

1 do some detective work and look at the different  
2 inconsistencies and questionable activities that had  
3 occurred to date, and so I generally visited banks to  
4 see what was going on.

5 So I randomly went to Chase Bank, presented our  
6 federal tax ID number and asked, "Do you have any  
7 accounts opened under this federal tax ID number?" And  
8 I was told there was an account. So that's how I  
9 discovered the account.

10 So that was in Palo Alto, California. They  
11 actually recognized there was some foul play here if I  
12 didn't know about this situation. Here I was the  
13 director and CEO. So they sent me to the Redwood City  
14 branch for Chase, and at that branch I presented the  
15 information which established my credentials with the  
16 corporation, showing our statement of information and so  
17 forth.

18 So the branch manager said that what they had  
19 done constituted an act of identity theft and contract  
20 fraud. They had presented themselves as being directors  
21 and officers of the corporation, when in actuality they  
22 were not, and began to initiate financial transactions  
23 on that basis.

24 They froze the account. The branch manager and  
25 Chase decided on their own to freeze the account and

1 initiate an investigation pursuant to a charge of  
2 identity theft, and they encouraged me strongly to file  
3 a report with the police department.

4 And so I did that, expressed concerns to the  
5 Menlo Park Police Department after that.

6 Q. Okay. And how did it transpire from there?  
7 How did the situation transpire? Where or what was the  
8 reaction from Mr. Brede and Showers in relationship to  
9 you discovering the bank account and going down freezing  
10 the account? What was their reaction?

11 A. Well, I knew that they would become aware what  
12 was taking place when Chase decided to freeze that  
13 particular account.

14 I also went to Wells Fargo where our  
15 corporation did have established checking and savings  
16 accounts to review the activity there, and generally  
17 upon a meeting of the actual board of directors made a  
18 decision to remove them from the accounts at Wells Fargo  
19 and to designate myself as a signer for those accounts,  
20 primarily with a view towards viewing the activity,  
21 seeing what was taking place, getting things in order.

22 So as that was taking place -- again, this was  
23 all in April 2011, around the second week of April, as  
24 all of this was taking place.

25 I took the initiative to communicate with

1 Ernest Brede. I sent him an email -- I believe it was  
2 on April 15th, 2011, a Friday, that I did that, telling  
3 him what was going on, telling him that I discovered the  
4 account with Chase, and that I was in the process of  
5 transferring authority for the accounts with Wells  
6 Fargo.

7           And so his response was, "Well, you and the  
8 other individuals were removed as elders," which is to  
9 say the previous body of elders serving in the Menlo  
10 Park congregation had been removed from those positions  
11 of spiritual oversight, and so he used that action as a  
12 basis to assert that we had automatically been removed  
13 from our legal positions as directors and officers of  
14 the corporation, which is incorrect.

15           In fact, he asserted that we had been removed  
16 from our legally held positions in the corporation  
17 directly by the governing body of Jehovah's Witnesses,  
18 which is not true and doesn't really make sense from a  
19 legal standpoint, because the governing body of  
20 Jehovah's Witnesses exercises no authority for the State  
21 of California.

22           And so in the State of California, members of  
23 the board of directors or the officers are to be removed  
24 at any time and for any reason by the members. And so  
25 the governing body of Jehovah's Witnesses are many

1 things and have many points of responsibility that we  
2 fully respect, but from a legal standpoint, they are not  
3 members of the Menlo Park Corporation, they don't attend  
4 the activities there. They're not members. They're  
5 not -- they don't reside there. They're in New York,  
6 we're in California.

7 So, no, the governing body of Jehovah's  
8 Witnesses had not removed us from our positions of --  
9 within the corporation, and they would be the first to  
10 say that.

11 But yet that was what he was endeavoring to say  
12 or assert in order to legitimize their actions. So kind  
13 of a blending of a point of religious conviction and  
14 aspects of corporate law, sort of creating this amalgam  
15 of a view to justify what they were doing, when in  
16 actuality they were conflicting in a sense both sets of  
17 parameters.

