

# Jay Gunther



*"Toward Freedom" is an Everything-Voluntary.com series sharing personal stories about the journey toward freedom. Archived stories can be found [here](#). Submit your story to the editor.*

I was born and raised in a very strong Christian, very strong Republican family. I remember at age seven when the race was between Barry Goldwater (R) and Lyndon Johnson (D), and although I knew nothing about politics, in my home, it was all about Barry Goldwater. And so it went. Nixon was God, Humphrey was the devil. Nixon was a saint, McGovern was evil... and so forth. I was excited in 1976 when I was finally able to vote and to cast my straight ticket Republican ballot in favor of Gerald Ford and all of the other candidates with an R after their name.

I was a poor history student in school. History bored me to tears, especially anything that had to do with American politics. I remember dating a history major in college whose passion was American History. On our first date, I laughed and told her that as far as I was concerned, history belonged on the bookshelf and there it should stay. I don't think she was very amused. We never dated after that - so I guess it was not just our first date, but our last date as well.

At about age 22, I started getting very interested in politics. It was during the years shortly following the end of the Vietnam War. I remember some of the treatment that the vets were getting. I hailed them as heroes. Damned be anyone who didn't. I was proud of our troops and their sacrifices for my freedoms and believed that anyone who didn't honor the vets or salute the flag needed to be taken behind the woodshed and whipped - before putting them on a boat and sending them out of the country.

I remember writing a paper about how much I appreciated policemen for setting up sobriety check points in order to preserve my safety. I remember feeling a sense of pride when I dutifully paid my taxes. I remember the disdain I had towards anyone who didn't

honor the flag. The list of things I appreciated about the state was long.

Life was good for the first 30 years. I was complacent and ignorant, obedient, faithful and an unquestioning Republican. I remember the day, January 18, 1987, as if it were yesterday. I was in a leadership position in my church and was asked to read a letter to the congregation. The letter was from the president of our church. It was the year of the bicentennial anniversary of the Constitution for the United States of America. The letter contained counsel to our church members to prayerfully study the Constitution and gain a better understanding of it. As I read that letter, I remembered feeling like a hypocrite. There I stood, admonishing the congregation to do something that I had never done nor had any intention of ever doing. But as I read, a strong feeling came over me that said, "YOU NEED TO DO THIS!"

I went home from church and looked through my rather large collection of books to see if I could find any copies of the Constitution. To my amazement, I was able to find such a book. I dusted it off and opened its crisp, new pages and started reading. It was totally foreign to me. It also seemed to be written in somewhat of a foreign language.

I didn't understand a lot of what I read the first time. There were several words or phrases, like "marque and reprisal," "habeas corpus," and "bill of attainder" that flew over my head, yet, it was intriguing enough to me that I had to know what it all meant. The next day, I went to a bookstore and picked up a book for beginners in studying the Constitution. Although I don't remember what it was, I probably appreciated that book as much as any I have ever read, because it took someone like me, who understood practically nothing about constitutional law, and gently moved me towards a much greater understanding. As I read that book, I thought, "Republicans don't do that. Republicans don't believe that. That isn't anything like the sort of thing I see in the Republican platform."

The next three months went by in a flash. I read many books and articles, among which were, *The Making of America*, *The Five Thousand Year Leap*, *An Enemy Hath Done This*, *The Real Thomas Jefferson*, *The Real George Washington*, *The Wealth of Nations*, *Miracle in Philadelphia* and *The Federalist Papers*. I joined the National Center for Constitutional Studies and The John Birch Society.

About that time, I moved to Phoenix, Arizona. Shortly after getting there, I turned the radio to a local talk show and was listening to a most fascinating interview. Everything that the guest was talking about made sense to me. He left the Republican Party in 1987 in disgust and joined the Libertarian Party. I absolutely loved him. I had never previously heard of Congressman Ron Paul of Texas. I said to myself, "This guy has my vote." I didn't know anything about Libertarians, but I knew that I wanted to be one. I soon changed my political affiliation from Republican to Libertarian, not yet knowing much about the Libertarian Party. Ron Paul got my vote for president in 1988.

I spent the next four years in a steady course of study. I believed myself to be a staunch defender of the Constitution. By 1992, I was living in Redlands, California. I was again listening to a local talk radio station and heard another Libertarian candidate for president, Richard Boddie. Ron Paul had mostly disappeared from my mind, and libertarianism as well. Listening to Richard Boddie once again piqued my interest. I learned that he was living in Orange County, not far from me. I thought to myself, "What the heck, I need to see if I can find out more about him." I looked up his name, found a phone number and called. I was shocked to hear a familiar voice on the other end of the line saying, "Hello?"

