

Election Strangeness

For the first time in sixteen years on October 21, 2008 I voted for a major party candidate for president of the United States.

To those that do not know me well, let me explain. My parents (both Mom and Dad) were very big on the idea of voting. "If you don't vote you can't bitch," they would say to me as we went to go vote and we voted every time the poles were open. One or the other would step up to the sign-in table, me in tow, and explain in loving detail the voting process. Then they would take me in to the voting booth, and in a hushed voice they only reserved for holy things, the parent I was with would tell me this is why America is so great – voting – up or down on a person or idea was why I lived in the greatest country in the world. No kings. No Gods. No dictators. Just folks in a really small smelly booth saying up or down and if we don't like it we will see you again in four years.

At the ripe old age of 18 I could vote for president and being 1988, I did. The week after my birthday Mom took me to the election commission to sign me up to vote. She taught me how to read a ballot and listen to the candidates to see what they were really saying. Then she let me loose upon the world to cast my lots as I saw fit. I voted just like my parents did every time the poles were open - even voting in run-off elections several times. However, times change.

I had not voted for a major party candidate for president since 1992. I voted for Bill that year. But after that I became very disenchanted with the whole election thing. I could not bring myself not to be heard in the voting booth because I knew no one was listening. Every election after that voted for a "down ballot" candidate, even in the "smaller" races. I even wrote myself in once in a U.S. Senate race. I just hated everyone else running and the politics. They just didn't represent me, my views, my ideas, or even my morality. However, at the time I was too young

to serve in the U.S. Senate. If I had won, I would have done my best to represent everyone, even those I strongly disagreed with.

Enough back story. I shoved the credit card looking thing they now give you at the poles into the voting machine with conviction. I verified myself to the ballot taker. Then there I was looking at those two names in the first column of my voting machine. It took me by surprise. I didn't realize the presidential race would be first vote. But I was going to do this. My hand began to lift, I looked loftily at the left columns of names – Barr, Nader. My finger kept inching closer to the touched the screen - Human Party, Confederate Party, Write in Vote. My hand just kept going like an arrow shot from a Scottish longbow man's weapon. Then touch, an X appeared in the first column. I had just cast my lot with a major party candidate.

I felt good about a vote. That had not happened in 16 years. I finished voting - all for major party candidates. Reviewed my selections. Hit VOTE on the final screen. Then pulled my card from the poor over used machine. Turned on my heels and as I was handing my card back to the pole worker I high-fived him. I felt good about being an American again. I just wish my Mom could have seen this. I think she might be the only one who could understand.

Vote...it's the only real voice you have except for your check book.