I shut the voice out. I insisted to myself that I had not prepared Shirley Johnson, my chosen successor, thoroughly enough. I continued to believe that I was "indispensable", that UTD would fall apart without me at the helm. Some part of me recognized that I had set up this situation myself, that I felt irreplaceable because I had made myself so. I loved my work, the nitty-gritty of negotiating, the deals and trade-offs and meetings with power brokers, the attention and the constant news stories, positive or negative. Deep down, I really didn't want to give it up. And it was true that along the way I hadn't trained a tough, militant new generation of teacher union leaders within UTD, who knew and understood and could replicate the innovative strategies I had pioneered. Often I fantasized about retirement, about a lovely fishing boat floating lazily in the warm waters off Miami Beach, fishing for snapper or mahi-mahi. But with some sadness I finally gave up this dream, because I knew that if I did have such a boat, it would sit at its berth unused most of the time. I simply derived more pleasure from being "the Boss" than from anything else; I knew if I gave it up, I would not find anything involving enough to fill the void. My wife and children knew better than anyone the absolute truth of this.

Those in the public eye who have made mistakes, whether CEOs, politicians, or media celebrities, know all too well that it does little good to try to assert that one's misdeeds were lesser or smaller than media reported. So I will not try. Here is how the end of my illustrious career played out. By 2002, it was clear that Murray (Sissleman), my CFO and finance person in UTD, was very ill, and would not be able to continue in his role much longer. The Travel Fund was nearly empty by this time, after years of vacations and pleasure trips by both of us. As Murray prepared to retire, I and other staff began to worry about who would be responsible for

the financial end of this multi-million-dollar organization. Several people came to me with their concerns, notably Gary Smith and Raul Suarez-Campos. Little did I know that I was about to make the acquaintance of my personal Judas and nemesis, Jim Angleton. It happened this way. Raul and Gary said they had spoken with Jim, then Vice-President of Total Bank in Miami, which was financing the new office building we were constructing for UTD staff. They said he was interested in coming to work for UTD, and wanted to meet with me. I had no reason not to trust their judgement.

So one morning a few weeks later, Jim Angleton walked into my office. He was a big man, tall and smoothly confident, and had the aura of a confident problem-solver. Puzzled as to why he would want to switch careers from banking to education, I asked him to explain why he wanted to come work for a teachers' union, since he had no background or connection to either unions or public education. His answer was designed to flatter. He said he had read the many stories about me in the press, and admired me as a strong leader who got things done. He was impressed with what I had achieved in bringing UTD to such a high level of power and political clout, and he wanted a career change. He seemed so earnest and sincere, and I had no information then which would make me suspicious of his motives.

In six short months, Angleton insinuated himself into the power structure of UTD, charming and disarming staff. As our new CFO, he took control of UTD's finances but also extended his domain into areas like incoming mail, check writing, security, maintenance, purchasing, the comptroller's office, and our relationships with banks. During the next year, I began having doubts about him as he became more and more secretive. I still do not know at what point he began his relationship with the FBI and Federal Grand Jury, nor who first approached whom. But I am convinced he was paid by my political enemies to find whatever they could use to weaken or destroy my power and the union's. Unfortunately, I had given him more than enough ammunition to do just that. I doubt the evidence to support this belief will ever surface.

To give the devil his due, it is possible that Jim began working at UTD in genuine good faith, then became frustrated and alarmed by my and our financial practices, finally agreeing to serve as a mole for a federal investigation. It is equally possible that he was planted from the very beginning at UTD to fatally weaken my leadership and the union itself. Obviously, if I had lived a less extravagant lifestyle and been more careful, he would not have succeeded.