Richard Boddie was a very warm, friendly kind of guy. It was a joy talking to him. I was flattered when he invited me to a dinner in Costa Mesa where he was getting together with a bunch of his Libertarian friends. I couldn't resist.

I struggled over the next ten years with the Libertarian party. Some things sounded good, but I was not a fan of their position on victimless crimes, particularly drugs and prostitution. I fought even more on the subject of abortion. While I remained registered as a Libertarian, I was mostly a lone wolf, not really identifying with anyone or any party. The 90's left me mostly feeling alone, politically. It was during those years that I was raising my eleven children and fighting an endless battle with the IRS and I had very little time or energy to continue my studies. My associations were limited to family and maybe one or two friends.

Life started to settle down a bit by around 2000. I left the Libertarian Party and joined the Constitution Party. I was feeling pretty good about this move and I wasn't suffering the conundrums I had with the Libertarians.

In 2003, my new boss gave me a copy of Atlas Shrugged. Since it was my boss, I couldn't disappoint him, so I reluctantly read it. That was a total game changer for me and a new jump start to my past ten years of very little study. By then, the Internet was a normal tool and it made research so much easier than it had been ten years prior. With a lot of kids still at home, I wasn't able to read books the way I had wanted to, but I could always eek out a little time to read articles here and there on the Internet.

Over the next few years, my dissatisfaction with government grew more and more profound. I was troubled about so many things - 911, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the PATRIOT Act, and what seemed to be the ever increasing invasion of our rights and privacy by an ever growing police force. Each new event moved me deeper and deeper into the Libertarian Party where I found more comfort than I had previously found.

I campaigned hard for Ron Paul in 2008 and again in 2012. I rejoined the Republican Party only so I could vote for Ron Paul. I lost a number of friends and alienated family the more I spoke about Ron Paul. I had become the black sheep of the family. One of the most difficult

moments of my life came when I offered to drive my wife to Utah for a reunion of her friends of an Internet blog. A few days before leaving, I mentioned on Facebook to a few of my friends (whom I had never met in real life) that I was going to be in Utah County with nothing to do for a day. Within an hour, an event was planned and I would have the opportunity to actually meet dozens of my political associates, most of whom were supporters of Ron Paul.

It was an event that I will always cherish. It was so much fun. The event ended fairly early in the afternoon and I had several hours to kill, so I decided to drive to Brigham City to visit my aged father. I knew that this would be the opposite sort of event from what I had just participated in. I was happy to see my father and he seemed happy to see me, but after a few minutes of niceties, he laid into me like no time ever before in my life. I was informed that I was, indeed the black sheep of the family and that I needed to change my attitude and apologize to my father and all of my siblings as a condition of being “a member of the family again.”

My drive home was painful. It is difficult to be cut off from your own flesh and blood. After a few email exchanges with some of my other siblings, I realized that it was not quite as ugly a picture as my father had painted, but I was nevertheless an outsider.

Ron Paul got clobbered in the primaries. How much of it was his sheer lack of popularity and how much was the result of media bias and corruption, I’m not sure I’ll ever know. All I knew was that I was more disgusted than ever with the GOP and with the whole political landscape of our country. I had been considering voluntaryism as my next line of study for some time. For the last couple of years, when people would ask me in front of my wife what political party I was affiliated with, I would respond that I was a Libertarian and my wife would usually interrupt and say with a smile that I was an anarchist.

Anarchy always sounded so extreme and so chaotic. I had a few Facebook friends who were voluntaryist/anarchist types and I was always impressed with their reasoning on various issues. It also helped that we had common religious ideals. Being able to reconcile my religious faith with my attitude towards anarchy was a big deal to me. My life was busy and I was still not in the place I needed to be to devote my time to the kind of studies that I had been accustomed to. I enjoyed reading articles by some of the well-known voluntaryists. But the reading is not what converted me. I knew in my soul that voluntaryism was right. It just felt right. It didn’t take long before I came to a realization that I am a voluntaryist. I abjure the use of force to further one political idea over another. I also found a lot of wisdom in the voluntaryist ideals of parenting. I had tried force. I was raised in a corporal home. It did not bear the fruits I had hoped for. Fortunately, for my younger children, they learned the virtues of being raised in a more loving, more voluntary environment.

I have come to realize that a truly civilized society is defined by freedom and commerce while uncivilized societies are defined by oppressive laws and regulations. The more uncivilized a society, the more laws it will have. Our nation has become a nation of laws to the point of ridiculousness. How can anyone feel a sense of freedom in a world where virtually everything we do, everything we eat and everything we buy is regulated?

My good friend, Richard Boddie, told me one time that the difference between a libertarian and an anarchist is about six years if you are paying attention and about twenty years if you are not. I was more on the side of not paying attention, but I'm glad I have arrived, even though it has taken a while.