

No Filter



Ali Goldwater Ross is on a mission to restore her grandfather's photographic vision – and in the process, expand how the world views Barry Goldwater

Text by JIMMY MAGAHERN

Photos courtesy BARRY AND PEGGY GOLDWATER FOUNDATION

If there were a virtual reality attraction where visitors could get inside the head of a young Barry Goldwater and experience the storied statesman's singular view of America through his own eyes – a kind of *Being John*

Malkovich portal putting visitors smack-dab behind those iconic black-rimmed glasses for a few moments – you can bet that right about now, people would be lined up around the block.

Soul-searching GOP devotees, in particular, longing to glimpse America again through the eyes of the five-term U.S. senator for Arizona widely regarded today as the father of American conservatism, would no doubt pay gladly for access to that rarefied vantage point.

That's essentially what visitors are promised at the *Photographs by Barry M. Goldwater* exhibit at Western Spirit: Scottsdale's Museum of the West. Alison "Ali" Goldwater Ross, Barry's granddaughter, teamed up with *Arizona Highways* to digitize more than 15,000 photos taken by the politician, a gifted photographer (even if lens legend Ansel Adams would only call him "a fine and eager amateur"). A curated selection of the artfully restored images is on display through June 23.

"It's about his vision, his love for Arizona," Ross says. "I was motivated to fulfill what my grandfather set out to do when he was roaming around the state of Arizona, hiking and taking these amazing photographs."

Those hoping for a conservative epiphany, however, may instead come away with a strange urge to join the Sierra Club and stand with Standing Rock. Goldwater the photographer found his muse in the fragile majesty of Arizona's wilderness and, most poignantly, in the beauty and dignity of its indigenous people. The senator who voted down the Clean Water Act and voted to dam the

"Portrait of the Artist as a Married Man," circa 1935, photographed by Peggy Goldwater at Coal Mine Canyon between Tuba City and Third Mesa

Mike, Joanne, Peggy and Barry Goldwater Jr. at Goldwater Dept. Store Farm in south Phoenix, where vegetables, poultry and meat were produced for store employees





Ali Goldwater Ross, founder and director of the Barry and Peggy Goldwater Foundation

Colorado River was, behind the lens – and, Ali says, in his heart – an environmentalist, and a staunch ally of Arizona’s Native American tribes.

“He was a conservationist,” says the granddaughter, who founded and directs the Barry and Peggy Goldwater Foundation. “There is a whole side of Barry, and Peggy, that people have no idea about.”

That side is best reflected in the trusting, friendly faces of the old Navajo chiefs and little Hopi girls Goldwater photographed along treks to his Rainbow Lodge and Trading Post at Willow Springs. “He spent a lot of time building relationships with these people,” Ross says. “When he would take a photograph of anyone, he would always go home to his darkroom, develop it and bring it back so they could see it first.”

Ross insists the exhibit has nothing to do with her grandfather’s politics, which, truth to tell, she never much aligned with. But she admits raising

funds for the project – which involved partnering with the University of Arizona Center for Creative Photography, the Heard Museum in Phoenix and the Hayden Library in Tempe, where archives of the photo collection are spread out – was made easier thanks to the lasting political influence of the Goldwater name. Much of the funding was supplied by Salt River Project, whose progress in the 1960s was aided by Goldwater’s lobbying.

“I remember something my grandfather told me when I was around 18 or 19. He said, ‘Alison, never be afraid to ask somebody for a favor, because I’ve done a lot of favors for people.’ And it’s turned out to be true. People are happy to honor him.”

For Ross, the exhibit is an opportunity to show the world the artistic side of her celebrated grandfather, whom she says seldom took the family on trips without his trusty Nikon strapped around his neck. “That was just part of his regular attire.”

Some of Goldwater’s love of photography

"Big Country," circa 1953, photographed by Barry M. Goldwater between the towns of McNary and Springerville in the White Mountain area. In the distance is an extinct volcanic cone



passed on to his descendants: Ross's cousin Anna Goldwater Alexander is now director of photography for *WIRED*, and her 16-year-old daughter, Esme, last March completed her own photo project – joining protesters in Atlanta to document that city's March for Our Lives against gun violence.

Ross, too, is now thoroughly consumed by the photographic arts. She is overseeing the continued digitization of her grandfather's photos, negatives and slides at the Heard, the University of Arizona

and Arizona State University, restoring 3,000 feet of film Goldwater shot on a 1940 Colorado River journey and exploring the possibilities of taking the photo exhibit on a nationwide tour.

"Because of who he was, he had access to people and places in Arizona that many people didn't," she says. "Plus, he knew the state was growing, and he understood the importance of capturing the history.

"He knew what was happening," she adds. "And I feel it's my mission now to save these images before they disappear." ❖