

addendum to the piece, titled “What’s My Angle?” Lombardi said he was motivated by “revenge of sorts” for having been kicked out of paradise, his first, golden job working with Harithas at the Contemporary Art Museum of Houston.

Though neither Mark nor Harithas would ever discuss his fall from grace, in this note he identifies his antagonist as George H. W. Bush and cronies. “In the late 1970s I was working as an organizer of art exhibitions in the Houston area. First International Bank, George Bush’s bank, barged into the scene at about this time, effectively vetoing my participation in a large number of projects.”<sup>4</sup>

No one in the Houston art world can or will explain his statement—because, as Sissy Farenthold remarks, insiders do not criticize insiders. The answer may lie in the interlocked relationships of one very wealthy donor, Marilyn Lubetkin, a “big-time progressive” who presided over the CAMH board at the time of his dismissal. Lubetkin, according to Mark’s ex-wife Day, was instrumental in getting rid of both Mark and his mentor, Jim Harithas. Sources in Houston’s art circles say Lubetkin was forced to fire both Lombardi and Harithas by pressure from the board of trustees following their melee at the famous bread-and-Rangerettes jamboree. She could not be reached for comment on a book about Mark Lombardi. Today, in the way things often go down in Texas, Lubetkin works hand in glove with Harithas on both his Art Car and Station Museums.

PROGRESSIVE IS AS progressive does in Houston. A close look at the CAMH board in the 1970s reveals a surprisingly deep and tenacious interlock with George H. W. Bush and First International in the person of another Sissy, Mrs. I. H. “Denny” Kempner III, who is still chairman of the museum’s board today.<sup>5</sup> Kempner’s husband, heir to the Imperial Sugar fortune that built an entire suburb of Houston known as Sugarland, was a director of Capital National Bank of Houston, founded by Lovett Baker, first cousin to Bush Secretary of State James A. Baker III; their relationship was close enough for James Baker to serve as Lovett’s pallbearer in 2010. Kempner’s fellow director at Capital was Bill Barziza, a descendant of the bearer of one of the strangest names in United States political history, Decimus et Ultimus Barziza.

Barziza the Elder was an Italian-American Confederate war hero who escaped to Canada, where he was one of the first to use a network set up by rebel agents and Canadians to smuggle Confederates back to the States. (The rebel agents were covertly supported by a British government that could not allow that nation’s booming textile trade to be cut off from access to King Cotton; the great

Gladstone himself supported the Confederacy.<sup>6)</sup> When Barziza resettled in Houston, he brought Canadian and British banking contacts with him, eager to re-colonize the booming frontier commodities trade, a pattern that would repeat itself with George H. W. Bush and his entry into Big Oil country in the 1950s backed by Scottish and British energy interests. Barziza founded the state's first trust company, Houston Land and Trust, to market and register securities relating to the cotton and lumber trades as well as hold their mortgages and financial instruments in trust. Houston Land and Trust later merged into what became George H. W. Bush's après-CIA bank posting, First International. Mark Lombardi was well aware of the connection, for he kept a copy of Houston Land and Trust's title-change document in his files.

According to Joseph Trento, "The ties between [former head of Saudi intelligence and principal of BCCI Kamal] Adham, Bush, and Shackley went directly to Bush's connection with Dallas-based First International, the single largest holding company in Texas."<sup>7</sup> First International was George H. W. Bush's first stop after Carter asked him to resign as director of the CIA. Twenty-six senior officers of the Directorate of Operations went with him when he set up shop at the Houston branch. Abbreviated as FIB, First International spanned the worlds of intelligence and oil finance. Russ Baker calls it George H. W. Bush's "government-in-exile." Bush Sr. never could remember just exactly what it was he did there when put to the question by journalists and members of Congress, but Jim Bath's former business partner Bill White said his job was to bring in Saudi business to the bank.<sup>8</sup> One of the responsibilities he was most inclined to forget was his appointment in February 1977 as chairman of the board of FIB's London merchant banking branch through which, according to the Senate BCCI investigation, Kamal Adham's petrodollars and BCCI money funded a number of Shackley's off-the-books intelligence operations for the next decade.

