

State Line

Waldo Steve and the Waldos

A couple of the Waldos were driving from San Francisco to Lake Tahoe in 1972 for some summer fun. The glove box of my 1966 four-door Impala contained a fresh new lid of grass, and in the trunk our suitcases stored two additional lids. As I drove, I expressed my fears about being busted.

One of the Waldos in our car was the son of a cop. In fact, his father was a narcotics officer. Familiar with many of the details of his father's profession, he tried to calm me down by educating me on search-and-seizure laws. We drove for hours, memorizing every detail of California law on search and seizure. I became an expert. Effective knowledge and strategies; nobody was going to bust us. Above all, I remembered that a police officer could not make you open a locked glove box.

We arrived at Lake Tahoe and pulled into the parking lot. The other Waldos got out and went across the street to look for a bathroom. I moved to the passenger side of the front seat and began rolling joints on the lowered glove box lid. All of a sudden, a car door slammed behind me. A cop had pulled in behind and was walking toward the car. I moved fast, rolling up the bag of weed into the box, closing the glove box lid, inserting the key and locking it. I breathed a huge sigh of relief; safe, armed with my new knowledge of search-and-seizure laws.

The officer knocked on the window. I rolled it down and he asked for license and registration. I complied. He returned them and asked, "What's in the glove box?"

"Maps," I answered.

The cop said, "Let me see those maps."

"No," I said.

He said, "Open up the glove box."

"I don't have to," I said.

He said, "Yes you do."

I said, "California law number 66294 (or whatever the number was at the time) says that I do not have to open a locked glove box."

And he said, "You're in Nevada, boy!"

I looked over my right shoulder. The state line was about 20 yards away. I looked over my other shoulder to see that two more cop cars had arrived, including an unmarked narc car. I opened the glove box and handed over the lid. The officer handed the lid to the cop from the unmarked car who started examining it closely.

The narc remarked, "Doesn't look too good. Too many seeds and stems."

One of the cops then said to me, "I'm going to give you a choice. If you have any more weed in this automobile, you can hand it all over to us right now and we may or we may not bust you. Or, we can search your car and if we should find anything we will definitely bust you." He added, "It's your Nevada gamble."

I opened up the trunk and handed over the two lids.

The narc officer asked me, "Do you want a receipt for this?"

And I responded, "Do you give trading stamps too?"

He chuckled.

The three officers had a little meeting while I waited patiently. Then one of them walked over and showed me a children's school-style notebook with a list of names and numbers written in it. He started writing my name at the bottom of the list.

He said, "I'm going to give you exactly one minute to get across that border. You are number 324 in the state of Nevada and you cannot come back to Nevada for as long as you live."

I said, "What about my friends? How will they find me?"

Holding up his watch, he said, "You have one minute to get out of Nevada, starting now."

I raced to the state line border marker located on the sidewalk next to the casinos at Lake Tahoe's South Shore and waited. About a half hour later my friends walked up.

We really wanted to go to Nevada because Nevada had the best beaches. We spent the entire following day trying to find a lawyer. Nearly every attorney we contacted would not talk to us. A few said they would talk with us; however, they quoted astronomical rates we could not afford. We were frustrated, but determined to get an answer as to whether or not I could enter Nevada for the rest of eternity.

The next day we drove over to the North Shore of Tahoe. An attorney there agreed to talk to us for a reasonable price. We were excited because this one attorney who agreed to see us was named Joseph Joynt. We paid our money up front, and waited on pins and needles to ask him, "Could we go back into Nevada?"

He answered with one word: "Probably."

We drove directly to Nevada and spent the rest of our vacation there, knowing the entire time what it feels like to be an outlaw.