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DISPATCH OCTOBER 20, 2008

"I had to be honest and put myself to the same test as the candidates. Here are the facts..."

by **Stuart Stevens**

My Secret Life As A Muslim

It came to me suddenly and, frankly, quite disturbingly. But the truth couldn't be denied any longer—I may have been a Muslim and just didn't realize it.

This epiphany—to use a word from my alternative Christian identity—came to me after reading many of the emails floating around regarding the Presidential race. I had to be honest and put myself to the same test as the candidates. Here are the facts, shameful as they are:

* It was not until the fifth grade in Jackson, Mississippi, that I entered a Christian school (an Episcopal elementary school.) Prior to that, I attended schools with *no religious affiliation*. And we all know what that means. As a Muslim, I would have had no conflict attending these non-denominational schools.

* Some of my best friends growing up in Mississippi were of Lebanese origin. There are pictures that exist today of me together with Lebanese Americans wearing uniforms of a distinct military design. There are some who maintain that these were Boy Scout uniforms, but that could very well have been a clever ruse. We even went on survival training missions together as members of the suspect Boy Scout Order of the Arrow. We were well trained in the use of firearms. Many metal bunnies died at the Mississippi State Fair.

* In junior high school—a non-Christian public school, I must confess—we played against a team who were called the Crusaders and I tried very hard to inflict physical and psychological damage on the Crusaders. We cursed the Crusaders and questioned the honor of their mothers.

* From my formative years as a grad student at Oxford, where there were many Muslims, there exist photographs of me attending a lecture entitled, "The History of Islam." I was spotted many times riding my motorcycle in the vicinity of the Mosque on Bath Road. That I was visiting a girlfriend who lived nearby may only have been a clever deep cover deception. As proof of my success as a Muslim organizer, there are now four Mosques in Oxford, where there was only one when I was a student.

* Upon deep reflection, I admit that I am unable to give my exact whereabouts on April 15, 1991. That is the day, as we all know, that the largest Mosque in New York City was opened. It is located on East 96th Street and *I had an apartment just three blocks away on East 93rd Street.*

* When asked, I would be forced to admit that I am aware that some guy named Mohammad founded the Muslim religion.

* In a devastating admission, even knowing the above, I attended fights and cheered for *Mohammad* Ali on more than one occasion. I did so even when he was fighting known Christians like Smokin' Joe Frazier. I confess to yelling, "Kill 'em!" in the 11th round of the second Ali-Frazier fight at Madison Square Garden.

* I like pita bread.

All of this is terribly difficult to come to terms with, but facts are stubborn things, as I read somewhere, maybe in the Koran. In this moment of national crisis, this is not the time for self-deception.

I can only ask forgiveness and understanding. To atone, I promise to argue that Ali only won the "Thrilla in Manila" because there are so many Muslims in the Philippines and clearly the whole thing was rigged. I will also cheer for the Crusaders in their next game, whomever they are playing.

Thank you for your understanding. Let the healing commence.

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