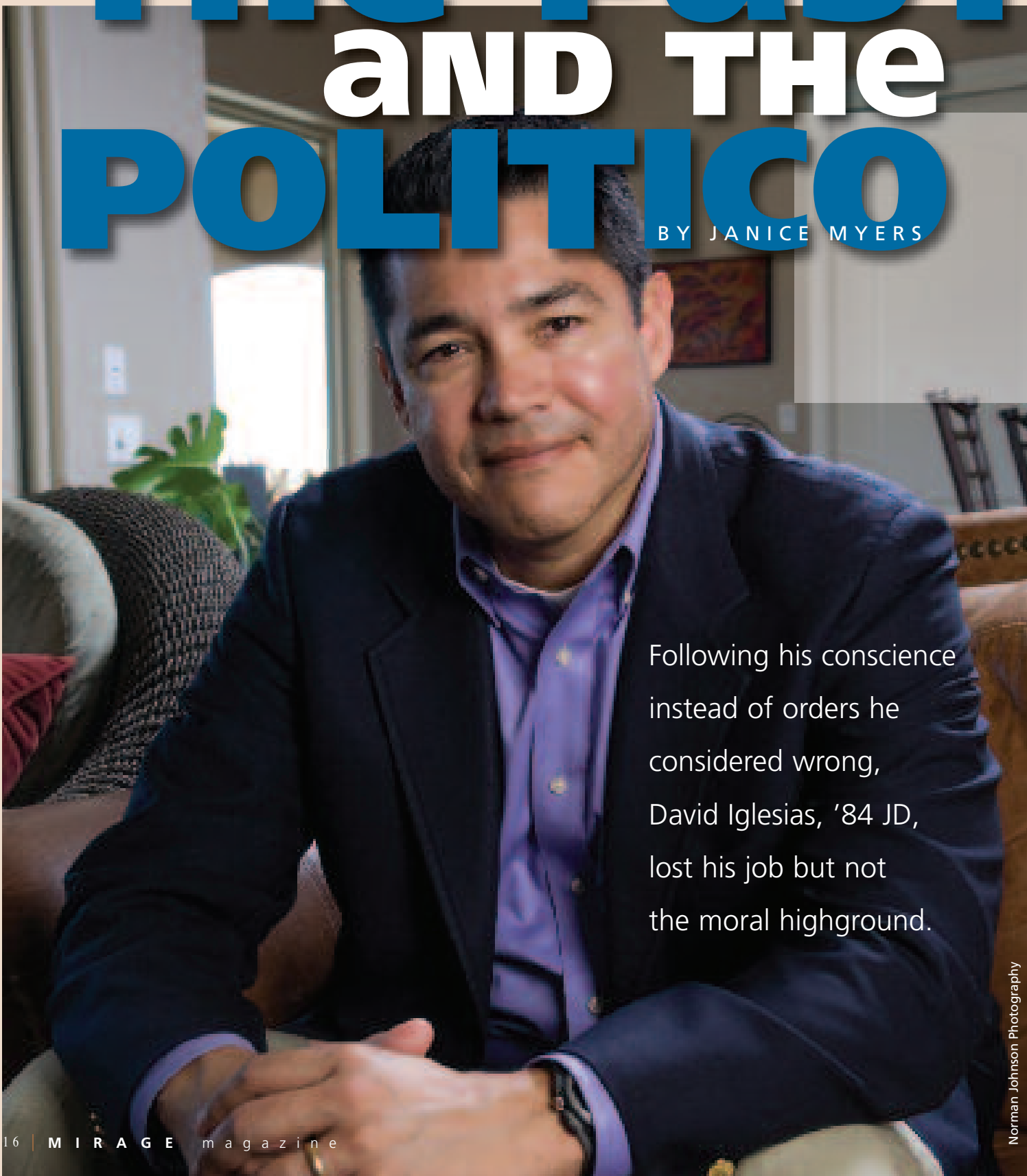


THE PASTOR AND THE POLITICO

BY JANICE MYERS



Norman Johnson Photography

Following his conscience instead of orders he considered wrong, David Iglesias, '84 JD, lost his job but not the moral highground.

