

Sid Wolfe

I like to think that I was a fairly wild guy in high school. But Sid had lapped me easily then did it again the first year after graduation. We went to Washington HS in Cedar Rapids, Iowa and ours was the biggest graduation class ever, in the state of Iowa. The class of 67 maintained that distinction for many years after. I think that Sid probably recognized my face, but I would bet heavily that he never knew my name until we ran into each other at the local pizza place, after bar time, the fall after we received our HS diplomas.

***I really was* a pretty wild guy. I had devoted most of my energy to chasing girls, drinking, then seeing how fast I could drive my car on straight and winding roads. I even initiated renting a house with some of my buddies to facilitate the girl chasing and the drinking. But Sid took it to a whole other level. He was on the yearbook staff and they had an office in the school with its own phone. One day Sid got it into his head to call the President from said phone. Not the president of the yearbook staff. Not the president of the student council. Not the president of one of the local manufacturing companies. But the President of the USA, Lyndon Baines Johnson. It seems that Sid had seen the infamous photo of LBJ lifting his hounds up by their enormous ears. Lyndon's were pretty large as well, and Sid had some questions.**

Somehow Sid got through to the White House operator who informed him that he needed an appointment to talk to the President. Sid made a valiant effort to work around the appointment requirement, but the secretary was adamant. Finally, he settled for leaving the following message: “How would you like it if someone lifted you up by *your* ears?” History does not indicate whether or not President Johnson ever received this message.

I’m pretty sure that everyone in the school heard about this stunt. I know that I was very intrigued and looked at Mr. Wolfe in a whole different light when I saw him working his way through the crowded halls, running a constant commentary. The school was built to hold 1800 students and was packing in 2500. What really put Sid on the map was “the party”. I had thrown a couple of pretty outrageous parties but Sid’s merited a series of articles in the local paper. One of the articles even made the AP wire and went nationwide.

His folks had left town for a few days and Sid decided to throw a rage-er. The term had not yet been coined but I am sure that his party would have fully met the criteria. I am still sore about missing it. Sid’s folks owned a high-end jewelry business and were the recipients of some family money as well. As a result, they were very well fixed. They made the grievous mistake of going out of town for the weekend and

leaving Sid in charge of their luxurious home, which Sid and his many drunken guests severely damaged during what became, a legendary party. The carpeting had to be totally replaced due to drink stains and cigarette burns. Doors and furniture were smashed and splintered. But the coup de grace was the grand piano. It was scratched and damaged by liquids and ciggie burns to the tune of \$5000. Total damages in 1967 dollars exceeded \$20,000. How did we know this? They were itemized in the newspaper article that went national about parents suing their minor son, still living at home, for damages that resulted from a party he threw. It seems that Sid was slated to be the beneficiary of a trust fund from his grandparents that would kick in when he turned twenty-one. And his folks wanted to get a lien on the trust for the 20K. They were successful in getting the lien.

Late one Saturday night in early November I was happily drunk with some of my Irish-Catholic buddies that attended the parochial high school, Regis. We had the munchies. We and a lot of like-minded folks were packed into the go-to pizza spot, George's Gourmet, waiting for our sausage and cheese pie. I saw Sid working the crowd and gave him a friendly wave. He came right over and squeezed into our table and started chatting everyone up. At some point he said to me "Sorry, I can't remember your name but I know we went to Washington together". I told him my name and he seemed

genuinely interested in what I was up to. I told him that I was going to the U of Iowa and living in the dorm there. He said that he was planning a visit to Iowa City soon and that we should hang out. I was flattered that a nationally significant wild child wanted to get together with me. I gave him the phone number for my dorm room and quickly forgot about it.

