



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #164 — JUNE 20, 2012

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Bush 9/11 Failure

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, June 20, 2012)

Here's a good rule of thumb for understanding what goes on in American politics: Always believe the opposite of what any Republican politician (or anyone who makes a living off Republicans) tells you! I've been employing this simple crap-detector for quite some time now, and I find it to be an invaluable tool in the quest to discover the truth.

"New NSA Documents Contradict Bush Administration 9/11 Claims" by Jordan Michael Smith, *Salon*

June 19, 2012, (http://www.salon.com/2012/06/19/new_nsa_docs_reveal_911_truths/)



("I don't think the Bush administration would want to see these released," an expert tells Salon.)

Over 120 CIA documents concerning 9/11, Osama bin Laden and counterterrorism were published today for the first time, having been newly declassified and released to the National Security Archive. The documents were released after the NSA pored through the footnotes of the 9/11 Commission and sent Freedom of Information Act requests.

The material contains much new information about the hunt before and after 9/11 for bin Laden, the development of the drone campaign in AfPak, and al-Qaida's relationship with America's ally, Pakistan. Perhaps most damning are the documents showing that the CIA had bin Laden in its cross hairs a full year before 9/11 — but didn't get the funding from the Bush administration White House to take him out or even continue monitoring him. The CIA materials directly contradict the many claims of Bush officials that it was aggressively pursuing al-Qaida prior to 9/11, and that nobody could have predicted the attacks. "I don't think the Bush administration would want to see these released, because they paint a picture of the CIA knowing something would happen before 9/11, but they didn't get the institutional support they needed," says Barbara Elias-Sanborn, the NSA fellow who edited the materials.

Let's start there. In 2000 and 2001, the CIA began using Predator Unmanned Aerial Vehicles in Afghanistan. "The idea of using UAVs originated in April 2000 as a result of a request from the NSC's Coordinator for Counterterrorism to the CIA and the Department of Defense to come up with new ideas to go after the terrorists in Afghanistan," a 2004 document summarizes. The Pentagon approved the plan for surveillance purposes.

And yet, simultaneously, the CIA declared that budget concerns were forcing it to move its Counterterrorism Center/Osama bin Laden Unit from an "offensive" to a "defensive" posture. For the CIA, that meant trying to get Afghan tribal leaders and the Northern Alliance to kill or capture bin Laden, Elias-Sanborn says. "It was forced to be less of a kinetic operation," she says. "It had to be only for surveillance, which was not what they considered an offensive posture."

"Budget concerns ... CT [counterterrorism] supplemental still at NSC-OMB [National Security Council – Office of Management and Budget] level," an April 2000 document reads. "Need forward movement on supplemental soonest due to expected early recess due to conventions, campaigning and elections." In addition, the Air Force told the CIA that if it lost a drone, the CIA would have to pay for it, which made the agency more reluctant to use the technology.

Still, the drone program began in September 2000. One drone swiftly twice observed an individual "most likely to have been Bin Laden." But since the CIA only had permission to use the drones for intelligence gathering, it had no way to act on its findings. The agency submitted a proposal to the National Security Council staff in December 2000 that would have significantly expanded the program. "It was too late for the departing Clinton Administration to take action on this strategic request," however. It wasn't too late for the Bush administration, though. It just never did.

Former National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice has taken credit for the drone program that the Bush administration ignored. "Things like working to get an armed Predator that actually turned out to be extraordinarily important, working to get a strategy that would allow us to get better cooperation from Pakistan and from the Central Asians," she said in 2006. "We were not left a comprehensive strategy to fight al-Qaida." Rice claimed that the Bush administration continued the Clinton administration's counterterrorism policies, a claim the documents disprove. "If the administration wanted to get it done, I'm sure they could have gotten it done," says Elias-Sanborn.