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Claudio Iglesias was proud of his son when he graduated from UNM law school. He was pleased as punch to welcome a charming and beautiful daughter-in-law to the family. And he was busting his buttons each time his son and daughter-in-law presented him with one of four lovely granddaughters.

But it's safe to say that the late Baptist minister's proudest moment was when his son said no.

That son, David Iglesias, will forever be known as one of seven highly rated US attorneys fired for refusing to compromise their principles.

"US attorneys are supposed to be protected from politics," says Iglesias, who realized only in hindsight that he'd as much as written his own pink slip when he declined to bring what he considered overblown and unprovable voter fraud cases to trial in the weeks before the 2006 election. The publicity from those cases could have tipped the election toward the Republicans.

SHOCK AND AWE

Stunned as he was by his own dismissal on December 7, 2006, Iglesias soon learned that he was in good company. In short order, the Bush administration's Justice Department fired six more US attorneys for what were perceived as similar acts of

insubordination. Two others had been fired earlier in 2006. And before it was over, Attorney General Alberto Gonzales and many other high-ranking Justice Department officials would fall on their swords before a Congressional inquiry.

In retrospect, Iglesias admits that he was somewhat naïve—although the evangelical Christian attorney stresses the word "somewhat." Having been a candidate for public office (he ran unsuccessfully for New Mexico Attorney General in 1998), he understood that compromise was the art of politics.

GROWING UP IN PARADISE

David Iglesias' upbringing was hardly your average American story. His father and mentor, Claudio, was born in 1923 on a small island off the coast of Panama. The son of a medicine man and a member of the Kuna Indian nation, Claudio was shipped off to the United States at the age of 13 in hopes that he might receive a formal education.

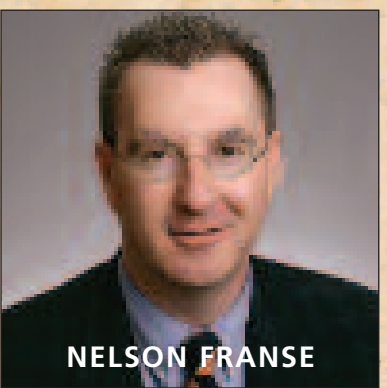
SERVING HIS COUNTRY AGAIN: Fired from his job as US attorney in 2006 by former Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, David Iglesias is back on active duty with the US Navy JAG Corps, prosecuting terrorist cases out of Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.

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Lt. Col. **R. David Fass**, '83 BA, '93 MBA, received his PhD in management, concentration in research methods, from New Mexico State University last year. David is currently an associate professor at the Air Force Institute of Technology at Wright Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio.

Charles V. Garcia, '83 BBA, has joined the Miller Stratvert law firm in Albuquerque.

Gary Gordon, '83 BBA, '86 JD, has been named treasurer of Albuquerque Academy, a continuation of his past involvement there. Previously, Gary served as a trial lawyer at the Miller Stratvert firm.



NELSON FRANSE

Nelson Franse, '84 BUS, '87 JD, has been selected as a Fellow of the Litigation Counsel of America. He is a shareholder in the Rodey Law Firm and the leader of the Albuquerque firm's Professional Liability Practice Group.

Julie Downs Goodnight, '84 BAR, has announced the second season of her horse-training television show, "Horse Master with Julie Goodnight" (DirecTV, channel 379, Dish 231, Verizon, and charter cable). She travels the country to work with horses and riders in her clinics while shooting her television makeover show, which won multiple awards (including a Telly and two Aegis awards) in its first year. Julie lives near Salida, Colorado.

Albert J. "Scooter" Mitchell, Jr., '84 JD, of Tucumcari, New Mexico, has been sworn in as a judge. Administering the oath of office was **William Lang**, '79 BA, of the 2nd Judicial District.

Sherry Robinson, '84 BA, is coauthor with David L. Durgin of his autobiography, *Entrepreneur to Investor The Hard Way* (Sunstone Press, Santa Fe), in which he discusses obstacles to tech transfer, looks at New Mexico's evolving business climate, and presents a recent history of Albuquerque. Sherry lives in Albuquerque.

CAREER NOTES

David Iglesias' career highlights include much more than his famous firing from the US Attorney General's Office.

Two years after having been fired by the Bush administration in 2006, David Iglesias, '84 JD, was mobilized into active duty status as captain with the US Navy JAG Corps to prosecute terrorist cases out of Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. It's "the most important work I've done in my 24 years of active and reserve duty," he says.