That is the bitter reality I have had to accept. In late 2002 and early 2003, Jim began advising Shirley and myself that the union's finances were in trouble. He said we urgently needed to establish new lines of credit by borrowing from Amalgamated Bank in New York, with AFT as co-sponsor. Our troubles soon worsened, as Bank of America threatened to close out our mortgage and call in our \$1.5 million line of credit with them; they also threatened to begin foreclosure proceedings against the union. Jim told us not to worry, he had negotiated a commitment from GE to take over the mortgage and line of credit. These memos and meetings were the first inkling Shirley and I had that UTD was in financial difficulty.

On April 10, 2003, FBI agents serving Federal warrants entered the offices of UTD in Miami. Ironically the phone I received letting me know this was from Jim Angleton, the very person who had orchestrated it. He said that agents were all over the building, confiscating records and file boxes and carting them away. I was too stunned to even react at first. It felt unreal, a bad dream. While I was taking this call in the FEA Tallahassee office, Ron Meyers of FEA staff told me there were two FBI agents down on the first floor waiting to talk to me. I agreed to meet with them, and after giving my name and address, said that I could not answer any more questions without my attorney present. They said they understood, and drove off. I felt a sudden chill and shivered, though it was a 90-degree day.

Soon the phone lines between Miami, Tallahassee and Washington were heating up. I tried to get through to Jim Angleton again, but was told he had left the office. Judy Garcia, my administrative assistant in Miami, told me that agents were going through my desk as we spoke. The veil of secrecy over the entire operation had been perfect. The moment of the raid was my first clue that UTD and I were under investigation. The press eventually revealed that Jim Angleton had blown the whistle to cover his own dubious actions with banks and our finances, and he was granted immunity from prosecution by the FBI for his cooperation.

It was astonishing how quickly I became persona non grata to friends with whom I worked closely for years, even decades. Suddenly no one in the office would talk to me. Three of my staff were meeting in a conference room, and they refused to see me. No charges had been filed, I was not under arrest, yet the mere suspicion of wrongdoing was enough to provoke this radical change in behavior from everyone around me. It was a new experience, to become in the blink of an eye the "outcast", the one from whom you kept your distance if you were smart.

Meanwhile, FBI agents had also arrived at our townhouse in Tallahassee, thinking I would be there. No one was home, so they let themselves in and proceeded to box up and cart away files, including our computers. The entire Tornillo family was in the midst of our annual family gathering at my beach house on St. George island on the Florida Gulf coast, except my daughter-in-law Merrio. I called her and asked if she would drive by the townhouse to see what was happening there. She walked in the front door, and was stunned to see ten FBI agents staring at her. She told them who she was, then called to get the security code for the safe, which they opened. As she later told me, Merrio then had the surreal experience of a polite conversation with a Department of Law Enforcement agent who happened to go to her church! Having lived a moral life sheltered from any criminal activity, it was hard for her to watch them take out and photograph each piece of my and Donna's jewelry.

By the end of this very long day, I felt as though an invisible wall separated me from my friends and colleagues; we might be occupying the same physical space, but were in different realities. I was physically present, but ignored, voiceless, invisible. And this was only the start of the nightmare. Over the next six months, *The Miami Herald* and many other media published endless front-page stories on the unfolding investigation, sometimes daily, creating a media firestorm around the case. Often the facts were inaccurate, sometimes wildly so. For example, it was reported that I used union funds to pay for our house, our personal maid, our cars, none of which was true. These expenses were itemized as part of my contract with UTD. I had also given strict instructions that our trips never be financed from teachers' union dues, but only from the Nova Travel Fund; this was still very wrong of course.

The media frenzy spearheaded by the *Herald* created a fearful public backlash against UTD and me personally, long before any charges had been filed. The story was eventually picked up by the national media, including CNN, TIME, *The New York Times*, and as far away as San Francisco. It was linked to other stories of corrupt union leaders, like the embezzlement scandal of the Washington D.C. AFT local. Here was the golden opportunity that anti-union forces in Florida had been waiting for over four decades, to seriously weaken our political clout and influence, not just in Miami but at the State Capitol as well. And they made the most of it. After all, the Democratic Party had been weak and ineffectual in Florida for a long time; for over twenty years, it was our union, through our endorsements, which had been the main force opposing the reactionary Republicans in the State.

