

From JenniferL: Here is Bjorn's take on Lincoln day that he posted on facebook (4.17.14):

"I admit to having a fun time at Kootenai County's 2014 Lincoln Day dinner. I was excited to learn that I was seated at the Governor's table, and right away I got Gov. Butch Otter to tell me stories of his time in the Liberty Caucus with Ron Paul. Gov Otter spoke about the seafood Friday lunches Dr. Paul would provide, and how he and the other members (he mentioned Walter Jones and Jimmy Duncan) would take turns researching an issue, and then reporting back to the group.

I left the table to mingle (and thereby I almost convinced State Controller candidate Todd Hatfield to enter a poetry slam with me), and when I came back I was ousted out of my seat by Gov. Otter's staff. I was disappointed, but honestly, I think I learned more from my new table mates than I would have at the head table. I sat next to Alan Goulob, our local bitcoin advocate, and a public relations consultant from Sandpoint. We dissected the speeches. Not the content, but, sitting alongside a communications professional, we critiqued their message delivery skills. Treasurer Ron Crane, running unopposed, got our table's award for best speech. Later on, I asked an inebriated Republican official to introduce me to him, and he drunkenly motioned for Phil McGrane, candidate for ID Secretary of State. I told him I liked his yard signs.

Ruthie Johnson, the 90 year old State Committeewoman (my counterpart, as I am State Committeeman), received the warmest reception, as she got loud applause and a standing ovation when Rep. Raul Labrador pointed her out and said that "if she ever supports a candidate, you'd better listen, she knows what she is talking about). This was a brilliant set-up for Lawrence Denney's home run when he later that night announced Ruthie as his campaign co-chair. The public relations guy whispered to me at that point "I guess that race is over". But my favorite aspect of Lincoln Day was not the food, the speeches, or any of the nakedly political machinations. I just like watching people, interacting with them. Learning who has a sense of humor, or meander around a philosophical conversation without posturing.

It is a testament to our civility that we can interact with political rivals at all. I understand that. Almost all of us feel that our shared future is at stake. And so even with stakes so high, that we can charm and be charmed by people who are pulling in a different direction, maybe we can take some hope from that. When we can't even sit in the same room, and comment on Gulf shrimp or joke about poetry slams, then we'll know we've slipped down another notch."