



The Yank and the Hoosier

May 20, 2010

Two congressmen faced two different scandals in two very different ways this week.

Congressman Mark Souder served the people of Indiana for eight terms, running on a pro-family platform. The problem is, as he was promoting abstinence education in public schools, he was practicing something quite different with a part-time staffer.

To make matters worse, his mistress/aide, Tracy Jackson, also married, appeared with the Congressman in a video promoting sexual discipline.

Not to be outdone by a Hoosier, Connecticut Yankee, Richard Blumenthal, current Attorney General and Senate hopeful, was reported by none other than the New York Times to be claiming—on several occasions—service to the country as a Marine sergeant in Vietnam. “We have learned something important since the days that I served in Vietnam,” said Blumenthal in 2008. “I served during the Vietnam era,” he stated on another occasion. “I remember the taunts, the insults, sometimes even physical abuse.” Newspapers around the state repeated the whopper, each with their own special touch describing him as “a veteran of the Vietnam War ... a Vietnam Veteran.” “He enlisted in the Marines rather than duck the

Vietnam draft,” reported Slate magazine in a 2000 profile.

Trouble is, not only did Blumenthal never set foot on Vietnamese soil; he escaped active duty service by actively avoiding it at least five times. He finally landed in the Marine Corps Reserves, bravely organizing a “Toys for Tots” campaign.

Souder signaled his own lack of character during the recent primary fight by decrying rumors of his affair as “revenge politics.”

Meanwhile, Blumenthal was riding the wave of public and Democratic favor in his bid to replace retiring Senator Chris Dodd. Few thought it possible he could lose in a heavily blue state while serving as its popular Attorney General. So Blumenthal continued to preen, enjoying public admiration of his fake valor, incredulously oblivious of the fact that lies have a way of being found out. But being found and “outed” by the New York Times must have been especially painful.

“On a few occasions I have misspoken about my service and I regret that,” said Blumenthal in a press conference backed by odd looking military types to an audience responding with the Marine shoutout, “Oorah!”

Strange enthusiasm for a “Toys for Tots” campaign and a boldface lie.

“I have sinned against God, my wife and my family by having a mutual relationship with a part-time member of my staff.” said Souder, alone on stage to no one in particular.

“... I will not allow anyone to take a few misplaced words and impugn my record of service to this country,” Blumenthal declared defiantly.

“Not only am I thankful for a loving family but for a loving God,” said a downcast Souder, adding that he would resign his seat in Congress. Thus he left the stage, disappearing from view.

Retiring Senator Christ Dodd, Chairman of the Banking Committee, and architect and personal financial beneficiary of the housing debacle, weighed in with full support of Blumenthal. “Dick Blumenthal and I have known each other for almost 40 years, and I’ve always known him to be the most honorable of people.... I’ve known him to be nothing but the most honorable of human beings in public life.” Trouble is, Senator Dodd wouldn’t recognize honor if it bit him in the Fannie Mac.

Honor is choosing the noble path at your own detriment. Honor is rising to a standard that exceeds the norm that does not seek personal gain, or take from someone or something to build anything for self. Honor is a code of honesty, sacrifice, oath taking and keeping. It should be a basis for public service, but in the degradation of our times, is the exception rather than the rule.

Honor can be lost and regained, but only through humility and confession

The German doctor Norbert Vollersten was raised by a Nazi father. So great was Dr. Vollersten's shame, he left Germany for North Korea to pour his skills and his life into helping the starving, medically-deprived people of that land. He wanted to regain his family's honor.

The Apostle Peter lost his honor when he denied knowing Christ three times as the rooster crowed, cursing God in the process. Deep regret caused him later, when sentenced to death, to insist on being crucified upside down to demonstrate and hopefully restore, at least in human terms, his once good name.

There is hope for a man like Mark Souder. But for someone like Attorney General Blumenthal who cannot admit guilt and who, rather than blaming himself, lashes out at those who would

find him guilty, there is no place in public service.

A Yankee and a Hoosier: Two very different men, two very different scandals ... one attempting to restore his honor, the other with none left to restore.