

## The “Goldwater Incident”



High Sierras, August 1964

Ed Bowling, standing far left. I'm 2d from the right.

I arrived in Reno, Nevada in the summer of 1964 as the Republicans were gathering at the Cow Palace in San Francisco to choose their candidate for POTUS. Having arrived a day or two prior to the commencement of World Survival Training at Stead Air Force Base, my friend Ed Bowling from Tennessee and I were exploring the city of Reno and found ourselves sitting at a bar after dinner, watching a large TV screen right in front of us as Barry Goldwater delivered a speech. I had been following the campaign and admired Barry for his candid and straight talk. His political thinking came much closer to matching my own than LBJ's. Barry was a fiscal conservative and social libertarian. I'll never forget him saying ( not during that speech, but earlier) that you could bring three double-deck touring busses up to the Pentagon, go through and arbitrarily load the occupants of every other office onto the busses, drive them off and nobody would ever miss them. Being somewhat familiar with the Pentagon, that rang true to me. ;-)

I forget what it was that he said during his speech that prompted me to raise a beer glass high in the air and say, “Yeah, Barry! Tell it like it is.” This outburst caught the

attention of a gentleman sitting nearby. He was wearing a suit coat and tie but the tie was loose, looking like he had just come from the office. He turned to me and asked where I was from? "West Virginia," I replied.,

That seemed to really surprise him. He introduced himself, telling us that he was an editor at the Reno Gazette Journal.

"We conducted a survey recently, going around and counting license plates all over the city. Do you know that there were cars here from every state in the Union except for West Virginia? Why is that? Are they too isolated and never leave the hills or what?"

I responded with something on the order of, Perhaps we Hill Billies are the only ones wise enough to avoid this pit of sin and corruption."

The conversation continued, mostly about political philosophy. He was stunned that someone from solid Democratic West Virginia would vote for Goldwater and added that he was headed to the Governor's house warming party, that Senator Canon would be there and he would love nothing more than to introduce me, a Goldwater fan from West Virginia, to the senator. He asked if both of us would go with him and promised to return us to the bar later.

In hindsight, I think he may have been looking for a reaction from Senator Canon that he could use in an editorial. If so, he was likely disappointed because the introduction to Senator Canon was very brief and abrupt. I actually considered it discourteous but again, in hindsight, Canon may have seen right through the editor's ruse.

Ed and I chomped down on the hor d'oeuvres and were then chauffeured back to Reno.

Ed and I were partners for the survival trek in the High Sierras. He and I both grew up hiking, fishing, hunting and camping in the hills, so it was like throwing a couple of rabbits into the briar patch. We had a great time and never came close to being "tagged" by the enemy (instructors posing as enemy). The photo at the top of this story was taken on the day we came out of the mountains.

Ed and I were in the same Intermediate Russian class at Syracuse and were supposed to go to Eielson (6985th Security Squadron) but Ed fell in love with a Turkish girl (naturalized citizen) and they pulled his clearance. I lost track of him after that but reconnected much later. He was living outside of Los Angeles and planned to attend the 2016 PWG Reunion in Seattle. I was looking very forward to seeing him again but, about a month prior to the reunion, he was diagnosed with stage 4 pancreatic cancer. Makes me think of the Lawrence Ferlinghetti poem "The World is a Beautiful Place."

So that's the story, or at least the crux of it.

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