Many of the documents publicize for the first time what was first made clear in the 9/11 Commission: The White House received a truly remarkable amount of warnings that al-Qaida was trying to attack the United States. From June to September 2001, a full seven CIA Senior Intelligence Briefs detailed that attacks were imminent, an incredible amount of information from one intelligence agency. One from June called "Bin-Ladin and Associates Making Near-Term Threats" writes that "[redacted] expects Usama Bin Laden to launch multiple attacks over the coming days." The famous August brief called "Bin Ladin Determined to Strike the U.S." is included. "Al-Qai'da members, including some U.S. citizens, have resided in or travelled to the U.S. for years, and the group apparently maintains a support structure here," it says. During the entire month of August, President Bush was on vacation at his ranch in Texas — which tied with one of Richard Nixon's as the longest vacation ever taken by a president. CIA Director George Tenet has said he didn't speak to Bush once that month, describing the president as being "on leave." Bush did not hold a Principals' meeting on terrorism until September 4, 2001, having downgraded the meetings to a deputies' meeting, which then-counterterrorism czar Richard Clarke has repeatedly said slowed down anti-Bin Laden efforts "enormously, by months."

For all the information the documents reveal, one huge matter is conspicuously absent: torture. There are nearly 50 CIA documents relating to such matters as the interrogation of 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and the intelligence gleaned from him, and yet "none of them were declassified at all," notes Elias-Sanborn. "Certainly, the CIA has a stake in revealing what they did," and they clearly do not want to reveal their complicity in war crimes.

One last thing is worth mentioning from the documents published today: Anyone with any doubt that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is dangerous to the United States is contradicting U.S. intelligence. "Violence between Israelis and the Palestinians, moreover is making Sunni extremists more willing to participate in attacks against U.S. or Israeli interests," the CIA wrote in February 2001. It is not the only piece of information revealed by the new documents that will be deeply uncomfortable for the Bush administration and hawks across the country.

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20120619-01	06:38	Tom	"Do You Think America Makes Plans a Thousand Years Out?"
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"Do You Think America Makes Plans a Thousand Years Out?" by Maj.Gen. Jerry Curry, Ret., SodaHead

Apr. 1, 2012, (<http://www.sodahead.com/united-states/do-you-think-america-makes-plans-a-thousand-years-out---we-are-not-allies-we-are-still-the-i/question-2555987/>)

The great British poet Rudyard Kipling, understanding today's situation in Afghanistan better than our State Department wrote, "I have eaten your bread and salt. I have drunk your water and wine. The deaths ye died I have watched beside. And the lives ye led were mine."

There are two points the President and the Secretaries of State and Defense may want to keep in mind as they evaluate future problems in the Middle East and how to successfully address them. Both are easiest illustrated by real life happenings.

Many years ago I attended the Infantry officer Advanced Course at Fort Benning, Georgia. Probably ten percent of the students attending that ten month course of instruction were from foreign countries. For about half of the course my tablemate was an Arab. We studied together, completed homework assignments together, got to know each other's families and generally enjoyed each other's company. Part of that time we students were immersed in reading about, researching and discussing wars and problems of the Middle East. By this time my Arab classmate and I had, I thought, become close friends. A question popped into my mind and without evaluating it I said, "I have a question to ask you, but you may find it a little impertinent ... or, perhaps, offensive."

"That's quite alright," he replied. "We know each other well enough to be honest with each other. So go ahead and ask your question."

"Well," I began. "Each time you Arabs start a war with Israel, they beat your socks off. Why don't you learn your lesson and quit making war on them?"

The words hadn't passed my lips before I knew that I shouldn't have asked that particular question. But I was wrong. My Arab officer friend didn't get angry. He didn't even think before replying.

"My dear friend," he said in his British accent, "You are absolutely right. Each time we attack the Israelis they whip our asses. But have you noticed that with each loss we get better. We get whipped not as badly as in the war before."

Then he got a faraway look in his eyes, pounded on the table and said, "Sometime in the next thousand years ... we will win!"

Up until then I had never thought in terms of a thousand years, and I don't think I'm very good at it today. But for those formulating foreign and defense policy for the nation, it is worth making the effort. For it is difficult to think in terms of the immediate future while negotiating with a nation whose leaders are thinking in terms of hundreds or thousands of years.

Point two: during the first Gulf War U.S. and Arab forces fought side by side and some of the officers became close friends. When the war ended in victory there was a celebration in the officer's club with everyone congratulating each other.

A lot of handshaking and hugging was going on. It was a time of displaying real brotherly love.

Seeing this, one of the senior Arab generals felt the needed to set the record straight. "Look," he said to a small cluster of American generals. "We have fought together and some of us have died together. I know you feel that that makes us brothers.

But that is not the way it is in my world."

He looked around the circle making eye contact with all of them. "I don't want to see you hurt so I need to share this with you. There will be no tomorrow for us jointly.