18 Q. Now what did Mr. Brede do from that point?

19 A. Well, he sent me his response, and after that  
20 exchange by email, which is on Friday, April 15th, the  
21 following Monday -- yeah. I'm looking at my calendar  
22 here. Friday, April 15th, 2011.

23 The following Monday, April 18th, 2011, Ernest  
24 Brede and Luis Contreras file a new or record a new deed  
25 for the property at 811 Bay Road, and they essentially



1 put the property in the name of the corporation in a  
2 sense. They had a meeting, called another special  
3 meeting, which they had no legal basis for, on December  
4 30th, 2010, and at that special meeting of the  
5 corporation, they proposed changing of the corporate  
6 name.

7 And so it no longer was the Menlo Park  
8 Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, Incorporated, but  
9 it became English Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses,  
10 Menlo Park, California, Incorporated. So it was a  
11 variation.

12 So they recorded that name on the deed, and  
13 then they put their own names on the deed as president  
14 and CEO. So now it says president Ernest Brede, CEO --  
15 no, I'm sorry. CEO/president Ernest Brede and secretary  
16 Luis Contreras.

17 So upon conferring with a lawyer -- and he  
18 viewed that as an action that was fraudulent. Number  
19 one, that they were not the board of directors. They  
20 did not constitute the board of directors for the actual  
21 Menlo Park Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses,  
22 Incorporated. They were not actually officers of that  
23 corporation.

24 So they had no basis to call a special meeting  
25 of the shareholders, much less to initiate discussions

1 of changing the name of the corporation and then going  
2 out executing the transference of the deed.

3 Q. Now when Mr. Brede gave you the response  
4 about -- after you contacted him, did he respond over  
5 the telephone, or did he send you an email, or what  
6 was --

7 A. Well, his response was April 15th, and there  
8 weren't any further communications that I received from  
9 him. I think there were times thereafter that I sent  
10 him follow-up communications, maybe on one or two  
11 occasions, but he didn't reply to that via email.

12 There were instances when I endeavored -- I  
13 told him I wanted to talk to him to try to address  
14 matters, and he was reluctant to do that and generally  
15 kind of began to just stay away from me and avoiding me.  
16 And I felt it was necessary for us to talk to try and  
17 address the matter directly and hopefully quickly so  
18 that things could be resolved; he could express himself,  
19 what he thought he was doing.

20 My main concern at that point wasn't winning an  
21 argument. My main concern was making sure that the  
22 funds were being handled properly and that the members  
23 of the corporation were being treated fairly and  
24 lawfully.

25 And I had a concern pursuant to a false

1 financial report that Ernest Brede reportedly gave  
2 during November 2010. He was on stage during a meeting  
3 at 811 Bay Road and advised the members that the funds  
4 on hand was \$3,500, funds on hand for the building  
5 project or the remodeling project for the facility was  
6 \$3,500.

7 And that caused a stir amongst the members,  
8 especially the long-time members who had been there for  
9 years and years, decades, because they all knew, based  
10 on the previous financial reports that had been given,  
11 you know, that we had much more than \$3,500 set aside  
12 for the building fund. That figure has been anywhere  
13 from ten to twenty thousand dollars, in that range, over  
14 the years, but nowhere near \$3,500.

15 So after that meeting was over and after Ernest  
16 Brede left the stage, he was approached by a couple of  
17 different people, one of them being Bill Douglas, and  
18 Brede was asked the question, "What happened to the  
19 money? We should have much more than that."

20 And he said, "Well, I don't know anything about  
21 that. You need to talk to those other individuals," and  
22 he was referring to the previous body of elders, and  
23 myself, Arlen St. Clair, George Stock and Jonathan Cobb.  
24 So he was inferring that there's money missing and that  
25 the previous group of individuals as named were somehow

1 responsible for that.

2           So that just didn't sound right to anybody, and  
3 at that point Bill Douglas was very upset about it. He  
4 came to my home inquiring as to what had taken place.  
5 And, again, this was in November 2010. He said, "What  
6 happened? This is what Ernest Brede is saying. Did you  
7 guys take the money? What's going on?"

