



The Politics of Murder: Organized Crime in Barry Goldwater's Arizona

Dave Wagner

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"A fascinating new book by Dave Wagner ... makes an important contribution." --Jon Talton, "Rogue Columnist," May 31, 2016. The Politics of Murder is a history of organized crime in Phoenix, Arizona from the prosperity of World War II to the end of the 20th century. It is a history of unsolved murders that includes figures like Willie Bioff, a society gangster who was killed for double-crossing a Tucson kingpin on an unpaid loan. Phoenix crime boss Gus Greenbaum was a friend of the state's most powerful politicians and helped develop the Las Vegas casino industry. He was rewarded with a grisly murder that is still officially unsolved. Land-fraud king Ned Warren stole nearly a billion dollars from veterans and retirees and got away with it for years because the Phoenix political network protected him even as he eliminated a dozen witnesses to his crimes. All of these killings remained unsolved at the time of the most notorious murder of them all, the 1976 car-bombing death of Arizona Republic reporter Don Bolles; his offense was to investigate a tip that one of the most powerful men in the state was working with the Chicago Ouffit to launder money from Las Vegas slot machines through Phoenix racetracks. The motive for killing Bolles related to evidence he uncovered about the Las Vegas money laundering, but his murder remained unsolved for entirely different reasons. Solving Bolles' killing would have revealed a carefully kept secret: In an early example of regime change, Barry Goldwater's political operation, using both legal and covert means, was then forcing out of office the president of the Navajo Nation because he refused, during the energy crisis of the 1970s, to submit to an energy policy imposed by Washington. The chief assassin in the Bolles case had been hired only months earlier to work undercover as part of the covert effort to remove the Navajo president. It had to remain a secret at all costs, and it was—until the publication of The Politics of Murder.

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