As an example of the overheated rhetoric, the *Herald* reported over and over that I was “embezzling” or “plundering union dues” while “teachers were fighting for pay raises”, omitting that it was I, as their chief negotiator, who was fighting for higher teacher pay. Embezzlement is a secret crime. Using union funds to pay for personal trips was wrong, but it was not secret. I never made any attempt to conceal this, quite the opposite. During this period, I saw the terrible toll the relentless negative publicity was having on Donna, my children and grandchildren. On a personal level, of course, it was devastating to them that the family patriarch they so admired had been so ethically adrift, and that our family name and reputation were now in ruins. My attorney, Michael Rosen, believed that if the case went to trial, I would have only a 40-60 chance of a favorable verdict. The case would drag through the courts for a year or two, and the media circus would only intensify. Donna and I spent long hours agonizing, but in the end we agreed that the most sensible course was to accept a plea bargain, so we could move forward with our lives. But the price was to be very heavy.

I am including the following news story from *The Miami Herald* to capture the flavor of media coverage at the time; it was non-stop and relentless. The shocking details of our extravagant lifestyle are by and large accurate.

Union paid for chief's opulent lifestyle

BY MANNY GARCIA AND JOE MOZINGO

May 18, 2003 06:29 PM

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On the morning of Nov. 19, 2002, United Teachers of Dade President Pat Tornillo excoriated school leaders over low teacher salaries and demanded "a hunt for spare dollars that could go toward raises." But Tornillo himself wasn't so frugal. That night, he spent teachers union dues to stay in a \$2,000-a-night suite at the Mandarin Oriental hotel at Brickell Key. Tornillo slept eight nights at the opulent hotel and charged it to a UTD credit card.

Total cost: \$20,138.53. "I went ballistic when I saw that Mandarin bill," said David J. Albaum, the union's in-house financial consultant, who reviewed the UTD's credit-card statements. "A \$2,000 room for a nonprofit union? Come on." Tornillo's spending is at the center of a federal grand jury investigation to determine whether the longtime union boss

spent teachers' dues on personal luxuries. Tornillo referred calls Friday to his attorney, Robert Josefsberg, who did not return three calls seeking comment. The Herald obtained 21 months' worth of the UTD chief's credit-card statements, union checks and financial records that show the union paid credit-card charges totaling at least \$350,000 between September 2000 and this March, with little or no scrutiny. Among the charges: The Sinclair Intimacy Institute - whose motto is "Better Relationships, Better Sex" - Bed Bath & Beyond, Target, ABC Liquor, Sharper Image, even the historic Ahwahnee hotel in Yosemite National Park in California. From the Neiman Marcus catalog, the 77-year-old Tornillo bought a pair of python-print pajamas (\$175.73) and a matching robe (\$149.10). Pat and Donna Tornillo globe-hopped, often first class, through Australia, New Zealand, Europe and the Far East. Pat Tornillo charged \$1,441 worth of tailored suits in Hong Kong and \$978.26 in souvenirs in Thailand. Donna Tornillo, 56, charged \$1,800 worth of designer clothing in one day in New York. The couple charged almost \$4,000 at a jewelry store in Carmel, Calif. Teachers' dues paid for it all, which Albaum said left the union so cash-strapped that it had to take out loans just to get by. "We paid all his bills," said Albaum, who reviewed outgoing payments, but admitted that he never confronted Tornillo. "We paid Southern Bell, the cable company, FPL. He didn't try to hide anything." **FIGHTING FOR SALARIES** Many of the expenditures, UTD records show, came at a time when teachers were fighting for raises, facing pay cuts or trying to avoid layoffs. Last November, Tornillo sat across from Miami-Dade County Schools Superintendent Merrett Stierheim and demanded pay raises for teachers and protection from layoffs for teachers' aides. He insisted that new salaries be retroactive, warning that he would negotiate "until hell freezes over." "No longer are we willing to accept that you don't have money," Tornillo told the school district's negotiating team. Later, Tornillo retreated to the Biscayne Bay Suite at the Mandarin, costing \$2,000 a night. High over the bay, the 960-square-foot unit features bamboo floors, a marble open shower, a deep-soaking tub and floor-to-ceiling windows, offering guests an unparalleled view of Miami. That night, Tornillo charged \$84 worth of beverages from the in-room bar. During his eight-day stay, Tornillo regularly ordered room service, used the bar, had clothes laundered, and lounged in the spa. He checked out on Nov. 23, charging it to a UTD American Express card. His rental apartment is just 300 yards away. Albaum said Tornillo caught so much grief over the Mandarin bill that he wrote the union a personal check to cover the charges. Albaum said that several weeks later, UTD bookkeeper Judy Bowling issued Tornillo a check to pay him back. "I saw the check," Albaum said. "It was for the same amount of the Mandarin charge. He turned around and had Judy B. reimburse it." Bowling declined repeated requests for comment. The

