

Farewell Good Friend

Memories of Royal Voegeli

Andrew J. Zafis, Esq., UW Law Class 1950, San Diego, CA.

It was a grimy part of the city with shabby, workingmen houses...not the Paris of travel brochures or of old black and white film classics...my friend Royal had asked me if I wanted to go with him while he dropped off a message at the Hungarian Embassy. In my naiveté', I had a mental image of an imposing building, (even if old) like the ones I had seen near Du Pont Circle in Washington DC...complete with brass plaques, gates, and guards. But this was a shocker...no gates, no guards, no plaque, no signs. Royal walked up, rang the bell, the door was opened at most two inches, and after a muffled introduction, he passed his letter on. It was 1949, at the height of the Cold War, and Churchill's aptly named Iron Curtain apparently extended to the diplomatic extensions of Stalin's satellite states.

Royal Voegeli (pronounced with a Swiss F sound) and I had met in law school and became good friends. Of medium height, and always very trim, he was equally at ease in the rustic work clothes on his family's farm at Monticello, or in coat and tie for his more sophisticated roles in life. An excellent speaker, whether in non-adversarial exchange of ideas, legal exchanges, on the speaking circuit, or as a mild voiced raconteur, he was always a comfortable companion to be with. Politically astute but of a non-partisan nature, he was very charismatic, and was elected the national president of the National Students Association, as well as appointed by the university president as student representative on the Faculty Court of Appeals... Our very respected and reserved Dean Rundell had cautioned all of us about the danger of missing classes. Most of us returning vets of WWII honored this, so I was surprised to find that Royal would be gone 3, 4, 5 or even more days at a time without any criticism by the Dean's office, presumably because of his student association activities. These duties for example, allowed him great leeway not only to meet with prominent leaders of state (such as dinner with the President of France), but also to go where others could not, behind the Iron Curtain in working with student's worldwide. My growing suspicions that his duties went beyond scholastic camaraderie were re-kindled that day in Paris and later confirmed when two years later we met in Washington D.C. and he admitted he was full time CIA.

Paris was where we were to rendezvous after we had sailed from Quebec to Rotterdam with a shipload of Canadian & American student volunteers aboard the converted troop ship, Volendam, to join students from around the world to help rebuild Dutch roads. He, and fellow classmates F. Ryan Duffy Jr, Galen Winter, and I volunteered to work as non-compensated waiters. To avoid too much hassle and/or complaints, we bluffed about, claiming in phony Milwaukee Plat Deutsche that we didn't understand English. This worked well until some smart-head started replying in fluent German. Once in Holland, I stayed, Galen went on to Scandinavia, Royal went south to Paris. We later met at the Bastille, where I was doing a miserable job of trying to uphold my infantry training at a shooting gallery. Next to me was a smug, young, red haired French lawyer, who was deadly in his shots. We were shooting for bottles of champagne suspended by a string through which a piece of chalk was knotted. If you hit the chalk, you win the bottle, and I hadn't shot one! Thank heaven for Royal's farm upbringing, which included lots of hunting...he took over and we won so many bottles, we couldn't drink them all. Those that we didn't we tried as shaving aids...doesn't lather too well, but not so bad as an after-shave. We wandered about Paris. Later that afternoon at a neighborhood wine bar, some of our American young political world savers were pontificating about the perfect (form) of government (or non-government)...anarchy. We turned to them and quietly asked: whose going to pick up the garbage? Who'll keep the streets clean and repaired? Dead silence. That evening we explored Pig'alle. And by the time I headed to my pension, it was closed for the night. No problem, I just went to the Cathedral at Notre Dame, and made my peace with my God until I could get back to my room.

I then went on to Greece, and we later met again in Holland for our return. He was enraptured with Harriet, a student aboard ship whom he later married. Royal, Galen Winter and I then hitchhiked from Quebec back home. In our last year of law school, Royal encouraged me to become a public speaker about the situation in Greece (the civil war between the Russian supported rebels and the Greek loyalist-royalists), and also got me involved in my first political venture...attending the huge student turn out to meet with and hear the rising star of the Northland and national politics, Harold Stassen. It was from the

latter I learned the technique of political handshaking...extend, but don't squeeze...like a dead fish. In that year we also mastered the art of golf, drank lots of beer at the student Rathskeller, then go to the driving range...worked like a charm until the next day, on the course, when completely sober, it was slice, slice, slice! We also mistakenly thought each other had expertise in sailing. I relied on Royal because he had been a naval officer in WWII and he on me because I had sailed on Lake Michigan at age 8 and later flirted with boats on inland lakes as a child. We assured the UW boathouse attendant we were capable sailors and took off beautifully out into Mendota but were later both shocked at the lack of our respective skills as we tried to bring our rented craft back to our mooring buoy running down wind. We made it but the boat attendant muttered something like "I thought you told me you were both good sailors". (Ironically both of us, in our later lives, on two separate coasts, without any contact with each other developed much better sailing skills and again without any knowledge of the other's choice, both landed up buying the same type of craft, a Catalina 27).

