

Cole article sent to Doris Cole by dc Oct. 2022

Oct. 29, 2024

10/21/22, 5:35 PM

COLE / DC

This article was written for the independent Church of God newspaper known as *In Transition*, published by John Robinson from 1995 to 1997. Dixon Cartwright, with assistance from Dave Havir, interviewed Mr. Cole for this article in 1995 or 1996. *In Transition's* last printed issues appeared in January 1997. *The Journal* began in February 1997.

By Dixon Cartwright

TYLER, Texas—Long-time church members remember the day: Jan. 3, 1979. That was the date burned indelibly into the collective memory of the Worldwide Church of God when the State of California raided the headquarters of the church and campus of Ambassador College.

A small army of lawyers and policemen and a newly appointed receiver converged on the executive suite of the Hall of Administration in Pasadena in an attempt to seize financial records as a result of a suit brought by two church members, Earl Timmons and John Tuit.

At first employees refused entry to the representatives of the state. Later in the day, however, the officials gained entry and sealed off the executive suite and the data-processing center, which housed the church's computers.

The Pasadena Star News carried a front-page headline declaring "Ambassador Raided." *The Los Angeles Times*, as well as wire services, picked up the story and sent it around the world.

Judge Steven Weisman of the Superior Court of Los Angeles was the receiver.

At first WCG pastor general Herbert W. Armstrong said the church would fully cooperate with the audit the state wanted to make in connection with the suit.

However, the initial cooperative impulse quickly faded a day later when Mr. Armstrong changed course and began an all-out battle with state officials that drug on for months.

A casualty of the proceedings was the Worldwide Church of God's director of church administration, C. Wayne Cole. Mr. Cole had advised Mr. Armstrong that he thought cooperation with the state, no matter how unjust the accusations might be, would be the best course, that a reading of Romans 13 shows that.

However, after conferring with church legal counsel Stanley Rader, Mr. Armstrong made an abrupt about-face, and the Worldwide Church of God embarked on a course of resisting at every turn any action the State of California took to investigate financial dealings of the church and church officials.

Fired, defrocked, disfellowshipped

Mr. Cole was fired from his position as director of church administration, defrocked as a minister of the church and disfellowshipped. For almost two decades, many church

members who lived through the crisis have written off C. Wayne Cole as a traitor to the church and to his employer and pastor general, Mr. Armstrong.

Sixteen years later, on the Sabbath of Sept. 16, 1995, in Gladewater, Texas, Mr. Cole, now 65, delivered his first sermon in 16 years to the Big Sandy congregation of the United Church of God. In that sermon Mr. Cole talked openly about the events of the late 1970s.

In an interview with *In Transition* the next day in his Tyler office, Mr. Cole spoke about the events of Jan. 3, 1979, and the circumstances leading up to the raid and his ouster.

Mr. Cole, who now with his wife, Doris, runs a successful real-estate business here, says the “troubles in the church” began years before 1979. He places the beginning in April 1967 at the death of Loma Armstrong, Herbert’s wife of 49 years.

“Mr. Armstrong began to spend much more time with his staff after Loma’s death,” Mr. Cole says.

With him constantly were people to plan his itinerary on trips to visit church areas and government and civic officials in many lands.

“There are those that say that it may have all started with Mrs. Armstrong’s death, that beginning at that time Mr. Armstrong was pretty well controlled by other people.”

Mr. Armstrong began to rely on people who may have had agendas, Mr. Cole says. “Without Loma there to shepherd him, he was in a more-vulnerable position to those around him who may or may not have their agendas. That word *exploit* sounds awfully strong, but in my book it was exploitation.”

Any exploitation may not have been apparent to observers as early as 1967, but Mr. Cole believes the situation gradually worsened over the years, picking up speed throughout the 1970s.

At the time of Mrs. Armstrong’s death, the Coles were living in Australia. Mr. Armstrong had sent them there in 1961 to oversee what was referred to as the Australian Work. But, when they came back to Pasadena, in August of 1972, “the Work in the United States was vastly different.”

In 1961, he remembers, the church’s income was “not that significant,” with Feast attendance “probably about 15,000 in 1961.” In 1972 the church had grown in membership and income, and the resultant change in life-style of church employees in Pasadena was evident to Wayne and Doris Cole.

“We were shocked to see the homes, fittings, life-style, the way the whole headquarters structure of the work seemed to be going.”

By 1973, Mr. Cole says, the church and some of its ministers and other members were involved in doctrinal disagreements; the disagreements included questions on governance, law and grace and Mr. Armstrong’s son, church vice president and radio and television broadcaster Garner Ted Armstrong.

By 1974 Mr. Cole, by then director of church administration, sent ministers David Antion and Albert Portune to the East Coast to “put the fire out,” as Mr. Cole puts it, “to help stabilize and settle down” the churches there.

But the problems worsened, so Mr. Cole himself traveled to Washington, D.C., to meet with ministers and other church members. His attitude at the time, he says, was, “We’ve

got doctrinal problems, but let's address them. Let's not throw the baby out with the bathwater."

