

## **PERSPECTIVE: A Vote of Confidence**

**By SALLY MARKS McKEE**

**Mesa, Ariz.**

I was taught to hate Barry Goldwater. As a young girl growing up in Arizona, I would delight in blowing raspberries at his campaign TV ads when he ran against Lyndon Johnson for president in 1964. My younger brother, Terry, and I vehemently booed and hissed every time we saw Mr. Goldwater's picture in the newspaper.

I came from a family of staunch Chicago democrats, and even though we migrated to Arizona two years before the election, my parents' political views never left the Windy City. Both my mom and dad saw the venerable Arizona senator as a dangerous man whose hawkish stance on the Vietnam War could only result in nuclear annihilation.

Of course, I knew this was true because I had seen the images on the television that showed a little girl innocently picking flowers in a field and the dramatic shot of a nuclear mushroom cloud. It scared the heck out of me.

Through the years, however, my attitude changed. My boss, Rosemary, worked on Goldwater's senate campaign, and she missed an opportunity to have her photo taken with him. When the senator heard of Rosemary's disappointment, she received an invitation to come to the Goldwaters' home to have a photo taken together. Rosemary knew my husband, John, was a good photographer, and she asked if he would take the photograph.

The photo session was a success, and John came back a changed man. He hadn't exactly blown raspberries at Goldwater's picture like I had (oh, OK, I admit it — I did it a few times as an adult, too), but John was no Goldwater fan either.

But something changed that day. My normally skeptical husband related how warm and friendly the senator was, and he strongly believed this to be the real man, not a political, baby-kissing ploy. John sensed a humanitarianism in the conservative revitalizer of the Republican Party that I never thought existed.

And then we started hearing about the humanistic side of Barry Goldwater, and about how he stood up for his convictions. We heard how he befriended and worked for Arizona's Native Americans, contributed money to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and desegregated his department store and the Arizona Air National Guard many years earlier. Many of his dear friends had political views that were diametrically opposed to his, but he didn't let that distort his view of their character.

He spoke out against opponents of President Clinton's plan to lift the ban against openly homosexual military service members and pooh-poohed the compromise offered by Sen. Sam Nunn (D.-Ga.), saying, "The compromise doesn't deal with the issue — it tries to hide it." Opposition to lifting the gay ban was, he said, "just plain dumb."

He was also one of the founders of Project Vote Smart, comprised of individuals from a variety of backgrounds dedicated to getting out accurate information about political candidates' voting records, campaign finances, position statements, backgrounds and the evaluations done on them by more than 80 competing special interest groups. No rhetoric, no character assassinations or mudslinging — just the information voters need to make an informed decision.

I've been a registered voter since I was 18, and during the many times Barry Goldwater entered the senate race in Arizona, I never cast a ballot for him. But I admire him for his honesty, his dedication to his friends — regardless of their ethnicity, political views or religion — and his humanitarian efforts. He may not have received my vote, but he will always have my respect.

And, somehow, I think he would've preferred the latter.

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