

Yes, Cynthia, non-natives can serve!

While it didn't seem to matter in the recent primary election that Cynthia Lummis wasn't the most competent, experienced or qualified candidate on the ballot, it probably will in the general election.

by
Dave FEATHERLY

No sooner had the shock worn off from the results of August 19th voting than Cynthia came out swinging her purse.

"If you weren't born here," she said, "you don't know what's going on here."

Faster than you can say "inherited everything," an operative from her own party unfolded his cell phone and got Cynthia on the line. "You may not know this, dear," he said, "as sheltered as you've been on your family's ranch, but Dr. John wasn't born in Wyoming." Not to mention Dick Cheney and Barbara Cubin, of course.

Malcolm Wallop was born in New York City and is a Yalie. Not that a lot of Wyoming natives want to claim old Malcolm as one their own - he who recently endorsed Democrat Mark Gordon in the Republican primary to succeed Republican Barbara Cubin in the US House. Old Malcolm also saddled the Steve Forbes horse for president in 1996. And he's supposed to be a descendant of royalty. Hardly one of us, Cyndy.

Wallop's predecessor, Gale McGee, the last Democratic politician of note in Wyoming, didn't arrive in Wyoming until he was in his early 30's. McGee was born in Lincoln, Nebraska and was educated in Nebraska and Illinois before working in Nebraska, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana and Iowa before journeying to Wyoming to work at UW. That didn't stop Wyoming voters from electing him to serve three terms in the US Senate.

Even Alan Simpson was born out-of-state. A Denver lad himself.

Frank Barrett was born in Omaha, Nebraska and didn't reach Wyoming soil until he was nearly 30 years old. The revered Stanley Hathaway was also born in Nebraska but came to Wyoming when he was two years old.

Wyoming's only Supreme Court Justice, Willis Van Devanter, was born in Iowa.

Jim Bridger was born in Virginia. "Buffalo Bill" Cody was born in Iowa. "Butch Cassidy" was born in Utah. Wyoming's two most famous political women, Nellie Tayloe Ross and Esther Morris were born in Missouri and New York, respectively.

James Cash (J.C.) Penney, who opened his first Golden Rule Store in Kemmerer, Wyoming, was born in Missouri and Francis E. Warren, who has an Air Force base and streets named for him in Cheyenne, was born in Massachusetts.

Were none of these named individuals worthy, in your eyes, Cynthia Lummis, of achieving recognition in Wyoming because they were not born here?

Who died and made you Queen? Charles can't get the throne over there and you may not get it here unless you change your high-faluting ways, missy.

How dare Buffalo Bill establish Cody, Wyoming, without your permission or blessing. He should have stayed in Iowa with his insipid "Wild West Show" and penchant for long hair and girlish horse-riding tricks. Maybe you can push through legislation to rename Cody. "Simpson" might be an appropriate name. Oh, wait, Al wasn't born in Wyoming, either. What's his kid's name? The one in the Wyoming legislature who bullied Barbara Cubin in a private conversation - saying he was going to challenge her for her seat in Congress, only to turn tail when he was told how much work it would be. He wouldn't even run when she didn't.

People have come up to me since Cyndy's utterance, many, like me, who were not born in Wyoming but consider it home nonetheless, and asked why I hadn't written about her inappropriate words.

Myself, I've been in Cheyenne for going on 23 years. I don't pass myself off as a native. I did not arrive here by the circumstance of birth. I chose to come here. Where might Cynthia now live if her family didn't provide her the advantages she has enjoyed all her life? Maybe she'd have gone to Salinas, California to counter the move by Barbara Cubin to Casper. Or to Lincoln, Nebraska to cancel Dick Cheney's move to Wyoming.

The fact that Cynthia Lummis has lived in Wyoming all her life is not all good nor all bad. People who live in the same zip code from cradle to grave do miss out on many of life's experiences. One of the great handicaps of the City of Cheyenne governing body is that few of the members have lived anywhere but Cheyenne. They dream the downtown will one day have a Fowler's, a People's, a Montgomery Wards, Greyhound, passenger train service, several first-run movie theaters and all of the new car dealers. It won't but they can't accept that because that's what they grew up with.

There may be reasons for Wyoming voters to not choose Gary Trauner as their next Congressman. But not having been born on Wyoming soil is not one of them.

Two years ago, at an event at the old depot downtown, Gary Trauner asked me when he'd be considered "one of them," and I told him "never." I don't expect to be, either, and I'm not asking to be.

But, I'll tell you something: It'll be a cold day in hell when Cynthia Lummis can match my knowledge on as many subjects important to Wyoming residents or possess the ability to produce a publication like the Cheyenne Herald on a regular basis.

And my lineage from Wisconsin didn't make the Herald possible. I didn't inherit this baby. And, so far as I know, Gary Trauner didn't inherit his wealth. As John Houseman used to say, "he earned it."

The Dems have had a field day with this misstep by Lummis.

If only Wyoming-born people could serve in public office, you can tell from this story how much of Wyoming's past would have turned out differently.

Of course, maybe Lummis has a different benchmark. Maybe you don't have to be born here, maybe you just have to arrive in Wyoming before you start school. Or by the time you graduate high school. Maybe if you graduate from UW, that cancels all other birthplace failings.

Rather than compare places of birth, why don't we compare IQs? Maybe get a college transcript. If a candidate is not smart enough, by virtue of those results, they are ineligible to seek public office in Wyoming. Boy, that'd weed out a bunch of 'em. You have to take a written test to get a driver's license but not to serve as a U.S. Senator or Representative. We need to do something about that.

I think I have a better idea. Each candidate would have to take a lie detector test.

"Cynthia, have you always been pro-life?"

"Gary, are you really offering 'straight talk'?"

"John, do you really care that there aren't enough doctors in Wyoming?"

"Nick, why did you become a Democrat to run for Senate?"

Mike Enzi, I have nothing to challenge you with. I had considered you a good politician, then I looked it up and found that you don't pass Cynthia's litmus test, either. You were born in Bremerton, Washington. As a "service brat," a baby doesn't get to choose where they're born. Other than that minor flaw, I think you are one who is in politics for the right reasons. You're not as loud as John Barrasso and you don't keep mentioning that you're married to Diana - we all know that - you don't have to keep telling us like John does. Why does he keep doing that?

Maybe with your first bride, you keep telling the world that she's your wife. But not your second wife. That's a little unbecoming, if you ask me.

When I started this story, I thought that I'd find many, if not most, Wyoming political figures, and other familiar Wyomingites, were born in Wyoming. Not so.

Even Mike Sullivan was born in Omaha, Nebraska.

Wait, I found some.

Clifford Hansen, born in Zenith and raised in Jackson and except for serving two terms in the U.S. Senate, he didn't stray far from home. Elected Teton County Commissioner, Governor and U.S. Senator without a loss. What a native!

"Gov Ed" Herschler was born in Kemmerer. Teno in Rock Springs. Jim Geringer was born in Wheatland. Dave Freudenthal in Thermopolis.



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