The 1970s were a time of internal turmoil for the church, so much so that at times the general public took notice, with articles appearing in newspapers and magazines such as *The New York Times* and *Time* when Ted Armstrong was banished and then reinstated several times by his father.

In 0000 Ted Armstrong sent the Coles to Canada to head up the church's office in Vancouver, B.C., and appointed Ronald Dart to direct church administration.

But by 1978 the senior Mr. Armstrong brought the Coles back from Vancouver to Pasadena as "the whole thing with Ted was coming to a head."

By this time, Mr. Armstrong was recovering from a critical near-death illness and was living in Tucson, Ariz. When Mr. Cole arrived back in the United States, one of his first thoughts was to visit Mr. Armstrong in Arizona.

"He'd been like a father to me," Mr. Cole says.

"I said I want to go see Mr. Armstrong. I might not be able to get into the room with him [because of people who were shielding Mr. Armstrong], but I just want to go. So I flew down to Tucson."

Garner Ted Armstrong arrived in Tucson at the same time, and he and Mr. Cole both visited Mr. Armstrong.

"He did indeed look like he was dying. We anointed him and prayed for him, and he looked at me from his hospital bed and said, 'Wayne, do you believe the same things I believe?' We'd had so much division: who was liberal, who was conservative, who was remaining faithful.

"I was cast by many people in those days as a liberal. I was certainly not a liberal, but I was not a right-wing conservative who believed in autocratic control.

"Anyway, Mr. Armstrong said, 'Wayne, do you still believe like I believe?' I said, 'Mr. Armstrong, with all my heart, soul and mind I believe the essential doctrines of this church just like you have taught them.'

"Mr. Armstrong said, 'Well, I thought so.'" Mr. Armstrong did recover from his illness sufficiently once again to begin his extensive travels, along with writing for the church's publications. Mr. Armstrong, on DATEHERE, remarried, taking as wife Ramona Martin, formerly Ramona Crittenden of Oklahoma, who had been an employee on the Pasadena campus.

Mr. Armstrong's relationship with his son had been stormy on and off for most of Ted Armstrong's life. Mr. Armstrong's marriage to a 38-year-old divorcee did not help the situation with his son, although Ted Armstrong did at the last minute agree to perform the wedding ceremony.

Mr. Armstrong's confidants no longer included his son. The pastor general was relying more and more on the advice and counsel of Stanley Rader, an attorney who had first worked for the church in 1958.

Mr. Cole remembers an incident in Tucson that sheds light on the closing days of the Armstrongs' familial relationship.

“One day Mr. Armstrong had asked for me to go over from Pasadena to his home in Tucson. Stan [Rader] was already over there. He had asked for [business manager] Ray Wright and me to come to Tucson and meet with him. He wanted to have presented to him some of the problems that were considered to be the result of the way Ted Armstrong was dealing with the church.

“So we went over there, and Mr. Armstrong said, ‘I couldn’t sleep very well. I got up about 3 o’clock and wrote a letter to Ted.’”

In the letter Mr. Cole says Mr. Armstrong appealed to his son in a “very tender and a very loving, fatherly way. The letter was very well written, and his heart was heavy because he had been fed whatever reasons that Ted was a bad influence on the church and was leading it astray, and so on.

“So he [Mr. Armstrong] read us the letter, and he said he was writing Ted to give him a last chance for them to see each other in Tucson and get this whole thing straightened out.

“When Mr. Armstrong finished, he looked at me first of all. He said, ‘What do you think? Should I send it or tear it up and write him a short letter of disfellowshipping?’

“I said, ‘Mr. Armstrong, if you got up at 3 o’clock this morning and you sat at that typewriter, then who am I to sit there and tell you not to send that letter? What’s to be lost by giving Ted one more chance?’ ”

But everyone else in the room, Mr. Cole says, disagreed and urged Mr. Armstrong to discard the letter and instead send a notice disfellowshipping his son.

“After we left, he wrote a very brief letter disfellowshipping him. Ted wasn’t without contribution to the problems that befell him,” Mr. Cole says, “but he was pushed out.”

Ted Armstrong was gone, and Mr. Cole says the remaining ministers in Pasadena began picking up the pieces. This was in June and July of 1978, half a year before the raid by the State of California.

Mr. Cole, along with Burk McNair (now a member of the United Church of God’s board of directors) conducted conferences for the ministry throughout the United States and Canada.

Meanwhile, Mr. Armstrong was spending much time with Mr. Rader “in hotel rooms, untold hours in planes. Mr. Armstrong was being advised and counseled and sort of pushed by these people around him who never had God’s Spirit; they weren’t converted people. Mr. Armstrong knew that.

“In fact, Mr. Armstrong would say, ‘I know Stan doesn’t have God’s Spirit. He’s not a minister.’”

And this was after Mr. Armstrong had ordained Stan an evangelist.”

(Mr. Armstrong had baptized Mr. Rader in a bathtub in a Hong Kong hotel in 0000. He had ordained Mr. Rader an evangelist in 0000.)