We met again in Washington a year later. He with the CIA, Jean with Social-Sec. Adm., and me sweating out an appointment...Those were exciting times...MacArthur had just come back to address the Congress after (being) recalled from Korea by Truman, and tensions were taut...Royal was gutsy when it came to principles, he had predicted that Truman would go down in history as being one of our toughest & greatest presidents..and that night we were rolling through downtown D.C. in an open convertible, with Royal waiving his arm and shouting "Vive la Truman"! During that stay, he and I were walking down a rather sleazy downtown street shortly after midnight...two or three toughs came along, one of them huge, passing us but saying nothing. Suddenly the big one whirled around, tried to grab our two heads and knock them together. He didn't succeed and when Royal produced a knife, took off running. We turned into the next entrance, a cheap type of all night flop house, and asked the desk clerk to call the police...he wouldn't. I guess "to protect and serve" didn't extend to his occupation and 911 was non-existent, but we survived.

We parted again. Royal on CIA assignment, Jean and I to Richmond, Virginia for job & marriage and would not meet until two years later, when he had settled in his hometown as a country lawyer during which he delighted in making the speaking circuit of the service clubs where he was unknown, passing himself off as a Russian official. It was the peak of the McCarthy era, and he would raise the blood pressure of his Rotarian-Kiwanis-Lions patriotic audiences by praising communism and pillorizing our capitalist form of life. Just on the verge of being physically attacked, he would drop his sham and explain who he really was. Dangerous, different? ...but all so Royal. He then disappeared again...but would come back from Washington from time to time, giving me helpful advice on making my mark as a fledgling lawyer in small town practice (Oconomowoc). We knew he was in Washington, no longer with the CIA, but not quite clear what he was doing...we found out. You might remember the Nixon-Watergate scandal...the special prosecutor being one Attorney Leon Jaworski. Jaworski was one of two members of a large & leading Dallas Texas law firm who manned their Washington D.C. office. The other? Royal Voegeli...and Royal explained that his firm was the one that handled Lyndon Johnson's private work. He would chuckle when he told us of Johnson's habit of calling either of them at any time of the night. And heaven help you if you didn't have an answer for him. Prior to this phase of his legal career he had been a litigation attorney with the U.S. Department of Justice, and after the Watergate era, was appointed to the legal staff of the newly created Nuclear Regulatory Commission in 1974, serving until his retirement in 1994.

Royal was a loyal son of the soil..his family farm had the oldest herd of purebred Brown Swiss cattle in America.. I have warm recollections of the week ends I spent as a guest at the farm in Monticello, one of the many colorful Swiss settlements in south central Wisconsin, where the annual William Tell pageant / festival at New Glarus is the highlight of the year. He never lost touch with his roots, no matter how far away his activities took him. Similarly he never forgot his friends..and felt very badly about being unable to meet with us at our 50th law school class reunion...the reason? Although in full retirement and enjoying his boat on Chesapeake Bay aboard which he would try his hand at writing and painting, he had always wanted to tour other areas of the world he had not seen, especially Egypt.

In mid-February we had just returned from one of our trips out of state, I took a call from a mutual friend from Oconomowoc, a fraternity brother of Royal, though he didn't know him too well...he told me that Royal was dead...but knew no further details other than that he died in Egypt. I called his younger brother Howard, who himself had just turned over the family farm management to his son. Yes, Royal had died in Egypt..early on he had had a blood clot in his leg, and for this reason always kept himself in good

shape...but, against his doctor's advice, he had gone to fulfill his dream of seeing that ancient land..and as he stepped aboard a bus, died immediately, on February 8..

His funeral services were over before we had even got the news..

I find it hard to realize that he is not just a phone call away...to not hear him talking in his erudite manner, yet slipping in occasional " yeah sure's" as if he were reasserting his true heritage. His voice, so assuring, so calm, so caring... So vibrant...and now, so still

Farewell my good, good friend. Farewell

[Royal J. Voegeli, Esq., UW Law School, Class of 1950, Washington, D.C. formerly of Monticello, WI, Univ. of Minnesota, Ensign, USNR, WWII, Sigma Chi, died Feb. 8, 2001 at Luxor, Egypt.]

Andrew J. Zafis, Esq.,
UW Law Class 1950,
San Diego, CA.