No matter how much you have helped my country — and you came and helped us when we desperately needed your help — and no matter how friendly you feel toward us, we are still Muslims and you are still Christians. That means that in our eyes, we can never be brothers. I'm sorry but, to us, you will always be — Infidels!"

And so we Infidels have liberated Iraq and Afghanistan, but we have not made their countries nor their people depositories of freedom and liberty. No matter how hard we work to rebuild their governments, infrastructure, educational and medical institutions, and no matter how desperately they need our help — as the Arab general pointedly noted — we can never be brothers to each other.

Also, I learned what Kipling meant when he wrote, "East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet."

He was pointing out to the western world that to Muslims, we Christians will always be infidels!

20120619-02	10:12	Pam	Fw: 5 Minute Management Course
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I hope this gives you a chuckle.

[Source of original email unknown. —SteveB]

5 Minute Management Course

Lesson 1:

A man is getting into the shower just as his wife is finishing up her shower, when the doorbell rings. The wife quickly wraps herself in a towel and runs downstairs. When she opens the door, there stands Bob, the next-door neighbor. Before she says a word, Bob says, "I'll give you \$800 to drop that towel."

After thinking for a moment, the woman drops her towel and stands naked in front of Bob, after a few seconds, Bob hands her \$800 and leaves.. The woman wraps back up in the towel and goes back upstairs. When she gets to the bathroom, her husband asks, "Who was that?"

"It was Bob the next door neighbor" she replies.

"Great," the husband says, "Did he say anything about the \$800 he owes me?"

Moral of the story: If you share critical information pertaining to credit and risk with your shareholders in time, you may be in a position to prevent avoidable exposure.

Lesson 2:

A priest offered a Nun a lift. She got in and crossed her legs, forcing her gown to reveal a leg. The priest nearly had an accident. After regaining control of the car, he stealthily slid his hand up her leg.

The nun said, "Father, remember Psalm 129?"

The priest removed his hand, but after changing gears, he let his hand slide up her leg again. The nun once again said, "Father, remember Psalm 129?"

The priest apologized, "Sorry sister but the flesh is weak."

Arriving at the convent, the nun sighed heavily and went on her way.

On his arrival at the church, the priest rushed to look up Psalm 129. It said, "Go forth and seek, further up, you will find glory."

Moral of the story: If you are not well informed in your job, you might miss a great opportunity.

Lesson 3:

A sales rep, an administration clerk, and their manager are walking to lunch when they find an antique oil lamp. They rub it and a Genie comes out. The Genie says, "I'll give each of you just one wish."

"Me first! Me first!" says the admin clerk. "I want to be in the Bahamas, driving a speedboat, without a care in the world."

Puff! She's gone.

"Me next! Me next!" says the sales rep. "I want to be in Hawaii, relaxing on the beach with my personal masseuse, an endless supply of Pina Coladas and the love of my life."

Puff! He's gone.

"OK, you're up," the Genie says to the manager.

The manager says, "I want those two back in the office after lunch."

Moral of the story: Always let your boss have the first say.

Lesson 4

An eagle was sitting on a tree resting, doing nothing. A small rabbit saw the eagle and asked him, "Can I also sit like you and do nothing?"

The eagle answered, "Sure, why not."

So, the rabbit sat on the ground below the eagle and rested. All of a sudden, a fox appeared, jumped on the rabbit and ate it.

Moral of the story: To be sitting and doing nothing, you must be sitting very, very high up.

Lesson 5

A turkey was chatting with a bull. "I would love to be able to get to the top of that tree" sighed the turkey, "but I haven't got the energy."

"Well, why don't you nibble on some of my droppings?" replied the bull. "They're packed with nutrients."

The turkey pecked at a lump of dung, and found it actually gave him enough strength to reach the lowest branch of the tree. The next day, after eating some more dung, he reached the second branch. Finally after a fourth night, the turkey was proudly perched at the top of the tree.

He was promptly spotted by a farmer, who shot him out of the tree.

Moral of the story: Bullsh*t might get you to the top, but it won't keep you there.

Lesson 6

A little bird was flying south for the winter. It was so cold the bird froze and fell to the ground into a large field. While he was lying there, a cow came by and dropped some dung on him. As the frozen bird lay there in the pile of cow dung, he began to realize how warm he was. The dung was actually thawing him out! He lay there all warm and happy, and soon began to sing for joy.