Why did Mr. Armstrong baptize and ordain Mr. Rader if he didn’t believe in the lawyer’s conversion?

“Stan just wanted it so bad that he just persuaded Mr. Armstrong to do it. Mr. Armstrong was vulnerable to a lot of that kind of thing.”

In 1978 problems in the church prompted Mr. Armstrong to close the Ambassador campus for a time. The Big Sandy campus had already been closed and was scheduled to reopen in 1978, but the reopening never happened [at that time].

“It fell my lot as Mr. Armstrong’s assistant to give the commencement address in 1978 and announce to students that we were closing Ambassador College,” Mr. Cole remembers. “That was not the easiest thing.” (The Pasadena campus reopened a year later, and the Big Sandy campus reopened as a junior college in 1981.)

All of this, Mr. Cole explains, is background information for the story of the raid and receivership of the church and Mr. Cole’s abrupt ouster as director of church administration.

By December of 1978 on the church grounds and college campus settled a climate of stress, division, labeling and name-calling, says Mr. Cole. “All this had been going on for some time.”

The Coles were living in Glendora, several miles east of Pasadena. On Dec. 10, 1978, Mr. Cole was working in his yard on a Sunday afternoon when Mrs. Cole came out of the house to tell him Mr. Armstrong was on the phone for him.

“To start with, he [Mr. Armstrong] by and large wanted to tell me about where he was going [on his latest overseas trip].

“Anyhow, he told me about the trip and updated me on that, and I was saying all the right things, I wish you well, we’ll be praying about it, and so on.

“But Mr. Armstrong interrupted me. He said, ‘Wayne, I’m not finished.’ He wasn’t ready to wind the call up. ‘I’ve got something else I want to talk to you about.’ I said yes, sir. I’ve got all the time you want.”

Mr. Armstrong then began to elaborate to Mr. Cole the situation between Mr. Rader and Mr. Armstrong.

“I’ve got a problem with Stan Rader,” Mr. Armstrong said. “Every place I go, Stan wants to get on the stage. If I visit a church area, Stan wants to get on the stage, trying to start preaching to these people, taking time from me. People don’t accept him as a minister. Stan is not converted, and I don’t know what to do about it. I’ve got a problem.”

Mr. Armstrong began to tell Mr. Cole about a recent trip. “I went to Tulsa, Okla., not long ago,” Mr. Armstrong said. “Before I was to begin giving the sermon, Stan started talking, and he didn’t leave me but about 15 minutes for my sermon. I do have this problem, Wayne. I need some help. I don’t know what to do about it.”

Stanley Rader intruding into Mr. Armstrong’s sermon time was hardly the whole story of Mr. Rader’s control over Mr. Armstrong. Mr. Cole believes Mr. Rader and company were busily controlling every aspect of Mr. Armstrong’s life, from his travel schedule to major ecclesiastical including doctrinal decisions.

While Mr. Armstrong was confiding in Mr. Cole on that Sunday afternoon, Mr. Cole was wondering if this was some kind of a setup. “Is Mr. Armstrong trying to get me to walk into a trap? Is Mr. Armstrong really wanting help? All these thoughts were going through my head.”

Mr. Cole decided to inform Mr. Armstrong about feedback from the ministry and others regarding Mr. Rader. “Mr. Armstrong, being in my position in church administration, I probably have greater access to the input from the field ministry than anybody else in the

church right now. You're not in Pasadena, but in my position in Pasadena, and as your assistant, I am getting telephone calls, letters, all kinds of expressions of concern from the field ministry about Mr. Rader."

Mr. Cole tried to couch his comments in discreet terms. "Mr. Armstrong, you know that Stan and Niki Rader have been friends of mine ever since Boliver O'Rear died."

(Mr. O'Rear had been a tax expert working for the church; at his death in 1958, Mr. Rader came to work for the church.)

"I have been a very close friend of Stan Rader's. I don't want to say anything in the world to discredit Stan. But when Stan begins to involve himself in ministerial matters and matters of the spirit, he is out of his realm."

Mr. Cole advised Mr. Armstrong to sit tight, go ahead and leave on his trip, and while he was gone Mr. Cole would "put together some material that addresses the questions and the problems you've talked about."

Mr. Cole said he could meet Mr. Armstrong in Pasadena, Tucson or elsewhere to discuss further the problem and possible solutions.

"When I told my wife about the conversation, she said, 'You're hanging yourself. You're putting a rope around your neck.' I may be, I said, but if I am it's just going to have to be."

Mr. Cole remembers that phone conversation with Mr. Armstrong as a "plaintive call of a man in the wilderness somewhere, longing for help. He was lost. It was that sort of hollow call from someone out there saying, 'I've got myself into a mess that I don't know how to get out of.' "

Mr. Cole decided to talk to Herman Hoeh, a church evangelist and writer who had been a pioneer student in Ambassador College's first year, 1947.