8           And I just told him, "No, no one's taken any  
9 money. We should definitely have more than \$3,500."

10           So I did some checking and came up with a past  
11 statement that was for March 2010, and that statement,  
12 which was with the Wells Fargo account, the operating  
13 fund, the original one, that statement showed a balance  
14 of just under \$20,000. So that was March 2010, \$20,000.  
15 And November of 2010 Ernest Brede is saying we just have  
16 \$3,500. So something wasn't right obviously.

17           So I gave a copy of that statement to Bill  
18 Douglas who went back to Ernest Brede and confronted him  
19 with it. And one point that was interesting that Bill  
20 Douglas made is, when he tried to initiate discussion of  
21 this particular bank account, Ernest Brede said, "What  
22 bank account? I don't know of any other bank account."

23           However, when Bill Douglas showed Ernest Brede  
24 the bank statement that I had given him, then I  
25 understand, you know, per Bill Douglas' accounting of



1 things, that Ernest Brede said, "Oh, that account."

2 And so there never really was a clear answer  
3 from Ernest Brede, from Glen Watson who had been an  
4 authorized signer on the account from years past. You  
5 know, he did the same thing when Bill Douglas approached  
6 him and tried to -- you know, "What's the status of the  
7 money in the account?"

8 "What account," was his response, which made no  
9 sense, because Glen was aware of those accounts and had  
10 his name on them for a long time. So he knew about  
11 them.

12 So anyway that created a mystery. What  
13 happened to the money? Where's the money? And it never  
14 was getting answered. So it was obvious to me that  
15 something wasn't right.

16 Q. Let me ask you. As far as you know, did  
17 Mr. Brede contact the GB or Patterson to get some  
18 directives on handling this situation with the bank  
19 accounts or the complaint that was filed?

20 Did they contact you in any way in relation to  
21 the action that you took with the bank accounts, or was  
22 there any indication that he had direction from the  
23 governing body or the Christian Congregation of  
24 Jehovah's Witnesses at Patterson?

25 A. Good question. I have two basic responses to

1 that question. Number one, there's no question that  
2 Ernest Brede had some direction or at least he presented  
3 documentation with the -- embossed with the logo and --  
4 of the Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses,  
5 Incorporated, in Patterson, New York. So he would  
6 present letters, and that established his appointment to  
7 religious positions in the congregation.

8 I have no basis to validate the authenticity of  
9 such, but he had letters to -- that substantiated him  
10 attending Menlo Park congregation, and everyone else,  
11 too, everyone who had been a part of the South Redwood  
12 City congregation, which was in decline.

13 They used to have memberships as high as -- you  
14 know, in the hundreds years ago, but in recent years,  
15 they were below 50 and by counts of some individuals  
16 that had been a part of that congregation before they  
17 came to Menlo Park they were down to, you know, 20  
18 people being in attendance at the meetings. So  
19 essentially they were dissolved as they were in decline.

20 So they were encouraged to begin associating  
21 with the Menlo Park congregation, with our congregation,  
22 to begin attending. And so there were written  
23 statements to that effect that Ernest Brede had in his  
24 possession and presented.

25 However, was he directed by the governing body

1 to assume a position of authority in the corporation? I  
2 don't think so. Based on the previous points we already  
3 talked about, governing body sets the foremost example  
4 of being compliant with law and being compliant with  
5 Bible principles, which certainly established the need  
6 to be honest and forthright in one's dealings and so  
7 forth.

8           So Ernest Brede would often say rather  
9 liberally, as did the other individuals, Don Showers,  
10 Luis Contreras, you know, Aaron Lucas and so forth --  
11 they all would very liberally say, "The governing body  
12 this," "the faithful slave," which is an expression  
13 which comes from the scriptures that pertains to a group  
14 of anointed ones within the beliefs of Jehovah's  
15 Witnesses that are collectively represented by a smaller  
16 group called the governing body.

