



THE MAN WHO WOULD NOT BE KING

By Susan Heller

PATH OF A PATRIOT - The Political Journey of Mr. B.

“Politics is a dance. Most of the time it’s pugilistic in nature. People in politics like that. They love the combative, deal-making, ducking in low for a quick shot then dancing away with glee kind of interaction.”

Foreword

What in the world is a lifelong, dyed in the wool, bleeding, close to hemorrhaging liberal heart Democrat like me, doing writing a paean to a staunch, straight-arrow Republican who literally flinches when he hears the name of Hillary Clinton? I may be a Democrat, but I know quality when I see it. And Fred Biebel is one of the good guys.

I’m also someone who respects traditions. When you have Captain Henry Biebel, Fred’s great, great grandfather from the Civil War making sure his obituary would include the statement that he had been, “a staunch Republican all his life,” that piece is securely in place.

Fred’s father continued the family trajectory spending many a year yowling about Harry Truman and how he sold us out at Yalta, and railing unrelentingly about Woodrow Wilson screwing up the League of Nations, so I can certainly see that consistency counts.

That and the fact that the man has devoted sixty years of his life to a cause he believes in and a country he continues to fight for in every way possible. He is a man of honor, great integrity and more energy than any fourteen people I know put together. He played by the rules and practiced the intelligent use of civil discourse, whereby people from both sides of the aisle and the press fought furiously for their individual causes, then got together socially to learn about each other as human beings.

Most importantly, Fred did something about his political convictions. He acted on them, and in so doing helped to change the very history of this country. That’s a hell of a lot more than most people do in service to their beliefs, so I figure we owe him and all the old-school Republicans one. They are a special breed: men like Gerald Ford, Ronald Reagan, and Prescott Bush. Whether you agreed with their policies and politics, you had to know they loved this country fiercely and devoted their lives to it.

You will see that although you may not recognize his name as you do those I just mentioned, Fred Biebel is very much a man in their league. And it is my sincere conviction that if we don’t teach the up-and-coming generations how you evolve a man or woman of that stature and standing, we are goners for sure.

We no longer have the rock solid foundations provided by growing up within extended families. We don't have neighborhoods where kids run free in and out of one another's houses and know they can be disciplined or corrected by any of the adults in their world.

There isn't a context for learning about the need to depend on one another and to take into account others in trouble. For people like Fred, it's just what you did. You looked out for each other. You had to. He passed that sensibility on to two more generations who, in their turn, are teaching what they were taught.

So here--for those who want to know what it took to evolve a man who would be at the very heart of national politics, who would keep his word and fight the good fight--is an account of a Kingmaker. Who decided *he* need not be king.

Chapter I

The Dance of Power

Fred Biebel has been described as a "wily, pragmatic politician," "an astute and competent judge of the body politic," a "squirrely old rascal with ants in his pants," and a man who knew when he spotted a bit of luck to grab it and hang on for dear life.

He is also someone for whom the phrase, "incredible coincidence" is redundant. The unlikely occurrences and concatenation of events in both his professional and personal life defy rational description. Not that he hasn't worked fiercely for everything he did and for all that he accomplished.

Fred lives, breathes, dreams and acts, on his Republican values and beliefs. The man is in love with the very essence of politics. He is also willing to acknowledge that above all else, politics is a dance.

Most of the time it's pugilistic in nature. People in politics like that. They love the combative, deal-making, ducking in low for a quick shot then dancing away with glee kind of interaction. The shots aren't intended to be knock-out punches and everybody knows they are going to eventually give as good as they get. The ones that don't inherently understand the give and take, the ebb and flow, end up leaving the game and going on to manage hedge funds and other more profitable pursuits.

On rare occasion, politics can be a pas de deux whereby two members of opposite teams, team up to do the right thing. Ex-Presidents George Bush Sr. and Bill Clinton are a good example of what is a very rare occurrence in our society.

Most often the business of politics is an out-of-step, two-step that expands into further discord as multiple partners enter the dance. Mostly it is an unending jockeying for position, power and the spotlight. Not unlike the gangs of Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story*, the Sharks and the Jets. Lots of posturing, not a little ritualized combat for the on-lookers, sometimes dirty tricks and on occasion, some truly spectacular end-runs that leave a single dancer alone on center stage, picked out by the lead spotlight as the audience cheers.

Unless it's an election year, most people think of politics as the sound and video bites that pepper the evening news or cycle endlessly on the Internet. Or the bickering pundits on TV or those splashed across the Op-Ed pages who hash and re-hash every local or national scandal or

contretemps. There is a smaller demographic that watches C-SPAN and has a sense of some of the logistics that the business of being in the business of politics entails.

However, just as with the quintessential iceberg, most of the real substance of the beast is below the surface. We hear it referenced quixotically by accepters of all kinds of awards: theatrical, political, meritorious, etc. People offer their appreciation for the sacrifices made and claim their success is due to everyone who stood behind them. *Behind* the scenes.

What most of us don't realize is the sheer magnitude of that simple truth. Even though we've all seen documentaries that show the amazing amount of time, effort and dogged will power that go into creating things as complex as movies or Broadway shows, what goes into creating a politician's performance on any level requires every bit as much choreography and coordination.

Because let's face it, politics is theater. But it doesn't stop there. For political success you have to add strategic vision to the mix, an infallible sense of timing, an ability to move through ever-changing loyalties and landscapes, a thick skin, an agile mind, the determination of a pit bull and the flexibility of a dancer. In Dale Carnegie's words, you have to know how to win friends and influence people.

Scale up the stakes and you ratchet up the requirements. Higher offices demand triple levels of what went before including stamina, experience and a far flung network of people from all walks of life and both sides of the aisle.

Early in his career, in a 1979 acceptance speech to the Connecticut Republican State Central Committee Fred said, "As I have traveled the towns and cities in Connecticut during the last few months, I have often told the story that was told to me, and I quote: 'When Republicans form a firing squad, they all stand in a circle.'

Fred went on to leverage the rueful laughter of the group by transforming the quote into a rallying cry. He called for permanent disbandment of the circle in favor of a straight line of party loyalists, marching shoulder to shoulder toward their new objectives. Exactly the kind of motivational mantra that was needed at the time.

In that same speech, Fred disavowed the standard operating procedure of many politicians of the day by declaring that if you wanted to find him, he wouldn't be in his office on High Street. He'd be out along Main Street and every other avenue, talking with people and finding ways to realign the party stance and presentation with their needs.

All of this would be just so much fluff and rhetoric coming from a good number of other politicians, whatever their level or party affiliation. But Fred's nature was such that he not only meant every word of it, he lived and breathed the credo for sixty years.

During Fred Biebel's career he worked for five Republican presidents: Eisenhower, Nixon, Reagan, Ford, and George Bush Sr. It isn't possible to count the number of councilmen, senators, congressmen, ambassadors, governors and committee members he has sponsored, worked for or helped.

With a career in politics that spanned six decades, in September 2008, Fred attended his fourteenth Republican National Convention. That is not only a love of politics, that is a deep and profound love of country.