"I called Herman Hoeh and I said, 'Dr. Hoeh, it's very important that I talk to you. I want to set up a time when we can talk without interruption.

"I had seen the console on the back of Mr. Armstrong's desk, and I had been in the control room off Mr. Ted Armstrong's desk and seen the reel-to-reel tape. You had to assume that any conversation on campus could be tapped into at any time. But I needed to talk to Herman Hoeh privately.

"I think Mr. Armstrong began to believe at that time himself that there was no telephone on the campus that you could confidently talk on without being bugged."

On one occasion, Mr. Armstrong, calling from out of town, directed Mr. Cole to go to Mr. Armstrong's house on Orange Grove Avenue, tell Mr. Armstrong's housekeeper to direct him to an upstairs study.

"That was the first time I had ever been there in that study. In fact, I didn't know that study existed. There was a telephone there that Mr. Armstrong had personally had installed hooked to an outside line. Mr. Armstrong was confident that that phone was not wiretapped or bugged. When I got to that phone, I called Mr. Armstrong back. We chatted some about football, then he told me more about the thing with Stan."

Dr. Hoeh came up to Mr. Cole's office. "I went through almost verbatim that telephone conversation with Mr. Armstrong. Here was Dr. Hoeh, a pioneer student, one of the most influential formulators of teaching doctrine in his advice and his writings and his helps to

Mr. Armstrong down through the years. I thought if there's anybody that I could call on who's converted, it may be him."

Dr. Hoeh, however, had what Mr. Cole calls a strange reaction to the revelation about the phone call. "In Dr. Hoeh's inimitable style, I didn't get any direct help or comments, and that was that. But he said that Ray Dick would agree with Mr. Armstrong and you that he's got a problem. I consider this a strange reaction. But that's about all Dr. Hoeh said."

Mr. Cole then decided to write a letter to Mr. Armstrong. He wrote two or three pages outlining the situation, taking pains to point out Mr. Rader's good points as an attorney and businessman, but noting that Mr. Cole felt he had no business involving himself in ecclesiastical matters of any kind.

"I suggested to Mr. Armstrong in that letter that he talk to Stan and explain to him in no uncertain terms the value that he [Mr. Rader] is to you, but he is limiting his own value by trying to involve himself in areas that are out of his capacity."

Mr. Armstrong's reaction was that Mr. Cole had written a "beautiful" letter, but that "Stan's not going to accept this. It's going to take the Spirit of God to understand this, and he's not going to understand or accept this."

Mr. Cole became immediately alarmed at the prospect of Mr. Armstrong showing Mr. Rader the letter.

"Yes, I've got to show Stan this letter," Mr. Armstrong told Mr. Cole.

"No, you do not have to show him this letter," Mr. Cole asserted. "You asked for help, and I have addressed your problem, but it is not my problem, and I can't solve it, and if you show Stan that letter all you've done is alienate me from Stan from now on. You take the letter, you assimilate the information from that letter, put it in your own terms and talk to Stan. But please don't show him that letter."

Mr. Armstrong accused Mr. Cole of raising his voice, "and I did at times. But someday I'll get the chance to tell him once more that I love him."

Mr. Cole and Mr. Armstrong argued. "Mr. Armstrong, you are almost a prisoner in your own house," I said. "I don't think you realize how much you are absolutely, totally surrounded and controlled." I did spend some time telling him that all of the information he gets about everything was being filtered through Stanley Rader and his staff."

Finally Mr. Armstrong agreed not to show Mr. Rader the letter. "I'll just talk to him," Mr. Cole remembers Mr. Armstrong saying.

"So our meeting ended. I flew back to Pasadena, and two days later Mr. Armstrong called me. Mr. Armstrong said, 'Well, Wayne, Stan's furious. I showed him your letter.'

"I looked at my wife, and I began to cry. This is it. We must as well pack it up."

Back in Pasadena, Mr. Cole was waiting dazedly for whatever would happen next. On Dec. 31 he remembers Ellis La Ravia (then in public relations for the church and college, now a minister in the United Church of God) coming into his office and offering him tickets to the Rose Bowl game the next day.

"I said, no, Ellis, I'm sorry but I don't want to go to the Rose Bowl this year. While he was there I said, 'Ellis, there are reports from every hand coming from all sorts of people that there's a lawsuit about to be filed against the church. Do you know anything about this lawsuit?'

“He said, ‘I have heard those rumors. I have asked Ralph Helge [another church attorney] about it. He said he has heard those reports; he has investigated. Ralph does not think there is any substance to it.’”

Mr. and Mrs. Cole stayed at home Jan. 1.

On Jan. 3, 1979, the church’s business manager, Ray Wright, called Mr. Cole at home and invited him to go out for breakfast that morning.

“I said fine, Ray. Where do you want to go?”

Mr. Wright wanted to go out to Griswold’s, east of Glendora.

“I don’t know whether Ray was trying to get me out of my house and away from Pasadena or not. It looks like he was.

“Anyway, we went out there at 7:30 for breakfast, and the waitress came over and asked if one of us was Mr. Cole. I said yes.