17           So in making different statements, they would  
18 say, the slave has told us this, the slave has told us  
19 that, the governing body has provided this direction,  
20 the governing body has provided that direction. And you  
21 couldn't help but wonder about the reality of those  
22 statements in view of what they were doing and in view  
23 of their standing.

24           There are some individuals who have a much  
25 higher station in Jehovah's earthly organization that

1 haven't met the governing body; circuit overseers,  
2 district overseers, traveling overseers or traveling  
3 managers, if you will, that have never spoken to anyone  
4 from the governing body.

5 So to say that you're a local individual in one  
6 congregation in California, and the governing body is  
7 telling you this and telling you that is -- comes across  
8 as a bit of a stretch.

9 Obviously there can be a statement as far as  
10 receiving direction from our spiritual journals, the  
11 Watchtower and the Awake and the scriptures and things  
12 of that nature, and that's just general Bible-based  
13 directives for everyone.

14 But in terms of being directed to take a  
15 certain action toward the bank, whether it be Chase or  
16 Wells Fargo, being directed to give a false financial  
17 report to the congregation that appeared to have the  
18 intent and tendency to induce further or accelerated  
19 contributions, I don't feel that he was told to do that  
20 by the governing body.

21 I don't feel that he was told to perform those  
22 actions by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of  
23 Pennsylvania or the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society  
24 of New York or the Christian Congregation of Jehovah's  
25 Witnesses, Incorporated, in Patterson. I don't feel



1 that those entities directed the questionable actions of  
2 Ernest Brede and Paul Koehler and these others that  
3 appeared to be unified in a particular scheme or effort  
4 that does not appear to be upright or lawful.

5 Q. Okay. Thank you for that answer.

6 So then based on what you have said, the  
7 governing body would not be giving instructions to  
8 anyone that would be contrary to law?

9 A. No, not -- that would never happen. It has  
10 never happened, and it never will happen.

11 Q. Thank you.

12 Now looking at it, another point I wanted to  
13 cover, when Mr. Brede made reference to the governing  
14 body as being the entity that removed you as an elder  
15 and also as an officer and director of the corporation,  
16 is that written anywhere?

17 A. Not that I have seen. That is not written in  
18 anything that I have read from a standpoint of  
19 organizational policy, nor was that a statement that was  
20 made in any of the communications that were received  
21 prior to our removal from positions of spiritual  
22 oversight. All the communications dealt with the  
23 spiritual aspect of things.

24 There was not one communication that addressed  
25 any resulting circumstance or directive or requirement

1 for the corporation, for the Menlo Park Corporation.

2 Q. All right. Now did Mr. Brede put this in  
3 writing himself?

4 A. No. I don't feel that I ever saw anything in  
5 writing from him. Basically he wrote the email, yeah,  
6 and I think that's a good question. I think it's a good  
7 point. He put it in writing in the email as an  
8 expression of his thought and his view.

9 And it really came across as him appealing to  
10 authority, which is a fallacy, you know, within the  
11 study of logic and reason. He wanted to draw upon the  
12 influence of the name "governing body" or "faithful  
13 slave" in view of the respect that that would invoke  
14 within our religion and organization.

15 But, again, it was his assertion and really his  
16 interpretation of what had taken place, and this is  
17 where you can see the disconnect. Because if the  
18 governing body -- why would they provide a directive to  
19 remove individuals illegally from a corporation when  
20 they themselves obey the law.

21 When they withdrew from the corporations, the  
22 Watchtower corporations in 2000, they fulfilled each  
23 corporate formality to the letter of the law to complete  
24 their resignation from those corporations. They  
25 respected the law. So I think that's a very profound

1 statement that establishes their point of view and how  
2 it's backed up by their actions.

3 So what Ernest Brede was doing, more so under  
4 the direction of Paul Koehler in concert with Don  
5 Showers and Aaron Lucas and so forth, it really comes  
6 across to me as a singular, isolated effort. They had a  
7 certain idea, they had a certain agenda, they had a  
8 certain goal relative to the acquisition of that  
9 property, 811 Bay Road, which was legally owned by the  
10 corporation, and it was a property that they wanted to  
11 use in a certain way.