As a JAG in 1986, David had been a member of the legal team working on a case involving the assault of a fellow Marine at their base in Guantanamo Bay, which inspired the film *A Few Good Men*, with Tom Cruz and Jack Nicholson.

From 1988 to 1991, David was a New Mexico assistant Attorney General. From 1991-1994, he was an assistant city

attorney for the City of Albuquerque. In 1995 David was a White House Fellow. He worked from 1995 to 1998 as chief counsel for the New Mexico Risk Management Legal Office, followed by three years as general counsel for the Taxation and Revenue Department. He ran for New Mexico Attorney General as a Republican in 1998, but lost to Democrat Patricia A. Madrid. At the time of his appointment in 2000 as US Attorney, he was an associate with the law firm of Walz and Associates in Albuquerque, as well as a Commander in the US Naval Reserve JAG Corps.

David is the author of *In Justice: Inside the Scandal that Rocked the Bush Administration* (John Wiley & Sons: 2008).

At the University of Oklahoma, Claudio met Margaret Geiger, who had been a missionary in southern Mexico with Wycliffe Bible Translators. It was a match quite probably made in heaven: the two married in 1949.

Claudio, who had become a Christian early in life, yearned to return to his roots. After refreshing his Kuna language skills and earning a college degree, he and Margaret set sail for the tiny Caribbean island of Mulatuppu, near Colombia. They worked first as independent missionaries and then joined the Southern Baptist Convention as missionaries affiliated with Wycliffe Bible Translators.

Claudio and Margaret's good works would fill volumes, but perhaps their greatest contributions were building a school and helping to create a Kuna alphabet so that the language could be written as well as spoken. They spent a total of 17 years as missionaries.

David remembers happy times growing up on the island, where his father also blossomed. He remembers the Bible precepts his parents taught him and their service as pastors-of-all-

trades. He remembers their love and the charisma of Claudio.*

FOOTNOTE: Claudio Iglesias died on December 1, 2008.

All of which is prologue to the moment.

WORKING WITHOUT A NET

If there's a question begged by David Iglesias's story, it's this: is "moral politician" an oxymoron? Is it possible to traverse the wobbly high wire between ethics and politics, between doing what's right and doing what's expedient?

Yes, says Iglesias, but it's very difficult. "Power, money, and fame go together," he says. "Once you get a taste of one, it's difficult to resist the other two." Indeed, it's the rare politician who doesn't yield to their siren song.

But it's not power, money, or fame that Iglesias considers the proximate cause of the Justice Department's fall from grace. "I don't think any of this would have happened if it weren't for 9/11," he says. "The attacks were, in my mind, equivalent to the bombing of

Pearl Harbor. I think that was the first time my legs actually buckled under me."

While some of us sat nursing our emotional wounds, the administration felt it was incumbent on them to prevent another attack, whatever the cost. Iglesias himself went out and gave talks touting the original Patriot Act. "It provided sweeping powers for the government, but in the wake of 9/11, they seemed appropriate," he says. For the administration, securing the next election was requisite to securing the country.

As the Justice Department official in a border state, Iglesias' focus immediately became issues of illegal immigration: preventing terrorists from entering the US. Concentrating on prosecuting such cases earned him high marks in his performance reviews by the Justice Department, but left him less attuned to what was going on in Washington.

PLAYING THE "RELIGION" CARD

Some characterize Karl Rove's political strategy as portraying one party

(Democrats) as bad people and the other (Republicans) as good. As a conservative, perhaps Iglesias didn't perceive the sting, but the 2000 campaign lay the groundwork for an eight-year series of religious and ideological skirmishes between the right and the left.

Though David Iglesias and George W. Bush technically started out with a shared religious ethos, at some point their paths began subtly to diverge. Early in his tenure, however, Iglesias saw only glimmers of misplaced allegiances.

It was in this spirit of personal and political solidarity, says Iglesias, that late in the summer of 2002, he and every other US Attorney received an e-mail from the Justice Department "...suggesting, in no uncertain terms, that we should all immediately begin to work closely with election officials at the state and local levels to offer whatever assistance we could in investigating and prosecuting voter fraud cases." (*In Justice*, p. 82.)