“I went to the phone, and it was my secretary, Pam Neilson Brubaker.”

Mrs. Brubaker said “strange things” were going on back on campus in Pasadena. “There are people at the doors,” Mr. Cole quotes her as telling him at the time. “We’ve been instructed to lock the doors. We don’t know what’s going on.”

Mr. Cole told Mrs. Brubaker, “Pam, I don’t know what’s going on. Is there anybody else there with you at the office now?” She told me that Steve Martin was there.

Steven Martin was coordinator for the part of the country that included Pasadena.

“I said let me speak to Steve. Steve just reiterated what Pam had already said: There were people there from a court trying to take possession of the offices, all of the books and files.”

Mr. Cole asked Mr. Martin, if he could get off campus, to drive to the Coles’ house in Glendora and bring Dr. Hoeh, if he would come.

“I told Ray Wright what was going on, and Ray acted surprised. I’m not saying Ray knew that this was going to happen, I don’t know.”

Back home, Mr. Martin and Dr. Hoeh showed up, along with TITLE Robert Kuhn and TITLE David Antion.

Mr. Cole decided he could not go back on campus until he talked with Mr. Armstrong, so he asked if Dr. Hoeh would accompany him to visit Mr. Armstrong in Tucson.

“David Antion also wanted to go, or maybe I asked him. Along about 10 or 10:30 or so my wife comes in and says telephone call for you. It was Joe Tkach, and he says that he has some information that may be relevant to what’s happening and he wants to talk to me.”

Mr. Cole asked his wife to tell Mr. Tkach he was busy at the moment, but Mr. Tkach insisted on talking with Mr. Cole. Mr. Tkach said he had with him a man he felt it was important that Mr. Cole meet, and that Mr. Cole could learn from that man what was going on back in Pasadena.

“I said, okay, tell Joe Tkach that I will meet him at 11:30 at the Denny’s restaurant right next to the 210 freeway in Glendora for 30 minutes.”

Mr. Cole asked Mr. Martin to accompany him to see Mr. Tkach and the other man.

“Steve,” he said, “I don’t know what this is about, but allegedly some guy’s gonna come out here to tell us something. I want you to be the witness for me at this meeting.”

Mr. Cole and Mr. Martin drove to Denny’s and met Mr. Tkach and a man named Earl Timmons. “Earl Timmons was the man who lived in Altadena [Calif.], attended the A.M. services in the auditorium and had a plumbing business, and he was the gentleman who was the West Coast plaintiff who filed the lawsuit.

John Tuit was the East Coast plaintiff, and I believe the prime mover in doing all of this. But they needed a resident of the state of California, and Earl Timmons was the West Coast plaintiff.

Mr. Cole has been accused of participating in a conspiracy with Mr. Timmons, Mr. Tuit and others to instigate the lawsuit. Mr. Cole remembers that someone named Earl Timmons had tried to call him the previous October or November. He had asked Mr. Martin to return Mr. Timmons’ call. Mr. Cole says that is the only other time he had heard the name Earl Timmons before the day of the takeover by the state.

At Denny’s, present were Mr. Cole, Mr. Tkach, Mr. Timmons and Mr. Martin. Mr. Cole quotes Mr. Timmons as saying:

“Well, you know about the lawsuit and the receiver on campus and that John Tuit and I filed this suit. We are not wanting to destroy or upset the Worldwide Church of God, but we are convinced that Mr. Armstrong has become controlled by unconverted and carnal elements of the church, and we want to see that changed.”

Mr. Cole comments that he did not agree or disagree with Mr. Timmons on the method Mr. Timmons’ was trying to use to effect the change. “That was pretty drastic,” Mr. Cole remembers, “when frankly we were already addressing the problem. Had we had the time, I think we might have solved it. Mr. Armstrong was aware of it and called for help.

“But I was no conspirator.”

Mr. Cole sat in a booth at Denny’s and listened, he says, in shocked silence for a time. “I didn’t say much of anything. I know I didn’t say thank you for calling me out here. I looked at Joe [Tkach], and I said, ‘You’re a good friend of Earl Timmons, right? What did you know about the lawsuit? Did you know a lawsuit was going to be filed?’”

Mr. Tkach was the associate pastor of the A.M. services in the auditorium on campus.

“Joe’s answer to me was, ‘Mr. Timmons and I have stayed very much in communication, and he has kept me pretty well informed.’ He never answered yes or no, but it certainly would lead one to believe.

“So then I said, very distinctly: ‘And, Joe, you work for Herman Hoeh.’ Dr. Hoeh is the pastor of the A.M. services. ‘What does Dr. Hoeh know about this?’ Joe said, ‘I try to keep Dr. Hoeh pretty well informed.’”

Mr. Cole says he doesn’t know who was involved in what conspiracy, “but I know I wasn’t. What they were doing was creating for us a giant problem, whereas we were addressing what was the legitimate problem, if you want to call it legitimate, in the church.”

