

Bethlehem Moment 2: Bethlehem Mourns

The Bethlehem Gadfly Bethlehem Moments, Fun Stuff, Gadfly's posts November 21, 2018

Bethlehem Moment 2

City Council

Nov 20, 2018

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A Bethlehem Moment: November 8, 1961

In Berlin August 1961, the Communists built a wall, and in Bethlehem November 1961 fourteen young men joined a U.S. Army expanding to meet an escalating international crisis. Before these “boys” touched a uniform, much less a weapon, they were dead, incinerated in a tragic plane crash near Richmond on the way to basic training. Their deaths hit the town hard. They were our neighbors, living on Broad St, Center, Brodhead. Though aged 17-22 – yes, one was 17 – they were “boys” to us. Their high school class pictures stared at us from the obituaries. They lived at home with Mom and Dad, had nicknames from cowboy heroes, pets that followed them everywhere, girls they didn’t want to leave, careers on hold. Some had never flown before. We gasped at the terror of the phone that rings in the dead of night. We watched helplessly as hope drained away. We grieved with mothers who ran shrieking from houses, never to be the same again. We shrugged shoulders with fathers who had premonitions of disaster. We were reminded through our shared mourning that we are a town not just a geographically framed collection of individuals. We were reminded that there is no such thing as a “cold” war. Lest we forget these valuable lessons, we erected a monument, which now resides in the Rose Garden.

For a more detailed description of this event, see the “Bethlehem Pays the Price for Freedom 1961” post dated Nov. 18.