A passing cat heard the bird singing and came to investigate. Following the sound, the cat discovered the bird under the pile of cow dung, and promptly dug him out and ate him.

Morals of the story:

1. Not everyone who sh*ts on you is your enemy.
2. Not everyone who gets you out of sh*t is your friend.
3. When you're in deep sh*t, it's best to keep your mouth shut!

20120619-03	13:21	SteveB	"Corporate Feelings"
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"Corporate Feelings" by Robert Reich, NationofChange

June 19, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/corporate-feelings-1340111582>)

Perhaps you'd expect no more from the Republican leader of the Senate who proclaimed three years ago that the GOP's first priority was to get Obama out of the White House.

But Senator Mitch McConnell's speech Friday at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington is simply bonkers.

The only reason I bring it up is because it offers an inside look at how the Republican goal of getting rid of Obama is inextricably linked to the Republican Supreme Court's decision equating corporations with people under the First Amendment, and to the Republican's current determination to keep Americans in the dark about which corporations contribute what.

In the upside-down world of regressive Republicanism, McConnell thinks proposed legislation requiring companies to disclose their campaign spending would stifle their free speech.

He describes the current push to disclose the sources behind campaign contributions as a “political weapon,” used by the Democrats, “to expose its critics to harassment and intimidation.”

Harassment and intimidation? It used to be called accountability to shareholders and consumers.

Five members of the Supreme Court think corporations are people. Mitt Romney agrees. And now the minority leader of the Senate – the highest-ranking Republican official in America – takes this logic to its absurd conclusion: If corporations are people, they must be capable of feeling harassed and intimidated if their shareholders or consumers don’t approve of their political expenditures.

Hell, they might even throw a tantrum. Or cry.

But what exactly are corporations anyway, separate and apart from their shareholders and consumers? Legal fictions, pieces of paper.

And whom do corporations exist for if not the people who legally own them and those who purchase the products and services they sell?

Clearly, McConnell doesn’t want corporations to be forced to disclose their political contributions because he and other Republicans worry that some shareholders and consumers would react badly if they knew – and thereby constrain such giving.

And the reason McConnell and other Republicans don’t want any constraint on corporate political giving is most CEOs are Republicans who want to use their firms – and the money their shareholders legally own – as secret slush funds for the Republican Party, funneled through front groups like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and Crossroads GPS.

Crossroads GPS has disclosed on its tax returns that 23 donors to it have each given \$1 million or more to finance its campaign activities. But Crossroads claims status as a charity under IRS rules – a “social welfare” organization” that doesn’t have to disclose its donors – even though anyone with half a brain knows its overriding purpose is to influence elections.

McConnell and other Republicans conveniently forget secret campaign money was at the heart of the Watergate scandals forty years ago. And that even the Supreme Court in its heinous “Citizens United” decision upheld the constitutionality of disclosure requirements on corporations and other outside groups.

Mitch McConnell wants to give some cover to his Republican colleagues who will be voting later this month or early next month on the bill to force full disclosure of corporate political expenses. But his speech at the American Enterprise Institute doesn’t provide cover. It cloaks the whole Republican enterprise in political bunk.

20120619-04	14:31	SteveB	From the Right: “Now Korea Is Cleaning Our Clock”
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I can’t help but agree with this guy when he talks about trade.

“Now Korea Is Cleaning Our Clock” by: Patrick J. Buchanan, *Human Events*

June 19, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/2012/06/19/now-korea-is-cleaning-our-clock/>)

The entry into force of the U.S.-Korea trade agreement on March 15, 2012, means countless new opportunities for U.S. exporters to sell more made-in-America goods, services and agricultural products to Korean customers -- and to support more good jobs here at home.

Thus did the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative rhapsodize about the potential of our new trade treaty with South Korea.

And how has it worked out for Uncle Sam?

Well, courtesy of Martin Crutsinger of The Associated Press, the trade figures are in for April, the first full month under the trade deal with South Korea.

And, surprise! The U.S. trade deficit with Korea tripled in one month. Imports from South Korea jumped 15 percent to \$5.5 billion in April, while U.S. exports to South Korea fell 12 percent to \$3.7 billion. Suddenly, the U.S. trade deficit with Seoul surged to an annual rate of \$22 billion.