First International was intimately connected with the Bass, Murchison, and Hunt oil dynasties as well as Joe Allbritton's spook-riddled Riggs Bank, which held the account for the Saudi embassy in Washington. Prudent banking, however, was not high on First International's agenda: In 1983, it announced a quarterly loss of \$249 million dollars, at that time the biggest in American banking history. After the \$3.5 billion federal bailout that resulted from the bank's ill-advised attempt to ingest its competition and become the biggest commercial bank in Texas, a tiny hatchling, Main Bank—where Jim Bath, Khalid bin Mahfouz, and another principal BCCI investor, Saudi billionaire Ghaith Pharaon, were principal investors along with John Connally—carried out

its other agenda: publicly creating a joint banking venture between Saudis and Texans and, coincidentally, marrying Saudi geopolitics with US covert operations funding.<sup>9</sup>

Mark Lombardi created a walking map for Sissy Farenthold's investigative collective, graphically illustrating the close and informal nature of these connections, which were predictably light in documentation. It conjures up an amusing but scary picture of Lombardi in his HotShot delivery truck spying on the spies, who could not have been unaware of his scrutiny. No. 1020 Holcombe, where Jim Bath, Bill White, and Salem bin Laden all had their offices along with one of their lenders, Fannin/Interfirst Bank, was steps away from 1801 Main, where George H. W. Bush and his 26 ex-spooks had offices at First International Bank, as well as Spectrum-7, the troubled company that merged with W.'s Harken in 1986. No. 1200 Main, headquarters of Main Bank, where Jim Bath, Khalid bin Mahfouz, Saudi billionaire Ghaith Pharaon, and Nixon's former treasury secretary, John Connally, were all principal investors, was another stroll away from 1004 Main, where Bath's real-estate business partner Lan Bentsen was to be found. Another short walk to the east would bring the corruption tourist to a stretch of Louisiana Street where Interfirst, BCCI, George H. W. Bush's oil company Zapata, and Baker Botts, the powerhouse law firm that represented the Saudis and where George H. W. Bush's secretary of state and Reagan's treasury secretary, James Baker, and George W. Bush both worked (one as partner, the other in the mailroom), had their offices and where Lombardi observed their denizens in their natural habitats.

The Kempner/Bush interlock is in many ways a snapshot of the deep alliances forged by George H. W. Bush when, fresh from his post-Yale apprenticeship at Dresser Industries (an oil-services provider known to function as cover for the CIA as well as innovative tax strategies regarding the "repatriation" of offshore earnings), he supposedly rejected the easy path to Wall Street and pointed his red Studebaker toward the West Texas oilfields and the launch of Zapata Petroleum. In point of fact, the well-connected young Bush functioned as a crucial link between the Eastern (banking) establishment, the Eisenhower administration and its military build-up, and the new oil money of West Texas.

Capital National Bank, formed in Houston in 1965, joined forces with the Swiss Paravicini Bank in 1969 to form a new Swiss entity, the Bank for Investment and Credit, Berne (BICB). Johann Frederich "Fred" Paravicini, scion of Venetian banking aristocrats with strong ties to Britain, headed the bank with

vice chairman L. F. McCollum, chairman of Capital National. Its investors included the Canadian-based Bronfmans of Seagrams Liquor—whose US interests were fronted by another Bush-friendly entity, Empire Trust—and Brown and Root, acquired by Halliburton in 1962. The Bronfmans were to figure prominently in one of Mark Lombardi's drawings, *Gerry Bull, Space Research Corporation, and Armscor of Pretoria*, about the connections of the inventor assassinated while building the Babylon supergun for Saddam Hussein. The Bronfmans purchased the land in Vermont where Bull originally tested his long-range weapons. One of Capital's directors was George H. W. Bush's close friend and trustee of his blind trust, William Stamps Farish III, the only grandson of the founder of Humble Oil, which begat Exxon. The Kempners and the Farishes, in the grand tradition of Texan interlocking directorates, intermarried. They sat on each other's boards, fraternized in each other's clubs, and didn't care so much about political denomination as they did about getting—and staying—rich.

The clannish, secretive, inbred world of what has been called the “Texas Raj” was a good match for the world of “Our Crowd,” the great German-Jewish banking families of New York. In the 1950s, they made a marriage of convenience that became the template for more strange bedfellows to come. Empire Trust, a “New York-based bastion of power and wealth,”<sup>10</sup> known today as the “banker's bank,” the Bank of New York, became in many ways the financial arm of the Texas oil industry's state within a state. A number of Kempners invested with Empire Trust, and a Kempner was nephew to its chief, John Langeloth Loeb Sr., who with uncanny timing managed to complete the sale of his other company's major holdings in Cuba the day before Fidel Castro came to power. That other company, Loeb Rhoades, became Shearson Loeb Rhoades in 1979, and then, in 1981, Shearson/American Express, which acquired Lehman Brothers. Among his other honorifics, Loeb Sr., who died in 1996, was a trustee of the Museum of Modern Art, a pillar of the Harvard endowment, and Edgar Bronfman Jr.'s grandfather. Loeb's wife, Frances Lehman, was a direct descendant of one of the three original founders of the ill-fated eponymous investment company.

It is, as people in the art world have remarked, a great shame that Mark Lombardi wasn't alive in 2008 to draw the supernova of Lehman Brothers. In an eerie footnote, Jeb Bush would be involved in attempts to rescue Lehman Brothers in 2008 at the same time that his cousin, George Walker IV, was involved in its downfall. Walker IV would surface after the fall as chairman of

the venerable “partner-owned” Neuberger Berman, one of the last bastions of independent wealth management left in the country, which was sold out of the Lehman bankruptcy at a bargain-basement price.