Mr. Cole drove home from Denny’s and called Mr. Armstrong. “I wanted to go to his house [in Tucson] and explained to him what was going on. Apparently there has been a lawsuit filed, I told him. The court has filed an injunction, and there is a receiver with his staff on campus. They are trying to take control of all the facilities, lock the doors, take possession of the files, so they can conduct a thorough investigation of the college, church, AICF

[Ambassador International Cultural Foundation], the whole thing. I want to come over to see you.”

Mr. Cole says Mr. Armstrong informed him that he had already called Capt. FIRSTNAME Black, pilot of the church’s G-II jet, to instruct him to fly the plane out of the area so it would not be in danger of confiscation. “I’ve already called Capt. Black and the plane is flying out of Van Nuys airport,” Mr. Armstrong said to Mr. Cole. “You be on that airplane with Capt. Black.”

Dr. Hoeh, Mr. Cole and Mr. Antion flew to Tucson on that trip.

In Tucson, Mr. Cole explained to the pastor general that he, Mr. Cole, had not been on the church grounds in Pasadena since he had heard of the crisis. They informed Mr. Armstrong that apparently a receiver appointed by a court was on campus and trying to take control of the operations of the church.

“Mr. Armstrong said, ‘Well, we’ll cooperate with any audit that the State of California wants to conduct on the campus.’”

I quoted to him Paul’s references to the Romans about the principalities and powers and being under subjection, and so on. He had himself told us two or three instances when the IRS had conducted audits, and that we believed that this was the right procedure. Let’s let them conduct their audit and get the audit over with.”

While the small group was in Tucson, Mr. Armstrong said he wanted to write a statement appointing C. Wayne Cole as his assistant to cooperate with the receiver, but he didn’t want to take the usual step of composing a memorandum to that effect. Instead, Mr. Armstrong wrote a press release, instructing Mr. Cole to take the release back to Pasadena, read it to the headquarters staff and release it to a newspaper. The article said Herbert W. Armstrong appointed C. Wayne Cole to be his personal assistant, placing Mr. Cole in charge of cooperation with the receiver for the duration of the audit.

“We, the others who were there, Herman Hoeh, Ray [Wright], Dave Antion, we needed some authority from Mr. Armstrong because we would have to have his authority because we knew there were elements who would not want to cooperate.”

While Mr. Armstrong sat at his typewriter composing the press release, Mr. Cole went for a walk in the Tucson neighborhood where Mr. Armstrong lived.

“I knew I was going to be walking into the fiery furnace, just like the three Hebrew kids. I was going for a walk to do some powerful praying. I was gone probably 20 minutes or so. When I returned, Mr. Armstrong had finished writing his statement.”

The men had flown over to Tucson on the G-II but returned to Pasadena via a commercial flight.

“I went home, and the next morning decided not to go to the campus until we had issued our press release to the paper.”

Mr. Cole decided to set up a temporary headquarters for his operations in the Huntington Hotel in the south part of Pasadena. Burt Mann, a writer for *The Los Angeles Times*, visited Mr. Cole at the hotel, along with Les Stocker, a college and church public-relations man. Mr. Cole gave Mr. Mann the press release.

Mr. Cole called someone on campus and found that the receiver, Judge Weisman, ex-judge of the Superior Court of Los Angeles, was trying to get department heads on campus to attend a meeting he was going to convene in one of the Loma Armstrong complexes.

“But orders had been issued for department heads not to cooperate and not to attend the meeting.”

So Mr. Cole and Mr. Antion drove to the campus and started to walk straight up from the administration building up the hill, and Ellis La Ravia was standing on the west side of the building.

“I saw him, and I said, ‘Ellis, Mr. Armstrong has asked us to cooperate with this. I knew nothing about this. I’m not any happier with it than you are, but we’re not going to accomplish anything by refusing to cooperate. I would appeal to you to call the department heads in your jurisdiction and ask them to cooperate and attend this meeting.’”

Mr. La Ravia’s reaction, according to Mr. Cole, was that he was not about to cooperate with the receiver.

“This is when David Antion said to Ellis, ‘You’re fired.’ But of course David Antion had no authority to fire Ellis La Ravia, and I said to Ellis, ‘No, Ellis, you’re not fired. Just go to your house, Ellis. Just go home. I’m going up to this meeting. I want to hear what Steve Weisman has to say. As soon as the meeting is over, I’ll call you and we’ll talk this thing over.’”

Mr. Cole says that, unless Mr. La Ravia was fired by some other party in an incident he knows nothing about, this is the source of the mistaken notion that Mr. La Ravia was fired.

In the meeting with Judge Weisman and those employees who chose to attend, the judge asked Mr. Cole to speak to the meeting.

According to a transcript of that meeting, Mr. Cole said, “I’ve assured him [Judge Weisman] of our 100 percent and total cooperation in doing our job, and I would like to instruct all of you to further instruct all those that you may be responsible for and anything that you may have heard from any source whatever that is contrary to the cooperative spirit that is prevailing here is to be absolutely and totally ignored.