Shades of NAFTA. When it passed in 1993, we had a \$1.6 billion trade surplus with Mexico. By 2010, our trade deficit with Mexico had reached \$61.6 billion.

There is other news of interest in those trade figures for those who chronicle the industrial decline of the United States.

In 2011, America ran the largest trade deficit ever with a single nation, \$295.4 billion, with China. But this year, the U.S. trade deficit with China is running 12 percent ahead of 2011.

And the U.S. trade deficit with the world is now back up over \$600 billion a year.

What do these mammoth and mounting deficits mean?

A deepening dependence on foreign nations for the necessities of our national life. A steady erosion of our manufacturing base. A continued stagnation in the real wages of the middle class. And an unending redistribution of America's wealth to foreign lands.

It is no coincidence that the real wages of U.S. workers ceased to rise in the mid-1970s, just as a century of U.S. trade surpluses was coming to an end.

In 1975, we began three decades of trade deficits that grew until, in the Bush II years, they reached 8 percent of the entire economy. These deficits helped to precipitate the Great Recession and helped to prevent our rescue from it.

For just as a trade surplus adds to the gross domestic product of a nation, a trade deficit subtracts from it, substituting foreign goods for U.S.-made goods.

If one would, in a sitting of a single hour, understand where and why America converted from the economic patriotism of Washington, Hamilton, Jefferson, Madison, Jackson, Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt and Cal Coolidge to the free-trade ideology of academics and ideologues, none of whom ever built a great nation, let me commend a splendid pamphlet from The Conservative Caucus.

The Conservative Case Against Free Trade, by Ian Fletcher and William Shearer, is a brisk walk through the trade and tariff history of the republic. It is a short story of national decline, of how a nation that converted itself in its first century from 13 agricultural colonies into the greatest industrial power the world had ever seen began to kick it all away in the third century of its existence.

It is a chronicle of the rise and fall of the United States as a sovereign and self-sufficient republic.

The knock on economic nationalists is that they really do not believe in trade.

This is nonsense. Like libertarians, economic patriots believe in untrammelled free trade among the states of the Union.

They believe in the 14th Amendment's equal protection of the law. U.S. wage-and-hour laws, civil rights laws and environmental laws should apply equally to factories from New York to New Mexico and from Alabama to Arizona. If

states wish to adopt their own right-to-work laws or abolish corporate income taxes, that is free and fair competition.

Global free trade is an altogether different matter.

If you move your factory to Mexico, Guatemala, Vietnam, China or Bangladesh, the 14th Amendment no longer applies.

Global free trade means U.S. workers compete with Asian and Latin American workers whose wages are a fraction of our own and whose benefits may be nonexistent. Global free trade means U.S factories that relocate to Indonesia or India need not observe U.S. laws on health, safety, pollution or paying a minimum wage.

Global free trade means that companies that move factories outside the United States can send their products back to the United States free of charge and undercut businessmen who retain their American workers and live within American laws.

Free trade makes suckers and fools out of patriots.

Anticipating the Davos crowd, Thomas Jefferson wrote: **"Merchants have no country. The mere spot they stand on does not constitute so strong an attachment as that from which they draw their gains."**

Instead of a trade policy crafted for the benefit of multinationalist corporations, we need a new trade policy that puts America and Americans first.

20120619-05	16:01	Art	"We're All Going to Hell or to Sweden"
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This is good not to share. Go all the way to the end please.

"We're All Going to Hell or to Sweden" by Bryan Revoner, Jonesboro Public Policy Examiner

June 18, 2012, (<http://www.examiner.com/article/dr-monica-crowley-drops-the-sweden-bomb>)

Fox News might not be fair and balanced, but it is definitely hilarious and unbelievable at times, and once again it has delivered with this latest interview between Dr. Monica Crowley and "The Factor's" Bill O'Reilly. Crowley was appearing on the "Factor" to promote her new book, called *What the (Bleep) Just Happened?*

Now knowing Fox News and knowing Dr. Monica Crowley, it shouldn't be too difficult to imagine the political content of this book. And if you guessed that this book is an anti-Obama, pro-conservative book, then you guessed correctly, because that is precisely what it is.