12 They had a certain idea of how they wanted it  
13 to be used, and when that idea was not embraced by the  
14 previous body of elders, then they effected a plan to  
15 get them out of the way, to get us out of the way, so  
16 that they could put people in place who would do what  
17 they wanted toward the end of furthering their plans.  
18 And that was one part of it, getting the property was  
19 one part of it.

20 Clearly there was an objective to get bank  
21 accounts that were specific to religious nonprofit  
22 corporations, because said accounts typically are not  
23 scrutinized. And so in talking to the police, they have  
24 stated -- and members of the FBI, they have stated,  
25 oftentimes bank accounts that relate to a church or some

1 religious entity or corporation can be a festering  
2 ground for criminal activity, money laundering, tax  
3 evasion, misappropriation of funds, conversion, things  
4 of that nature.

5 So that's why there's a legitimate basis of  
6 concern here in view of their actions to date, in view  
7 of some very serious allegations.

8 Q. Since you mentioned the police department,  
9 isn't it true that they filed a complaint or a case  
10 against you with the Menlo Park Police Department?

11 A. That is true. I went to the Menlo Park Police  
12 Department April 2011, maybe the first week of April,  
13 maybe the second week, somewhere around there. And so I  
14 opened a case for identity theft, and I opened a case  
15 citing my concerns of a false financial report, which is  
16 a violation of corporate law.

17 The statute would be 6812. If a person gives a  
18 false financial report to shareholders that it has a  
19 tendency to induce or is intended to induce  
20 contributions, it says in the statute 6812 it is a  
21 crime.

22 So that's what he did in November, you know,  
23 and there clearly was an intent to generate further  
24 contributions, because now there's a real need to  
25 contribute, because, instead of having \$20,000, we have



1 \$3,500.

2 Q. According to --

3 A. According to what he said, exactly. So would  
4 that induce contributions? Absolutely, and it did.

5 So, yeah, I went to the police to file a range  
6 of concerns; false information to banks, you know, all  
7 sorts of liberties. And then after I did that, then  
8 Ernest Brede and Don Showers also went to the Menlo Park  
9 Police Department and filed a report claiming that I had  
10 misappropriated funds.

11 And when I was able to provide copies of the  
12 more recent bank records for the Menlo Park police  
13 concerning the relevant accounts that I had access to,  
14 it disproved their assertion. So when they were  
15 presented with the evidence I had provided, which  
16 covered parts of 2011 and 2010, then they changed their  
17 story and said, "Well, we think that Jason Cobb did  
18 something in 2009 or 2008. We're not really sure. We  
19 just feel like he did something."

20 And I had a conversation with Burt Bruttig of  
21 the Menlo Park Police Department, and I believe the  
22 spelling is B-R-U-T-T-I-G, to my best recollection. He  
23 was the actual officer who fielded the report from  
24 Ernest Brede and Don Showers, and he was very unclear as  
25 to exactly what they were asserting.

1           He said they felt that you did something  
2 relative to the bank accounts, and that you had  
3 misappropriated funds or embezzled money or basically  
4 had stolen money.

5           So at that point, that case sort of got rolled  
6 into the case I had opened. My case number was 11-973,  
7 and it was being handled by Officer Jeff Keegan under  
8 the oversight of William A. Dixon, a sergeant. And this  
9 also after I had initially spoken with Commander Romero  
10 who -- I described what my concerns were, and he said,  
11 "Jeff Keegan is our white color crime fraud specialist.  
12 He would be happy to work with you." That's how I got  
13 in contact with Jeff.

14           Q. Did it seem reasonable to you that Mr. Brede  
15 and Mr. Showers, upon going down to the police  
16 department, got any direction from the Christian  
17 Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses or the GB?

