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Between the "radio shack" behind his home, above, and his living room console, Goldwater can monitor ham radio and aviation frequencies and get a complete weather report.

wife, Peggy, died almost three years ago. His six-foot cowboy's frame is cut down an inch or so not so much by the arrows of history or age as by the surgeon's scalpel. Both his hips are man-made. One of the knees, too. Even the ticker is primed by a triple bypass. Slows him down some. But not much. He uses a cane to direct you to a chair by the desk in his sun-drenched living room overlooking Phoenix. The cane has a bulldog's face carved into its handle.

Goldwater extends his arm across the panoramic glassed-in view and shakes a finger at the television screen. "Senate's debatun' that damned-fool trade bill," he says with dismay. "Sometimes I think those people back there have almost given up on American principles."

It's been almost two years since Goldwater left "those people back there," leaving behind 30 years in the Senate. It's been 24 years since he took up the cudgel for The Cause in his great kamikaze run at the presidency—an ill-starred adventure that, despite its utter disaster, changed the Republican Party and the American political landscape for a generation to come.

Mr. Conservative, they called him back in 1964 when the ascendancy of the liberals had left "conservative" bordering on a political dirty word. He was called a few other things, too: cantankerous and blunt, hotheaded and prophetic, loose-lipped and frightening, even emotionally unstable

and nuke-'em nuts. Some of it was outrageously, downright libelously unfair. Some not. Goldwater invited political hits the way a lonesome pine draws lightning strikes. He was an unreconstructed westerner who spoke his mind and found that the sentences often came out laced with hells and damns.

"Yeah," he muses, chuckling. "Hells and damns and a little more."

When other politicians wisely bit their tongue, Goldwater blustered on. His formal campaign was traditional conservative—tough defense, individual rights, trim the budget-busting federal bureaucracy—and it touched a public hard core yearning for a lost simplicity in American life. But off the cuff? Barry shot his mouth off like a daily 21-gun salute. He'd sell the socialistic Tennessee Valley Authority for a dollar. He'd make Social Security voluntary. He spoke nonchalantly of missiles so accurate we could "lob one into the men's room in the Kremlin." The forests in Vietnam could be defoliated with low-yield atomic weapons. On the nuclear stuff, he never said should, just could, like a general pondering all options in the sanctum of the Pentagon war room. But a presidential campaign is no sanctum. The press leapt on every word, and when the clippings got too rough, he fired back that the "eastern publishers"—how he loved to take on the namby-pamby easterners—covered him like Pravda.

Mr. Conservative became the Fastest

Lip in the West, an Arizona gunslinger, they joked, whose slightly off-kilter battle cry was "Ready! Fire! Aim!" His loyal posse fanned out with signs that insisted "In Your Heart You Know He's Right," nice little double meaning there. Meanwhile, Lyndon Baines Johnson sat serenely in the White House, only months after the tragic death of John Kennedy. Lyndon Johnson would not defoliate jungles. Lyndon Johnson would not send our boys over to fight Asian wars. Lyndon Johnson sent his loyalists out to greet Goldwater with other signs: "In Your Guts You Know He's Nuts," no double meaning there at all. The race became meaner and meaner, Goldwater more and more quixotic.

In the spacious room at Be-Nun-I-Kin, the unglazed walls are lined with superb southwestern paintings, artfully carved Hopi dolls, remarkable photo-portraits of Apache chieftains taken with the battered old Nikon that sits at the ready on Goldwater's desk. Not a political memento remains—not a single arm-around photo, all 30 years' worth given away to make room for deeper loves. How in the world did this complicated man, whose disguise was to opt for simplicity, ever think he could beat the ultimate pol, Lyndon Johnson, in those Democratic halcyon days of 1964?

"Oh, hell, I never thought that. Knew that when I started. We sat right here in this room and I said, 'Well, we sure as hell can't beat Johnson. So let's get somethin' out of this ordeal. Let's get control of the Republican Party away from those damned easterners and bring it out West.'" Suddenly, a blue-eyed sparkle radiates through the horn rims. "You remember what I said about that?"

Oh, yes, Senator. It's hard to forget the things you said.

"It would be a good thing to saw off the Eastern Seaboard and let it float right out into the Atlantic." That's what he said back then, and that's about what he did. But with no regrets about the loss?

"No. No. Not when it was over. It didn't even cause me great unhappiness. I just came up here on the hill with Peggy, sat out there watching the sunset and whistled 'Hail to the Chief.'"

HOW BARRY GOLDWATER LOVES TO FLY. He piloted his first plane in 1928 at the age of 19—an open-cockpit biplane—and it's still easy to conjure up the vision of the dashing handsome man he was and is, a silk scarf trailing in the breeze. By 1941, when World War II broke out, he was too old and couldn't see the charts without his horn rims. But somehow he coned his way into the left-hand seat and got one of the war's most risky assignments—ferrying C47s over the Hump, the treacherous gap in the Himalayas between Burma and China. At 79, with all