

Disclaimer: I am not Bob Woodward. Not everything I say here may be 100% accurate, but it's the best I can remember. The names of those who I met may have been changed.

During the summer of 2008, I was working towards my masters thesis studying bats in the Mojave Desert of Nevada. Almost every night for 3 months, I mist netted for bats on the Refuge where I was working. Most of this mist-netting I did alone, without the help or the company of others, and so it was very lonely work.

One evening as I was preparing to set up my mist-nets, I heard a vehicle coming down the road. Vehicles moving around on the Refuge were not uncommon, and so I thought nothing of it, however this one stopped and two people got out. Soon enough they were walking my way. I figured they were lost and needed directions, or that they were curious about what I was doing, and so I approached them as well.

Working alone, sleeping during, and not having anybody to talk to for long periods of time can wear on you. And, I was excited for the opportunity to talk to them out and help out if I could.

However, as we approached each other, it became very obvious that they were absolutely, positively, without a doubt.....WASTED! This was immediately apparent by the way that they walked, talked, and introduced themselves. The first thing I received when I met them was a big hug from the woman, and a beer from the man. I graciously accepted the beer and we struck up a conversation.

“What are you doing?” they asked.

“I’m studying bats” I replied. They looked confused so we walked over to where my mist nests were set up. I explained what the nets were and what they did, and they seemed to get it. They seemed interested and stayed around. We downed our beers, opened a few more, and talked for longer.

Both of them were in their mid 30s, and both spoke casual drunk talk with a good mix of expletives. The woman (we will call her Donna) zoned in and out of conversation, she was about 6 inches shorter than me, but must have weighed around 70-80 pounds. A few of her teeth were missing, and her hair was very scraggly. She looked like a mess. A skinny, gaunt, drunk, mess. It was obvious that she maybe hadn't had the best life, but she seemed happy, and contently drank her Milwaukee's Best beer through a green bendy straw.

The man, who I shall call Brian, was about 180 pounds, shirtless with cutoff jeans, boots, and a shaved head. He had a few tattoos and seemed overall like a nice guy. He chugged beers like water though, and probably drank 9 or 10 of them in the period that we hung out. He ranted about the Refuge, and how the Refuge managers were F***ing everything up, and how evil the government was. He spoke fondly of times when you could drive

anywhere on the Refuge, swim in all the spring pools, and how they use to get drunk and play “hide-and-seek” on the Refuge with their vehicles, or see who could drive the farthest through the marshes. It was neat hearing his stories, about how much things have changed since the place was protected, but I didn’t argue with him. Arguing didn’t seem like a good idea.

They stuck around for 2 or 3 hours I would say. We talked the whole time about the Refuge, the government, beer, the Refuge, beer, more government. It was a good time, even though I didn’t catch any bats. I enjoyed their company, and I got the impression that they enjoyed my company as well. We both agreed that next time they pass through the Refuge, they should stop by and see if I’m working.

They left around midnight.

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A day later I was in the Refuge office speaking with Refuge employees. I mentioned casually that I had met Brian and Donna and had spent some time speaking with them the other night.

“You met WHO?” I was asked.

“Brian and Donna” I replied. Adding that “they were a mess.”

“You need to speak with the Refuge officers and write up an incident report” I was told.

“Why?” I asked.

“You met Brian and Donna that’s why!” they said.

And so I told my story. Apparently, Brian was wanted for “assault and battery, and kidnapping” and Donna was wanted on charges of “drug possession and distribution.” They seemed like such nice people to me.

Follow up.

A few months later Brian was arrested and charged. Donna was caught as well, but her mother bailed her out of jail time. To the best of my knowledge, Brian never went back to the Refuge. However, Donna did. She smashed her car into a power pole on the Refuge. She broke her leg in the process, but she was too drunk and drugged at the time to really notice. I wasn’t surprised when I was heard that she told the cop that the wreck stressed her out, and asked the cop to get her another beer from her wrecked car.