18           A. Again, that's just not a matter that the  
19 governing body would weigh in on. They focus on  
20 spiritual oversight for the organization and focus on  
21 our Bible education and preaching work. So they would  
22 never call anyone and say, "Go to the local police  
23 department and file a report."

24           What they have said is, if there is a basis of  
25 concern regarding a crime, and it's of a serious nature,

1 then you certainly are at liberty to notify the police.  
2 A very high-level general statement. But would they  
3 ever direct someone to do that, no.

4 And I don't feel that any of the other  
5 corporations associated with Jehovah's Witnesses would  
6 provide that specific direction either.

7 Q. Okay. So what's the status of that case filed  
8 against you as well as the one you filed?

9 A. Well, the case that I filed was moving in the  
10 early going, and we reached an important point in the  
11 investigation. Basically at a certain point, Anthony  
12 Smith, the attorney of record for the defendants in your  
13 action, either was contacted by the police department or  
14 he took the initiative to contact the Menlo Park Police  
15 Department. I think it was him that may have reached  
16 out.

17 And basically he was saying there what he has  
18 typically said in your action and related court  
19 documents, that, you know, they have a corporation, and  
20 that it's totally legal, totally valid. Everything has  
21 been done properly. He provided all the paperwork that  
22 had been accumulated for this new corporation or the  
23 corporation under the stewardship of Brede and Contreras  
24 and Laverdure.

25 Interestingly, when the paper was reviewed by

1 the Menlo Park police as represented by Jeff Keegan,  
2 Jeff Keegan raised the point that they had done banking  
3 in the name of the corporation with Chase on  
4 July 9th, 2010, and they had also done banking in the  
5 name of the corporation on July 12, 2010, with Wells  
6 Fargo.

7 He said, "Bring me your documentation and proof  
8 that you had legal standing in the corporation on  
9 July 9th. Bring me any proof that you have that you had  
10 legal standing in the corporation on July 12," when they  
11 did the banking with Wells Fargo.

12 So that was the point where my investigation or  
13 my case came to a halt. Basically I was told by Jeff  
14 Keegan that he gave this ultimatum to Anthony Smith. He  
15 specifically said, "Show me whatever you have that gave  
16 you legal standing in the corporation for July 2010."  
17 And obviously Anthony Smith could not do that because no  
18 such thing existed.

19 And so at that point the communication -- the  
20 line of communication with the Menlo Park Police  
21 Department really broke down, and I don't totally  
22 understand it at this point. I have concerns that there  
23 may have been some inappropriate negotiations that  
24 occurred or some type of communications or something  
25 along the lines of a bribe to discourage them from



1 moving forward with my case.

2 Because if they had moved forward with my case,  
3 and if it was established that Brede and Contreras and  
4 Laverdure had done something wrong legally, then that  
5 would have significantly hurt their standing in your  
6 Federal case, and Anthony Smith knew that that could not  
7 be allowed to happen. And so somehow some way some  
8 arrangement was reached where basically Menlo Park  
9 stopped pursuing the matter.

10 And when I pressed them for a status, pressed  
11 them for answers, they provided a letter of response to  
12 me dated July 5th, 2011, where essentially they provide  
13 a recap of events to date, which wasn't really complete  
14 or accurate in the complete sense. But they basically  
15 said that we're at an impasse. They said they needed  
16 the bank records in order to go forward to establish  
17 what had or had not taken place, and they needed the  
18 bank records from 2008 to the present.

19 And they did not have that and I didn't have  
20 that in every case, because my name had been removed  
21 from the original operating fund with Wells Fargo, the  
22 one where Brede said it had \$3,500, when in actuality it  
23 should have had around \$20,000. My name had been  
24 removed.

25 Q. Without justification?

1           A. Yeah, and without authorization. And this is  
2 something I learned after the fact when I was  
3 communicating with the Wells Fargo rep in April 2011.

4           She said, you know, "Your name has been removed  
5 from this account."

6           And I said, "Who did that?"

7           And she said, "The three that you have a  
8 problem with." And she was referring to Brede and  
9 Showers.

10          Q. Okay. You know, we should probably take -- can  
11 we go off the record?

12                   (Recess.)