“I am personally outraged that the situation could even initially have been created. I’m not going to impute any motives, try to judge any attitudes, but it seems to me that this institution that I belong to and that you belong to should always conduct itself in such a way that the deeper the attorney general looks, the better we look.

“And if we don’t conduct ourselves that way, then we should. And that’s our objective, that’s our goal. And if it takes something like this for us to do it, then let’s do it. And get on with the job.”

Mr. Cole announced that the press release had been given to the *Times* and *The Pasadena Star News* and continued: “Let’s go on with our work. Let’s cooperate in the spirit of Christianity that we stand for. That’s what it means to us, that we’re honest, trained, that we are cooperative, peacemaking, that we are of lowly estate, and all the things that are attributes, the characteristics of one who I believe is truly a Christian.”

In Mr. Armstrong’s press release, dated Jan. 3, 1979, and typed in huge letters on the special typewriter he used for coworker and member letters, the pastor general said he was “shocked beyond measure to learn of the raid on our executive offices in Pasadena, this morning, initiated from the State of California Attorney General’s office. I know little of the facts as yet. The Worldwide Church of God and Ambassador College are both upstanding institutions and we are people of integrity.

“If any improprieties have existed in either institution, I want them to be known, and I shall take every effort to cooperate with the Attorney General’s office. We are an institution of 46 years’ standing. We have many departments, and branch offices around the world. We employ many hundreds. I have of necessity had to entrust responsibilities to various officers under me. I am appointing Mr. C. Wayne Cole as Acting Chief Executive officer under me until this crisis has passed. Mr. Cole is Director of Pastoral Administration over our ministry world wide.”

At the bottom of the one-page announcement, Mr. Armstrong signed his name.

After the meeting, Mr. Cole and Judge Weisman had lunch with a lawyer from the district attorney’s office in Los Angeles.

Immediately after lunch Mr. Cole called Mr. Armstrong in Tucson. Mr. Cole noticed an obvious change in Mr. Armstrong’s demeanor.

“It was more than obvious that Mr. Armstrong had already talked to Ellis La Ravia and to Stan Rader, and he’d already backtracked on this whole thing. He was not in a good frame of mind.”

Mr. Cole asked Mr. Armstrong if he had changed his mind and decided to distance himself from his previously chosen course of action. “I didn’t get an answer to that, but he just kind of went on and on about he didn’t know that the receiver was trying to take control and he didn’t know this and that, and Steve Weisman was wanting to talk with him.”

Mr. Cole encouraged Mr. Armstrong to talk directly with Judge Weisman, “but I already knew that he had changed his mind. And of course I knew there were people involved who at all costs wanted to prevent the audit.”

At some point, Mr. Cole remembers Mr. Armstrong advising him that the church members in the area were going to have to be informed about what was going on. Church members did attend a meeting on campus in which ministers, among them Roderick Meredith and Raymond McNair, spoke.

“I went over to that meeting,” he says, “and after Rod and Raymond finished I walked on the stage and wanted to explain a little about what Mr. Armstrong had told me. At that point he had not officially removed me.

“That’s when they begin to blink the lights and turn the sound up to a deafening crescendo, and it was going to be impossible to say anything. Norman Smith came up to me and put his hand on my shoulder and said, ‘We will solve this later.’ I said, ‘Yeah, I guess you’re right.’”

I walked back to my office and found quite a few ministers there, I don’t know who all. I think Don Ward was in that meeting: some area coordinators and other ministers. I told all these guys, ‘It’s been a thrill to be in the ministry.’

“I was half in tears, half incoherent. ‘My days are over. I know that. I’m not stupid. I know that whatever forces there be have convinced Mr. Armstrong there’s not going to be any cooperation in this matter. In the process of trying to help, I’ve just hung myself out.’”

Mr. Cole told those men he was going to leave that office and never expected to walk back onto the campus again. “Indeed that was the last time I was ever there.

“Later, some time later, I don’t know how much later, Stan commented that we know that Wayne Cole was not guilty of any of the things he was charged with, but we had to have a

scapegoat. It was obvious because of his association with Mr. Armstrong that Wayne Cole was the logical one to be the scapegoat.”

Some of the people Mr. Cole believes were cooperative with the suit, notably Joseph W. Tkach, participated energetically in the next few weeks in sit-ins and demonstrations of defiance against the State of California. Some held Sabbath services and sing-alongs in the Hall of Administration, with people sitting on the floor and resolving not to move unless they were carried out by police. Others, including AC students, marched in picket lines. News media around the world covered the story for months.

Rumors abounded about Mr. Cole’s supposed nefarious acts to bring down the Worldwide Church of God. Mr. Cole says he was accused of being a conspirator; of firing Mr. Armstrong; of accepting his role as Mr. Armstrong’s assistant from the judge; of trying to take control of God’s Work; and of trying to set himself up as the head of the church.