Mandarin charge, records show, was not the only indulgence. On Sept. 24, 2000, Pat and Donna Tornillo jetted to San Francisco, then to Australia, New Zealand and back to California. They visited the world-renowned aquarium in Sydney and bought \$332 in women's clothing the next day. In the New Zealand mountain resort of Queenstown, they charged \$852 at the Bonz Gallery and \$487 at the Queenstown Gallery of fine art. In California, they landed in San Francisco and drove to Carmel, where they strolled among the town's famous cypresses and spent \$1,310.94 on Christmas collectibles at Kris Kringle and \$3,900 for a necklace and gold ring at Concepts Jewelry. Their next stop down the Pacific Coast Highway was the Post Ranch Inn in Big Sur. The cost on his corporate credit card: \$4,279.87 for a few nights' stay. The Tornillos drove back to San Francisco to end their vacation at the Bay Area's Mandarin Oriental, where they racked up a \$7,306.24 bill. The three-week vacation cost at least \$49,715 - equivalent to the annual salary of a schoolteacher with 15 years of experience and a master's degree. In terms of the union, it cost the annual dues of 59 teachers. The following year, the Tornillos jetted off to Switzerland, India, Thailand and Cambodia for a two-week vacation that cost at least \$27,000, union records show. In its review of union checks for that trip, The Herald could not confirm that every expense was covered by the union, although much of it was placed on corporate credit cards. Overall for this report, The Herald reviewed about \$444,000 in credit-card expenses, with \$350,000 in corresponding checks. Albaum said the union paid all of the expenses. He said Tornillo simply turned in his monthly statements to Bowling to be paid. Albaum acknowledged that he approved many of the checks. He never confronted Tornillo and never told the executive board during its monthly meetings. His explanation: "Tornillo demeaned people. He'd tell them, 'Get outta here.' " Albaum said the board never questioned Tornillo either. In one financial report prepared for the board, Tornillo's spending is listed under a line item, "Community Affairs and Organizational Relations." Albaum said he showed the charges to UTD Secretary-Treasurer Shirley Johnson, who expressed concern. "I thought it was her job to do," he said. "She said she would talk to Pat and even went to lunch with Mrs. Tornillo on Jan. 28 to talk about the spending." On Jan. 17, Johnson sent an angry e-mail to Tornillo, claiming that her signature was being stamped on checks that she had never seen or approved. All union checks required both Johnson's and Tornillo's signatures. Johnson wrote that she had met with Albaum, Bowling and James Angleton Jr., the UTD's chief financial officer, about "using our signature stamps and stamping both of our names on checks we never see or sign." "I sent an e-mail eight months ago about this and was very disturbed to find out that my e-mail was ignored and this is still going on," she wrote. Neither Johnson nor her attorney,

H.T. Smith, would comment for this report. Albaum recalled the meeting and said Bowling was the one who used the stamps. Albaum joined the UTD 18 months ago at the request of Angleton, his friend for 15 years. Angleton - who knew that the union was hemorrhaging money - says he was tipped off to the questionable billing on Feb. 25 by Tornillo's longtime colleague Murray Sisselman, the former union president who died of cancer several weeks later. Albaum and Angleton have become government witnesses in the probe of Tornillo.