While officials may have cast this obsession as an honest interest in "reform," to Iglesias it sounded more like caging, an active attempt to bar legitimate voters from casting their ballots.

Still, engrossed as he was in preventing terrorists from crossing New Mexico's border, he brushed off such Justice Department directives. His performance won him high praise in his evaluations by administration officials, his office staff operated as mutually supportive teammates, and he was proud of what he was able to achieve.

Perhaps he felt, as many of us do, that we can accomplish good even in less-than-ideal situations.

FURIOUS—AND FORGIVING

The facts of this case have been copiously covered in the media—in just two years, Iglesias has given more than 200 interviews. Time, the

peculiarities of our popular culture, and the peephole of history will determine if it's remembered as a watershed moment when a nation decided that, in the United States of America, the ends do not justify the means.

The far more interesting question is how to reconcile a deep faith in God with the duties of public service. While some evangelical Christians look to the Bible for exact instructions on how to behave in life, it's not always clear how to apply Biblical principles to a world where hundreds of people with varying agendas influence the breakneck pace of politics.

Iglesias's experience has taught him many lessons. "No particular religious group has a monopoly on morality and decency," he says. "I've met Christians, Jews, Muslims, and Buddhists who all hew to the same moral standards I do. And I relearned something that I had always known: that whether liberal or conservative, power has to be checked."

One Biblical admonition is not quite as ambiguous as others—Christians are to forgive their enemies. It's a process that Iglesias has engaged in, over and over. "I'll be going along fine," he says. "I'll feel as though I've forgiven the administration for implying I was fired for poor performance, which was so wounding because it was so untrue. Then I'll hear something on television or read something and I'll get furious again, and I'll have to start over. Forgiveness isn't a one-time thing: it's a process."

Nobody knows how he or she would act in a morally murky situation. Few of us have been tested in so public a forum. But Iglesias found he had the moral chops to say no.

And he's proud to say he survived his baptism by firing.

Note: The views expressed are personal views of David Iglesias and should not be considered the official views of the US Navy or any other US Government organization.

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Deborah Jacobson Van Vleck, '84 JD, last year, was appointed a US Administrative Law Judge for the West Des Moines Social Security Administration Office of Disability Adjudication and Review.

David A. Finlayson, '85 BBA, '93 JD, '93 MBA, has joined Barlow & Wilcox in Albuquerque. His practice is business and corporate law, commercial transactions, estate planning, and probate.

L. Luis Lopez, '85 PhD, has published three books of poetry. *Musings of a Barrio Sack Boy*, *A Painting of Sand*, and the most recent, *Each Month I Sing* (Farolito Press). He presently teaches Latin, ancient Greek, and mythology at Mesa State College in Grand Junction, Colorado.

Lora Lee Ortiz, '86 BA, is executive director of Mothers Against Drunk Driving in Albuquerque.

Beth Soybel Porter, '85 PhD, '93 MD, is an urgent care physician with ABQ Health Partners.

Mary Ann Cuneo, '87 BA, '95 JD, has joined Barlow & Wilcox in Albuquerque as an associate practicing in the area of estate planning, estate administration, and asset transfer.

Loretta Córdova de Ortega, '87 MD, now chairs the department of pediatrics at the UNM School of Medicine.

Manuel Varela, '87 BA, '89 MS, '94 PhD, has been promoted to professor of biology at Eastern New Mexico University in Portales where he teaches courses in microbiology and conducts research in the area of microbial physiology.

Krista Brown, '88 BUS, has been named 2008 Regional All Star of the Southwest for Whole Foods Market. The Dallas resident is a director of store promotions and marketing.

Daren W. Parks, '88 BA, '93 MS, has rejoined Defined Fitness in Albuquerque as the regional athletic director.

Scott E. Turner, '88 BA, '92 JD, has opened the Turner Law Firm in Albuquerque. The firm's primary areas of focus include litigation and transaction work in the areas of real estate, business, commercial, contracts, and entity formation and maintenance.

Eric DeBonis, '89 BSME, '97 MS, was recently promoted to vice president of Southwest Gas, Central Arizona Division, located in Phoenix. Eric and his wife, **Sonny Yeats DeBonis**, '92 BSCP, live in Scottsdale.