Only a few days elapsed before the phone rang in the dorm room that I shared with two other freshmen. Our dorm was The Quadrangle, built during WWII for some war related purpose. It was Sid calling and he wanted to know if he could stop by. I said sure and started to give him the directions, but he interrupted. "Listen, I'm down at the bus station and I have some luggage. Would you be able to come pick me up?" It struck me as odd that he was "stopping by" with luggage but I quickly assented and jumped into my 61 VW Bug and headed for the Iowa City bus station which was a room in the back of the lobby of a very old and very funky Hotel in the downtown area. There was a beaming Sid and his "luggage" which consisted of at least a half a dozen black 50-gallon garbage bags, filled to the top, and spread out on the floor of the bus terminal. More oddness. But nothing compared to what was to come.

We stuffed, what turned out to be, the entirety of Sid's worldly possessions, as he was between getting kicked out of

his parent's house and receiving his trust fund moola, into the back seat of my VW and headed for the Quad. Most of the dorm rooms in our building were made for two residents, but we had a larger corner room that accommodated three with space left over. I had scored an abandoned curbside couch for the room which Sid immediately deemed good enough to crash on. My roommates had no warning that a guest was going to be staying overnight as I had not been privy to that info myself. But everyone was pretty mellow about it. I told Sid that he would have to keep his garbage bags out of the way and rustled up some sheets for him. After all it was just going to be for a night or two. Right?

Our Resident Manager. Rick S., lived right down the hall and was one cool dude. He was a senior and needed the money he saved from the free room and board he earned riding herd on us freshman to get across the finish line and earn his degree. He had a very laissez faire policy regarding our conduct in regard to the dorm rules. If we kept it out of his face, no problem. I figured that would include the "no overnight guests" policy, so we endeavored to keep Sid's presence on the down low. He came and went through the hallway opposite the side that Rick's room was on. Sid only used the community shower when Rick was in class. Plus, he spent most of his waking day wandering around Iowa City and ka-noodling with the locals.

When we attended Mohammed Ali's lecture at the Student Union, Sid's profile was anything but low. Ali had refused, on religious grounds, to submit to the draft and had been immediately indicted. The various boxing commissions had moved to strip him of his titles of World Heavyweight Champion before he ever went to trial and maintained the ban until shortly before he won his appeal to the Supreme Court. In effect, he was being held to the standard of "guilty until proven innocent". So, he was doing the lecture circuit in order to make some money to cover his alimony and child support payments as well as living expenses.

We had arrived early and had good seats near the front of the auditorium. Ali was an eloquent and humorous speaker. He took us through the lows and highs and back to the lows of his life. The audience, including myself, was all in for "The Champ". Then came the Q&A portion. I noticed that Sid was ferociously waving his hand around while Ali fielded a couple of softball questions, then called on Sid. Sid stood and angrily accused Mohammed of supporting Muslim Palestinian terrorists who were "bent on the destruction of Israel", accentuating his message with repeated finger jabs. Two burly security men immediately emerged from behind the curtain and positioned themselves between Ali and Sid. By

this point I was physically pulling Sid back into his seat. I was able to get Sid to shut his yap without actually clapping my hand over his mouth, though I was fully prepared to do. As Sid calmed down the security guys took a couple of steps back. Ali did answer the question but I was too stirred up to remember what he said. I was starting to have second thoughts about Sid's presence in my life.

The low profile in the dorm worked fine until Thanksgiving, when everyone but Rick and Sid went home to visit family. Sometime in the two weeks that Sid had been staying with us before Thanksgiving, but after the Ali lecture, he had decided to shave his head. He was already wearing tiny wire rim glasses ala John Lennon. He completed the look by wrapping a white sheet around him and over one shoulder and donning a pair of sandals. Suddenly we were rooming with a Mahatma Gandhi look alike.

And that was the look that he was affecting when Rick spotted him exiting our room. Rick was baffled as to why a young Gandhi would have access to our dorm room while we were away on Thanksgiving break. Sid provided some long-winded and dodgy explanation that Rick did not buy for one minute, but decided to defer taking action until my

roommates and I returned. When I did, Sid explained the situation to me and I immediately went to Rick's room for a confab. The first words out of Rick's mouth were "Who the hell is that guy. He is the most derelict looking son of a bitch I have ever seen". Apparently, Rick was not a big fan of the Mahatma. When I explained that he was a high school classmate down on his luck and that he would not be staying long, Rick grudgingly assented to the arrangement but said to keep the guy out of his sight.

