

Election 2011 Series

Part 1: Wake Up Call

By Dick Farmer

The race for the mayor's seat and two council positions is on. The three positions, in themselves, represent a council majority and potential control over the future of Boulder City. The first automated telephone call, or "robocall," was made to Boulder City voters before the period to file as a candidate for office had even ended. I did not take the call. I did not have too. The message, with the recorded voice of the candidate polished by practice, went on my answering machine. One machine talked to another for the end purpose of causing me to vote for one human being over another. I got the message. It was a wake up call.

Does anyone remember Joe Roche? As a candidate in the 2009 city council race he impressed me. He had heart, and fresh ideas, and the guts to make the combination work. "BC Joe," as he chose to be known, made a strong showing at the start of the race. Then, shortly before the primary election on April 7th, 2009, the robocalls began, and we were told what a terrible person BC Joe really was and how he was being sued by his former employer for theft. While BC Joe received more votes than most candidates he still lost in the primary. Yes, there was a small claims action filed against him in our local justice court, and prior to the general election that June, BC Joe was exonerated. He still lost what mattered most to him, because in the court of public opinion the jury had been bought.

Those robocalls have been credited to BC Truth, a "PAC" or political action committee. BC Truth registered as a PAC, by fax, with the Nevada Secretary of State on March 17th, 2009. On the same day, according to BC Truth's financial disclosure report, it paid \$209.95 to Global Connect, a New Jersey company that makes robocalls. BC Truth paid \$214.20 to Global Connect on March 24th, 2009. This strikes me as interesting given that the small claims action against BC Joe was not filed until March 19th, 2009. What is even more interesting is that when Global Connect was recently contacted they claimed to have no knowledge of BC Truth or its resident agent. So far as their activities in Boulder City went the only entity that Global Connect named was a company called Paladin.

If you want to commit character assassination it is very affordable. Global Connect charges 36 cents per minute for its calls with a 30 second per call minimum. At the current rate BC Truth's \$424.15 would buy 1,000 – 2,000 robocalls, depending upon duration. You will need to provide your own list of telephone numbers to be called. Cam Walker's campaign reported contributed services from Paladin Advertising, for a "targeting list acquisition," valued at \$500.00, in April of 2009. The Secretary/Treasurer of Paladin Advertising, Inc., James A. Ferrence, gives the address of 1820 Dawn Ridge in Henderson. Could this be the "Jim Ferrence," with the same address, who was one of the managers of Hang Time Sports, LLC, the company that held an active lease option with the city to build a professional sports complex in Boulder City?

Despite a history of civic involvement and community service, once the robocalls started BC Joe did not stand a chance. Robocalls, yard signs and newspaper ads cost money. How much money should we expect a candidate running for office in Boulder City to raise? At what point should we become concerned when the money going into a local campaign comes from interests outside of our city? Most people do not give \$500 or \$1,000 or more simply because they like the way a candidate looks or what the candidate has to say. They give something with the expectation that they will get something in return, and that “something” is usually a thing they cannot otherwise buy for themselves.

Editor’s note: *Jim Ferrence of Paladin Advertising, Inc = James Ferrence of Hang Time Sports, LLC = Jim Ferrence, a Director of the Boulder City Museum and Historical Association =son of William Ferrence former Manager of the Boulder Dam Credit Union = son of Cheryl Ferrence, Museum Director.*