

Bart Tiernan's VP Story Told us May of 2024, About 1975 & 1968

As the Class is doubtless panting with anticipation to learn who is to be the Donald's vice presidential running mate, I thought it might like to learn how the ineffable Spiro Agnew became Richard Nixon's running mate, the knowledge of which I acquired from an authoritative source, viz., the late Bill Casey for whom I worked when I punched my ticket in Washington.

In 1975 I accompanied Casey on a junket to Rome for the purpose of promoting the sale of American manufactured nuclear power plants, a business then dominated by the Canadians. While there, we stayed at our ambassadorial residence on the Via Veneto. Our ambassador was John Volpe, a former governor of Massachusetts who had also been President Nixon's transportation secretary and was a most delightful host. The Italian public and private officials with whom we had held meetings over several days were highly intelligent, cultivated and elegant speakers of fluent, unaccented English.

Whether our meetings accomplished anything or not, others would decide, but they were altogether cordial and enjoyable, so Casey decided to give a celebratory dinner before our departure. He chose Alfredo's of all places (a Roman counterpart of New York's Mama Leone's) where the host is not allowed to leave without a photo of the famous Alfredo who appears from his kitchen with a large bowl of faux fettuccine. (Mama Leone's photos featured a hug from Mama Leone.) Our Italian guests were speechless. We were in a city notable for gastronomy, dining at a tourist attraction.

That said, the evening became quite jolly. Shooting a large wink at Ambassador Volpe who was at the opposite end of the table, Casey exclaimed "were any of you ever told how Spiro Agnew became Vice President," whereupon Volpe broke into a broad grin. The table went silent as the rest of us, like the young boys breathlessly waiting for the old man of the sea to tell them once again about "the baseball," waited for Casey, a renowned raconteur and a highly intelligent, cultivated person himself, (though mainly as an autodidact), to sail into full cry, as he proceeded to do essentially as follows.

"When Dick sewed up the nomination, he created a committee consisting of George Bush, Anne Armstrong and me to come up with a running mate. He wanted a Catholic, an ethnic, a Republican office holder who had won big in a Democrat state, and a self-made man. We told him there was no need for a search; he wanted John Volpe of Massachusetts."

By now, Volpe was struggling to avoid laughing.

"So we brought John down to New York and shooed him into a room with Dick at Dick's campaign headquarters in the Pierre Hotel. A half hour went by, an hour went

by, and then they both emerged all smiles and vigorously shaking hands. Without letting go of John's hand, and with his other hand planted on John's back, Dick walked him to the elevator, reached in to hit the down button, and gently pushed him into the elevator."

By now Volpe was chuckling uncontrollably and shaking his head up and down.

"Turning to us, Dick said "That little G***** spent an hour telling me how we should run the country after we are elected. I want to amend the search. I want a Catholic, an ethnic, a Republican office holder who won big in a Democrat state, and a useful idiot who will happily keep out of my way and otherwise keep his mouth shut." We told him there was no need for a search. He wanted Spiro Agnew of Maryland.

Further affiant sayeth not.



Alfredo's