Mr. Cole says Mr. Armstrong appointed him as his assistant, but in the meeting with the judge Dr. Hoeh asked Judge Weisman for a clarification: Did Mr. Armstrong have the authority to appoint anyone since the church was in receivership.

The judge said he had thought about that question, that the precedents were unclear, but that it was a moot point because he also wanted Mr. Cole to be the liaison between him and Mr. Armstrong.

Did Mr. Cole try to fire Mr. Armstrong?

“Of all the ministers around Mr. Armstrong, I frankly feel in my own heart that I least wanted control. I never did want control, never wanted authority. I repeatedly told Mr. Armstrong, no, I didn’t want to be his successor. I did tell Mr. Armstrong, however, that I would do everything I could to see that his legacy was carried on, that I would do everything I could to carry on in his footsteps.”

Mr. Cole, emotionally a broken man, moved not long afterwards to Tyler, Texas. Garner Ted Armstrong had incorporated the Church of God International (CGI) after his final ouster from the WCG, in 1979. Mr. Cole went to work for the younger Mr. Armstrong and was employed by the CGI for six months.

The arrangement didn’t work out in the long run, but the Coles saw no reason to leave Tyler. They got into the real-estate business, and, Mr. Cole says, business has been good, and they have enjoyed living in East Texas.

The Coles had not attended church since 1980. “I tried to forget the church in the early 1980s,” Mr. Cole says, “but I couldn’t. I never did really do what I would call breaking the Sabbath, and I just couldn’t bring myself to say it doesn’t matter what you eat. I had grown up in the church; my father had been a member of the Church of God (Seventh Day) beginning in 0000.”

Until Herbert Armstrong’s death, in January 1986, Mr. Cole held out the hope that a reconciliation would come, that the telephone would ring and Mr. Armstrong would call and say, “Wayne, come see me.”

“Maybe I should have picked up the phone and called him,” he says, “but I would have gotten [housekeeper] Rona [Martin] . . . so I never tried it. Maybe that’s a cop-out.”

But sometime in the mid-1980s Mr. Cole became more settled in his resolve to obey God and hold onto what he had been taught.

“It wasn’t that the Sabbath and the Holy Days that kept me so much, and they’re important. But this thing about what man is, who he is, his purpose, the reproduction of the God Family is so absolutely crucial.

“Genesis 1:26 comes before God rested on the seventh day, after all. After He had made his little miniature image of Himself. Now, I need to observe a day of rest, but I’m saying that it is the knowledge of that great destiny. That is the pearl of great price.”

The pearl of great price was the subject of Mr. Cole’s Sept. 16 sermon in Gladewater, the first he had given in a decade and a half.

Mr. Cole gets emotional when he talks about what he perceives to be the heresy the WCG has fallen into and led people into.

“They moved into this realm of the Trinity; they break down what God is and destroy this. I know what the Greek word *gennau* means, that it can mean born again, but to say that rebirth is complete and that we’re born again, past tense, today is just ludicrous when you see it in context, the whole story flow from beginning to end. I could no more accept that than I can fly.”

Just before Mr. Cole’s sermon on the 16th, church pastor Dave Havir delivered the sermonette, about Mr. Armstrong and his legacy. Mr. Havir noted that people tend to either almost deify Mr. Armstrong and denounce him because of perceived problems Mr. Armstrong had. Mr. Havir called for a balanced approach, acknowledging the work God built through Mr. Armstrong but being careful to follow God and not place Mr. Armstrong on a pedestal.

Mr. Cole, reflecting on Mr. Armstrong’s life and his relationship with him said, “I think he was a converted man, I think he was a God-fearing man; I think he truly and honestly looked to God for guidance, for understanding and for answers.

“He was also a man with a great deal of personal weakness in his own life-style, and he knew it. I have come to believe that about half of the time when he was preaching exhortative and corrective sermons he was preaching at himself and not his congregation. He was a man who detested himself in the eyes of God, literally. There was a great conflict going on in him, and he knew that he was not living to the character and image God wanted. Too many times things would come out to indicate that.

“Still, he had this burning passion and desire to preach the gospel, and I sincerely feel he did that. I never, never, ever in my life felt that the man was insincere, that he was hypocritical. I heard one man, a former minister, say, ‘If I saw Mr. Armstrong in a restaurant, I would want to walk over and double up my fist and slug him as hard as I could slug him.’

“Neither do I feel that it was the Spirit-led mind of Mr. Armstrong that put me on the outside. I don’t think Mr. Armstrong, in full control of his faculties, would have done that. He had said that very day there would be no disfellowshippings. The next thing Stan walks on stage and said I’m disfellowshipped.”

The Coles have a daughter, Patricia, of Portland, Ore., married to UCG minister Howard Davis. They have two sons: Randy, 40, who has worked for *The Plain Truth* since 1972, and Richard, 30, who lives in Orange County, Calif.

Mr. Cole says he’s ecstatic about being back in the ministry and back attending with God’s people. He sums up the experiences he has had:

“I believe with all my heart: Boy, don’t second-guess God. He knows what He’s doing.”

Words: 7,900