MOTIVES QUESTIONED Union officials and their attorneys question the pair's motives in going to the FBI, which led to the investigation. They say Angleton, as the chief financial officer, was in a prime position to know about the union's spending - and do something about it - long before his meeting with Sisselman. None of the officials or attorneys would be quoted for this report. On Sunday, The Herald reported that Angleton turned over to authorities records showing that Tornillo and his wife charged at least \$155,000 for personal items, including antiques, a St. Bart's vacation, California spa visits, custom clothing, even groceries. Tornillo earns \$243,000 a year in salary and benefits. That includes a \$42,700 stipend that is supposed to cover his business expenses, Angleton said. UTD spokeswoman Annette Katz declined to say whether Tornillo has a contract that covers his personal expenditures. She also refused to provide a list of union-related trips that Tornillo took. On April 29, FBI agents raided UTD headquarters and hauled off all the credit-card statements, expense reports, Tornillo's appointment **calendar and more**. Tornillo then took a leave of absence. Three days after the raid, Albaum said, Tornillo returned to UTD headquarters with a stack of personal expenses. "Tornillo wanted us to pay the phone bill," Albaum said."

Prior to my sentencing hearing before Federal Judge Adalberto Jordan in Miami, I asked my children and some close friends who had always supported me to write letters to Judge Jordan pointing out all the good I had done over 40 years of a career devoted to public education. The many letters were eloquent and impassioned, but in the end it made no difference. As I read

over the charges, I felt a rush of many different emotions in the span of a few seconds; first, incredulity, then a quick flush of anger at the unfairness of it all, followed by deep shame at what this would mean for my family; and finally, a deep sense of loss as I contemplated the lasting damage to the union I had given forty years of my life to create and preserve. My COPD, the result of 30 years of smoking four packs of unfiltered Camels a day, had made breathing oxygen from a portable tank necessary, and I was a little shaky.

Standing before the judge, my family, the news media, and a small group of angry teachers as I prepared to give my public apology, I remembered a day back in the 1980s, when Steve Ross had first explained to me his theory of the white hats and the black hats. He had said, “Pat, we [progressives] are the white hats. They [the forces of reaction] are the black hats...and it is important for America that we win and they lose.” For the first time I realized that while seemingly still wearing a white hat, through a baffling moral inversion I had become one of the black hats. In that moment of revelation, my moral universe was turned upside down. It felt as though an abyss had opened under my feet, and I became physically dizzy for a moment. All of my children were there at the hearing, except my son Louis who could not make the trip from California. My son Robert read his eloquent letter pleading with Judge Jordan for house arrest instead of imprisonment. But in the end the Judge announced that I would serve a 27-month sentence, and be eligible for parole after 24 months.

I hope the reader marvels along with me at the strange twists and turns a person’s life can take. I have come to understand that as flawed human beings we are not “this” or “that”, but a thousand shades of gray, and how often our actions are driven by unconscious forces we are not even aware of, or childhood experiences that shaped the adult we became. One of my favorite quotes is from an Isaac Singer story; “If there is such a thing as truth, it is as intricate and hidden as a crown of feathers.” Through all the ups and downs of the past forty years, all the battles won and lost, I still believe in fighting the good fight, in public education, in the country we are always in the process of becoming. I think on the whole I have done more good than harm, but others can perhaps assess this more objectively. Certainly the coming of collective bargaining to Florida brought a better quality of life for hundreds of thousands of public employees, and that is no small matter.