In the 1930s, Lehman helped finance the rapid growth of the oil industry, including that of Halliburton. Loeb’s son, John Langeloth Jr., sat on the board of Holly Sugar, a subsidiary of the Kempner family’s Imperial Sugar (he is also, curiously, a commander of the British Empire for services to the Winston Churchill Foundation). Empire Trust’s legal affairs in Texas were handled by Baker Botts, the powerhouse law-firm and political fixer founded by James Baker’s family. Charles Leslie Rice, president and chief executive officer of Texas-based Gulf States Land and Industries and a Princeton protégé of Empire chairman Dean Mathey who later became chairman of the Bank of New York, served on its board along with Lewis McNaughton, a director of Prescott Bush’s corporate fiefdom Dresser Industries, also later acquired by Halliburton.

Equipped with what historian Stephen Birmingham in *Our Crowd: The Great Jewish Families of New York* called “something very like a private CIA,”<sup>11</sup> Empire financed a Cuban oil venture known as the Cuban Oil Voting Trust and Trans-Cuba Oil Company, for which Rice served as a voting trustee, to “assure continuity of management and stability of policy for shareholders of twenty-four oil companies in South America.”<sup>12</sup> In the years to come, this extra-governmental alliance would assure discontinuity in management and instability for everyone but their shareholders. According to Russ Baker, the oil-generated elites of Dallas and Houston would become the leading funders of off-the-books covert operations in Latin America, beginning with plotting overthrows of Latin American and Caribbean leaders in the 1950s and continuing, under George H. W. Bush’s aegis, with Iran/Contra in the 1980s.<sup>13</sup> As such, they were integral to the functioning of BCCI.

In fact, the bizarre thing about the Kempner/Bush interlock is that it leads straight back to 12-year-old Mark Lombardi’s original fascination, the death of his young President Kennedy as well as to the shadowy outlines of Gladio. In 1949, New York Senator Herbert Lehman (of the Lehman-Loeb clan) created the “Crusade for Freedom” with Gen. Lucius Clay, which, through Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, became a conduit for laundered money to be sent to “freedom fighters” in Eastern Europe. As Baker says, “This was a forebear of later CIA money-laundering operations, including Iran-contra, in which Poppy [George H. W.] Bush played a hidden but significant role. . . . Members of the Texas Crusade for Freedom would become a who’s who of Texans connected to

the events surrounding the assassination of John F. Kennedy.”<sup>14</sup> Baker draws an even closer connection between JFK’s assassination and the “silent coup” that removed Richard Nixon from office: Both presidents fought to eliminate the oil depletion allowance, a large and automatic tax deduction to compensate for dwindling assets in the ground, and a birthright in the hearts and minds of Texas oilmen.<sup>15</sup>

IF, AS EZRA Pound remarked, beauty lies in seeing all of the connections, it was a nuclear option in the hands of an artist struggling—amid the fumes of alcohol, pot, raw egotism, and frustrated aggression—to find himself. Forbidden knowledge of the clandestine alliances between master class and underworld gave him a giddy rush of power, a weapon against the fraternity that had disadvantaged him, and, at least in the beginning, the sense that he was invulnerable. It was Mark Lombardi’s peculiar gift to find his artistic voice in what was intended to remain silent.

In his last years, he would become known for his inability to shut up, for a peculiarly obsessive machine-gun narration of his drawings that prompted one fellow artist to remark, “Maybe he couldn’t stop talking about these connections because he didn’t have any real emotional ones. He became his work.”<sup>16</sup> Perhaps there was something more at stake than the struggle of an artist to find a unique brand of expression. His voice was his connection to the world: Without it, he was to tell an interviewer some years later, “I felt like some kind of schizophrenic.”<sup>17</sup> That may be the common fate of most people without voices, but it is funny, and sad, and more than a little chilling, to hear Lombardi describe his big breakthrough as “all about me”: “The painting and writing had little relationship to one another, and I felt that something was lacking from both. I kept thinking I needed something, some type of medium or vehicle of my own devising, that would unite the two, and now, with this schematic form, I had it. . . . It was all about me, incorporated everything I wanted to say in a manner I felt totally confident about.”<sup>18</sup>

He was too drunk on his own creation—on distilling a 12-year-old’s raw flailing at injustice into what Texas master painter Richard Stout would later call “coldly elegant arrangements . . . underscoring the evil he exposed”—to worry that the people from whose misdeeds he created his artistic process might find their silent ways to turn his anger back on him.<sup>19</sup> It was too delicious to revenge himself on the Bushes and their pretensions to culture by putting their business