By the time I returned to the room to rejoin my roomies another problem had hit the fan. A very big and very gross problem. They had discovered that Sid had ejaculated repeatedly on both of their pillows and both of their sheets during break. For reasons that were never fully made clear, my bedding was unmolested. Needless to say, they were highly agitated; i.e., pissed off. I'm not sure why, but for some reason I talked them out of throwing Sid out on the spot. He did wash their bedding right away and promised not to do it again. I insisted that he immediately find gainful employment so that he could move out sooner rather than later. Two days later he started working at Scotties fast food restaurant a few blocks from the dorm.

By Christmas break, Sid had some money put away and was starting to look for another place to live, but had not yet

pulled the trigger. Unfortunately, he repeated the same compulsive masturbation on my roommate's sheets and pillows while we were home for the Xmas holidays. This time they didn't just want him gone, they wanted to beat the living shit out of him. And again, for some reason that I cannot recall, I shielded him while telling him that it was imperative that he wash their sheets immediately and get a place of his own by the next day.

I took him to look at a place that night and he rented it on the spot. I was fed up with his behavior and told that I would help him carry his belongings to the curb within twenty-four hours, and that he was on his own from there.

The next day Sid informed me that he was working the day shift but had arranged to borrow a car from one of his co-workers and would be moving his stuff out as soon as he got off work. As promised, when the time came, I helped him carry his stuff out to the car. I was shocked to see that a guy who had only known Sid a few weeks had loaned him a cherry 63 Chevy Impala with a honkin 409 engine and four on the floor. I had had the thrill to drive a buddies GTO a couple of years previous and this car was in the same league. Sid told me that he wasn't a very good driver and asked if I would drive. I said "hell yeah".

It only took about twenty minutes to get to Sid's new place and unload the car. And the car's owner didn't get off of work for five more hours. Playtime. We bought a case of beer with my homemade fake ID (one of the many I produced in my dorm room) and headed to CR to show off the ride to hometown friends. We didn't really see anyone to show off to so we eventually headed back to the dorm. I had been putting the big block Chevy thru its paces, burning rubber in the first three gears and getting it up to 110 mph on the highway. As we pulled into the parking lot of the dorm, I was well lubricated on beer and adrenaline but still hadn't completely gotten my ya-yas out with the car. So, I just started burning long strips of rubber up and down the aisles of the lot. At some point Sid had jumped out and was watching from the cheap seats. Just as I finished what I figured would be my last burn-out for the night, I saw a campus police car swing into the lot. Between the un-opened brewskis and the dead soldiers, the entire case of bottles was rolling around on the floor. I reviewed my options, which didn't take long since there were none. The cops put on their flashers and I pulled over. They told me to get out of the car which I did while they pulled out all the beer bottles, full as well as empty and sat them on the hood of the car. I was so inebriated that I had to lean against the car to avoid weaving around.

When they asked to see my license, I showed them the legit one. They asked where I lived and I pointed to the nearby dorm. Then they asked whose car it was. I had not anticipated this question and did not know the answer nor did I have the where-with-all to invent a credible lie at that moment. And good old Sid had disappeared. I fell mute as I pondered the likely charges. Auto theft, DUI, reckless driving, and possession of alcohol as a minor. I was just waiting for them to slap the cuffs on and haul my drunk ass away. I never in a million years expected to hear what the cop said next.

“OK, park the car right here and get in the dorm and go to bed. If we ever catch you doing something like this again, we will call your parents.”

As I staggered back toward the dorm, Sid emerged from the bushes where he had been hiding. I flipped him the keys without saying a word and kept on walking. I never laid eyes on Sid again.