13          MR. COBB: Okay. We're ready.

14          Q. Now let's switch a little bit from our previous  
15 discussions where we were talking about the bank  
16 documents and also the police report. Let's focus  
17 attention on Paul Koehler who was a traveling advisor  
18 for the Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses.  
19 And now when did he arrive?

20                 Well, before that, what was some of the  
21 circumstances that were occurring in the congregation of  
22 Kingdom Hall in reference to the Kingdom Hall before  
23 Mr. Koehler arrived on the scene?

24          A. Well, his predecessor James Hall had begun to  
25 discuss the idea, a very high level, just an idea, of --

1     seemed as if there was an effort to look at our  
2     building, our Kingdom Hall, our meeting facility as a  
3     resource. How could it be used to address the needs  
4     that existed at that time, or how could it be used in  
5     some other purpose.

6             But James Hall mentioned the idea of maybe our  
7     congregation leaving, no longer using the building, you  
8     know, turning over title and having our congregation  
9     merge with another congregation.

10            So one thing that should be mentioned in that  
11     topic is it seems as if there's an effort to refer to  
12     Jehovah's Witnesses as a hierarchical organization. I  
13     don't know much about that subject matter, but what I  
14     have read seems to establish a very firm, rigid view of  
15     absolute power and authority from the top down. So I  
16     readily think about the catholic church.

17            My understanding when you talk about church  
18     properties and church property disputes, there are two  
19     central points, two central questions that have to be  
20     clearly understood to determine the proper course of  
21     action. Who has ownership is number one, and who has  
22     control.

23            So our congregation had both. Our corporation  
24     owned the building outright, free and clear, no  
25     mortgage, and our corporation had control in the

1 relative sense of the property. So any ideas of how  
2 that property might be used or any considerations of  
3 should it be sold or anything like that essentially had  
4 to occur through dialogue with the body of elders and  
5 dialogue with the corporate directors and officers.

6 You had to account for the religious  
7 considerations in one sense and at one level, but you  
8 always have to account for the legal considerations.  
9 And so as we wanted, in looking at the example of the  
10 governing body, Jehovah's Witnesses have a recognition  
11 of law and legal procedure.

12 So to say that James Hall was talking about  
13 what should occur is not to say he had the authority to  
14 dictate what would occur. He had the authority to  
15 initiate discussion of possibilities. But any decision  
16 making, that's a whole 'nother matter.

17 So the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of  
18 Pennsylvania and New York did not own the property at  
19 811 Bay Road. They exercise a spiritual oversight over  
20 the principals and members of the congregation, but that  
21 is not to say that they have a basis to dictate what  
22 would occur with the property.

23 And I want to be clear on that point, because I  
24 don't want that to sound disrespectful. We're not in  
25 any way challenging the basis of religious or spiritual



1 authority of individuals in Jehovah's organization,  
2 Jehovah's Witnesses. What we're talking about is the  
3 reality of lines of responsibility, accountability and  
4 the legal considerations.

5 So I don't own the Watchtower facilities in  
6 Brooklyn Heights. I'm a member of the organization. I  
7 don't own the building. My name is not on it. Our  
8 corporation does not own that building. That  
9 corporation doesn't own the building in Menlo Park. But  
10 we are all in the same religious organization. But who  
11 owns what becomes an individual consideration, okay?

12 So with that being said, you know, James Hall  
13 had come along prior to Paul Koehler and talked about  
14 different ways the building might be used, and the body  
15 of elders at that point in time were not really  
16 embracing the topic of merging with another  
17 congregation, of releasing ownership of the property,  
18 things of this nature.

19 So his line of dialogue kind of quickly  
20 fizzled, and, you know, he didn't push the issue. And  
21 he said we don't -- in fact, he said on a different  
22 visit, you know, we don't really need to pursue that or  
23 discuss that any more. We're just going to go in a  
24 different direction. So it was kind of a dead issue.

25 After that, right before James Hall visited us