

It Could Have Been Rowland, Not Trump



As-yet-unsullied Gov. John G. Rowland addresses the Republican National Convention in San Diego on Aug. 14, 1996. - (Rick Hartford / Hartford Courant)

By EDWARD MARCUS

If John Rowland stayed out of trouble, could he have been president?

When you watch what now appears to be the inevitable march to the Republican presidential nomination by [Donald Trump](#), you cannot help but wonder what might have happened if John Rowland had played it straight.

When I first met John Rowland, he was a handsome, affable young congressman who did not appear to have a dark side. He seemed to be

unbeatable in the 5th Congressional District and, with strong support from his hometown of Waterbury, had the political world at his feet. Rowland then became a three-term governor.

But on becoming governor — even starting with his first term — it seemed to me that he became a completely different person. Growing arrogance crept in to replace affability — along with the apparent need for money on top of his salary to cover alimony payments and some living expenses. Even a governor has to pay for his clothes and the personal needs of his wife and family.

The increasing demands of personal expenses seemingly did Rowland in. The economic numbers never added up and the pressure drove him over the edge.

During the time, when I was state chairman of the Democratic Party, I wrote 307 critical essays and news releases about John Rowland, and every one of them was true. Ultimately, Rowland pleaded guilty to a number of charges and served a little bit under a year in federal prison.

Rowland, with the support of his many friends in the Waterbury area, made a comeback and had his own successful radio talk show. Then it happened again. Rowland got caught up in a scheme to consult on a congressional campaign, which would have been perfectly legal if reported properly. Instead, he attempted to disguise his role on the campaign, saying he was working as a business consultant. The facts appear to indicate that was not the case. Rowland currently is awaiting the results of an appeal from a 30-month prison term in connection with that misrepresentation and violation of election laws.

If John Rowland had played strictly by the rules, he probably would have been a Cabinet officer in George W. Bush's administration. With that high-level post on his resume, plus a popular reign as governor, I truly believe that Rowland would have been more than a credible candidate for president in this election cycle.

John Rowland, with the persona and honesty he upheld as congressman, in my mind, certainly would have been a far more credible candidate than what we now see as leading the Republican pack for the leader of the free world.

He might well have won a national election to become the first president of the United States from Connecticut.

Unfortunately, Waterbury, instead of having a native son in the mix for president this year, has the Rowland State Government Center. At the time the naming of the center occurred, I was the Democratic state party chairman and objected to the naming, as it was simply an indication of Rowland's arrogance. I warned at the time that John Rowland would end up as nothing but a bad memory.

Rowland simply knocked the "John G." off the building's name and said the building would now be named for the Rowland family for their "two centuries of community service."

So John Rowland is still up in bold letters in Waterbury. Oh, but what could have been.

Edward Marcus of Branford is former chairman of the Democrat State Central Committee and former state Senate majority leader.