MAD COW Morning News

Sarasota Vote Snafu Figure Involved in Bribe Scandal

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Gary L.Greenhalgh, the election company executive responsible for the touch-screen electronic voting machines in ***Sarasota County*** which failed to register fully ***one of every seven votes*** cast in last week's hotly-contested race to replace Rep. Katherine Harris, has a checkered past, the ***MadCowMorningNews*** has learned exclusively, including involvement in election bribery scandals.

The most recent rocked voters in North Carolina in 1999, and resulted in the supervisor of elections in North Carolina's Mecklenburg County being sent to federal prison for taking over $130,000 in payoffs from MicroVote, the election company where Greenhalgh was national sales director.

More recently, as vice president of Election Software & Services (ES&S), Greenhalgh was instrumental, first success of an all-out

push in 2001 by then newly-elected Sarasota County election supervisor Kathy Dent to persuade Sarasota County to pay more than four million dollars for touch-screen electronic voting machines; and then as the project manager overseeing their installation.

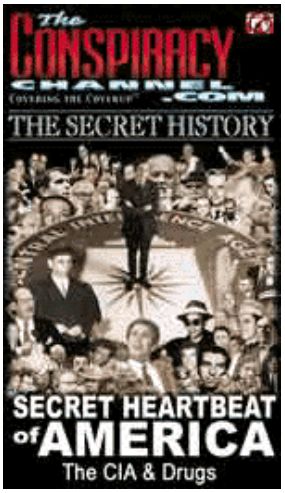
Greenhalgh's Ivotronic machines allegedly failed to register over 18,000 votes in Sarasota County last week; his touch screen machines were almost entirely responsible for the massive 13% undercount of votes which marred the closest Congressional contest in the country, which pitted Republican Vern Buchanan against Democrat Christine Jennings.

Thus it is not incidental to discussion of the fairness of that contest that the curriculum vitae of one of its key players, the man who brought touch screen voting to the hometown of Katherine Harris, has been filled with textbook examples of American elections being conducted by people whose sheer brazen corruption equals that of any pack of Washington lobbyists sharing Jack Abramoff's Skybox at a Redskin game with the San Diego "defense contractor" buddies of convicted grifter Randy "Duke" Cunningham.

But wait. There's more.

In an ironic twist (in a story abounding with them), Greenhalgh was once quoted in the ***New York Times*** saying, "The problem with computer-assisted voting systems was that they centralized the opportunity for fraud."

Greenhalgh's long service in the election industry, we have learned, stretches all the way back to one of the earliest election companies, Shoup Electronics, working for company founder Ransom Shoup, who was himself convicted of bribery and sent to



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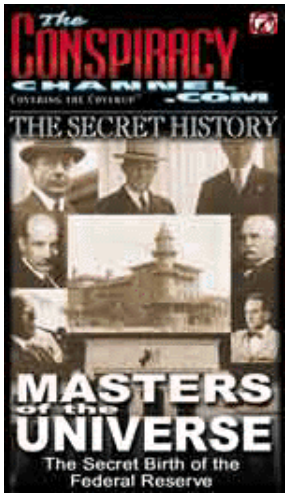

"Masters of the Universe - The Secret Birth of the Federal Reserve"

federal prison in 1979.

It has, of course, dawned by now on most observers that bribes and payoffs to election officials are a matter of course in what is, by almost any standard, a highly-corrupt business.

Nonetheless, it still comes as something of a shock to discover that the man responsible for Florida's latest vote snafu was once accused by a former boss of selling defective voting machines.

Appeals Court rules "Lying asshole" wasn't meant literally

Greenhalgh also has a long and occasionally hilarious ***history of suing people*** and corporations who in some fashion displease him.

"(Greenhalgh) once sued a Franklin, Tennessee election official for slander after the man called him a liar," reported the ***Charlotte Observer.***

(Given ***our own recent history*** of being sued by individuals feeling that the old saying ***"The truth hurts"*** was never meant to apply to them, we admit to receiving this news with some dismay.)

The election official he was suing had actually called him a "***lying asshole,"*** information the Charlotte Observer was apparently hesitant to pass on to its readers.

Greenhalgh's lawsuit apparently set a new legal precedent. A U.S. Appeals Court threw out his slander suit. The official's phrase was, they said, merely "rhetorical hyperbole."

"Casey(the election official Greenhalgh was suing) ***could not have meant literally*** the statement that Greenhalgh's ***'anus was making an untruthful statement'"*** reasoned the

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court. [National Law Journal, 10-30-95]

A blow for liberty, to be sure. We gave a silent cheer.

Losing our religion... *and* our democracy?

"Lying assholes" aside, Sarasota County supervisor of elections ***Kathy Dent*** was a full partner in the effort to bring the 'benefits' of electronic voting to Sarasota, FL.

According to the ***Sarasota Herald Tribune,*** "Dent's most significant decision in office was pushing hard for Sarasota County to purchase touch screen voting machines in 2001."

Ironically, while lobbying Sarasota County Commissioners in a successful campaign to spend millions on new touch screen electronic voting machines in 2001, one of ***Dent's primary arguments*** was that the new machines ***would lower the rate of uncounted votes, which then stood at barely one percent,*** versus the 13% undervote in the election last week.

“I do think we're going to see those numbers drop,” Dent told Commissioners. “We're looking more for accuracy and the confidence that the voters have in the system.”

The Dark Side of the (Republican) Force

As the Sarasota recount began Monday, the embattled Republican election

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New Mob Links in A
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supervisor Kathy Dent looked shaken and pale.

In the face of sudden and skeptical scrutiny she hastily announced a complete about-face, stating she will now implement a county ballot proposition calling for paper ballots, which she had been fighting tooth and (manicured) nail in the courts.

Dent may turn an even-whiter shade of pale when she learns of the negative comments her partner in crime (*not literally*) Greenhalgh made about electronic voting machines,

“The problem with computer-assisted voting systems is that they centralize the opportunity for fraud," Greenhalgh said, in a July 29,1985 story in the New York Times.

“There is a massive potential for problems."

Reported the Times: “Mr. Greenhalgh said that while lever-type voting machines could have their counts rigged only machine by machine, counting votes by computer was done at one central site in most counties.”

Now he tells us.

How to fix elections in three easy steps

The North Carolina scandal began in earnest in 1994, when generous election supervisor Bill Culp awarded MicroVote a contract for $5.2 million in voting machines. Another $1.3 million changed hands in 1997.

At the time MicroVote was a hapless firm reeling from setbacks, like one in Montgomery County, Pa., north of Philadelphia, where its machines kept ***shutting down*** during a November 1995 election, freezing as voters scrolled through a three-page electronic ballot.

When glitches resurfaced the following spring, Montgomery County sued MicroVote. MicroVote counter-sued, and eventually had filed four lawsuits at various times.

And here's where it gets interesting...

Montgomery County traded the machines to a dummy ‘front’ company, which turned around and resold them to Bill Culp, whose North Carolina county bought 400 of Montgomery County's rejects.

Culp was publicly enthusiastic over the purchase, but privately complained about the same defects that led to the chaos in Pennsylvania.

"The obvious weakness in the scrolling mechanism concerns us," he wrote to the company on May 13, 1996.

Like he cared.

Our draconian system of justice

In 1999 Bill Culp pled guilty to accepting bribes and was sentenced to 30 months in federal prison.

However, just as in the case of convicted Louisiana Commissioner of Elections ***Jerry Fowler,*** who served a five-year term in federal prison for taking hundreds of thousands of dollars in kickbacks from election company ***Sequoia Pacific***, no voting machine executives were ever convicted of wrongdoing.

In Louisiana, ***Pasquale “Rocco” Ricci,*** identified as an “independent contractor” for Sequoia Pacific, was convicted of bribing Fowler for a period of over a decade.

For his crime, Ricci got a ***year.***

A year of ***home detention.***

A quorum of election officials in the 'Big House'

After Mecklenburg County election supervisor Bill Culp was convicted of taking more than $134,000 in kickbacks and bribes from representatives of the Indianapolis-based company where Gary Greenhalgh was national sales director, there was a general scrambling for cover...

When the FBI subpoenaed financial records from the elections office, Gary Greenhalgh felt it prudent to announce that he'd personally lavished dinners and entertainment on Culp in Philadelphia and Atlantic City, even as he was selling Culp's county millions of dollars' worth of electronic voting machines.

In North Carolina, Ed O’Day took the fall, pleading guilty to bribery charges that included paying Culp's wife, Deena, $ 16,500 for "consulting services."

He was identified as a “voting machine salesman” and an “independent sales representative” for “United American Elections Supply Co,” a basically non-existent front company, but not as an active agent and employee of MicroVote.

That goose presumably had some golden eggs left to lay.

"Being connected means never having to say you're sorry."

For their part, however, MicroVote executives suffered nothing more than... ***internal recrimination.***

MicroVote sued Greenhalgh, then living in Vienna Va., alleging he'd used inside information to lure clients to competing businesses. Company President James M. Ries Jr. accused Greenhalgh of ***“trade secret violations.”***

“Probably the most damaging, he was actually selling equipment being released from Montgomery County to our customers on the side,” Ries told an Indianapolis TV station.

“And it violated his working contract with us that he was selling outside of Micro Vote’s jurisdiction.”

Greenhalgh said he'd done nothing wrong.

For that matter... ***so did MicroVote.***

“Ed O'Day was an independent agent of MicroVote – not a direct employee but a manufacturer's representative for our product in North and South Carolina,” Ries claimed.

“He was convicted of bribing a public official, something we had no knowledge of, nor did we have any input. Unfortunately he's still out selling equipment to election officials, which surprised us all.”

"He thought it up all by himself. Sure."

And that's where we'll leave our story for today, with the image of a portly red-faced genial man trudging through South Carolina's fertile election landscape.

Passing out bribes, maybe, sure... But ***receiving no outside help.*** Like lone nut Lee Harvey Oswald. Or Mohamed Atta's Lone Nut Cadre.

Revealing that all of the nation’s fuzzy thinkers ***no longer live in California***, a former South Carolina Election Commission Chairman, "Rusty" DePass, expressed *shock**--shock!--*** at O’Day’s conviction...

"Ed O'Day is a decent man in a shady business."

Rusty, a man clearly unafraid of turning a phrase, continued, "Ed has always been ***just as straight up and down as 6 o'clock*** with me."

Today, Americans weary of ceaseless public scandal no doubt envy good ol' boy Rusty his seemingly wide-eyed capacity for surprise.

But it's a little too late to believe that's its real.

TOMORROW:

SARASOTA SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS KATHY DENT: BABE IN THE WOODS, OR EXTREMELY SMART COOKIE?