And in typical conservative fashion, Crowley goes after President Obama just in time for the 2012 elections, and she does it with some very interesting, yet somewhat predictable accusations. She starts by telling O'Reilly the usual, conservative talking points of how Obama's only mission in life is to destroy the goals and principles that made America so great, as evident by her discontent with the spiraling, sixteen-trillion-dollar debt and the high unemployment numbers, which she blames wholly on President Obama's failed, economic policies.

But the most interesting tidbit of information that Crowley shared with O'Reilly and the Fox News audience in her hot, new book is the startling, new revelation that President Obama is not the person that he says he is—basically an imposter, which is a sentiment that has been echoed before, specifically by people like Donald Trump and his Birther brigade.

So are you ready for this? You might want to sit down. According to Dr. Monica Crowley, President Obama is as close to being a card-carrying member of communism as one can be without actually living in China or Russia, and

it didn't stop there. Apparently, President Obama's father, Barack Obama Sr., was part of a socialist organization in Kenya, and his mother, Ann Dunham, was a regular member of a place described by Crowley as the Little Red Church—red meaning communist red and this was the upbringing that a young Obama was subjected to and indoctrinated by.

It could have ended there, but it didn't, because O'Reilly asked this one fateful question of Crowley, as she was busy spewing her new, communist-Obama plot. O'Reilly asked her to specifically state what President Obama's communist plot had in mind to turn America into—what country, what place? Crowley then tried to dodge the question with more of her destruction of America by Obama propaganda, but O'Reilly pressed her into a corner and demanded that she name a place that America would be morphed into if Obama the communist could have his way?

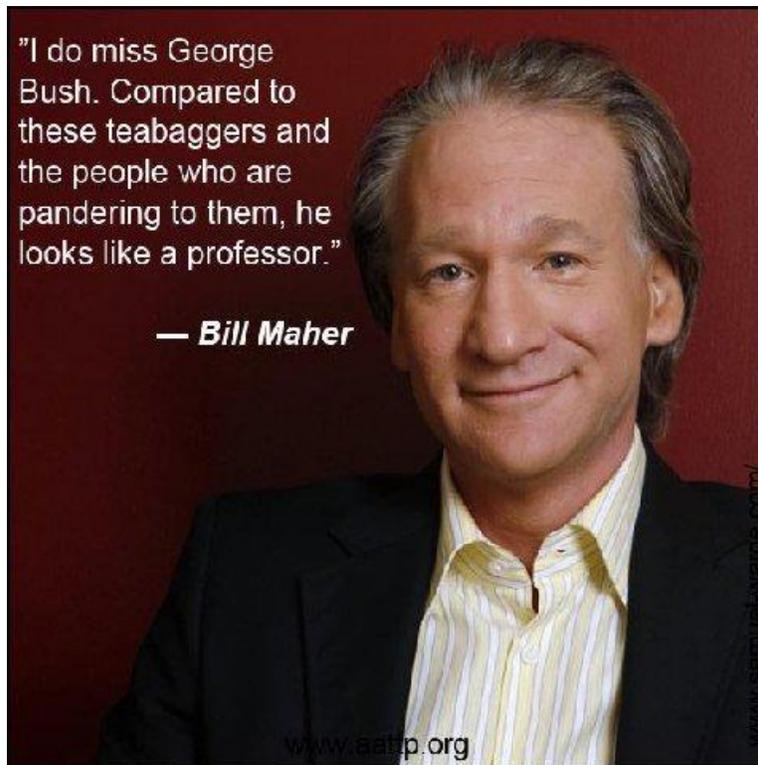
And, you are not going to believe what Crowley came up with! After all of her communism talk and communist accusations against President Obama, his mother and his father, Crowley finally looked O'Reilly in the eye and said that the country that Obama the communist is just dying to turn America into is—Sweden!

Yes, she said Sweden! Out of all of the countries that I just knew that she was going to name, Sweden was not one of them. I literally passed out in laughter, because nothing will scare the conservative voters to the polls in November to vote for Mitt Romney like the horrendous possibilities of Sweden.

In fact, the U.S. Department of State does not even recognize Sweden as a communist country. It has Sweden labeled as a Constitutional Monarchy. So if President Obama is a communist, he's not a very good one, because he obviously doesn't know enough about communist countries to pick one when he chooses one to model the United States after! Even O'Reilly chuckled in disbelief at Crowley's Sweden theory.

First President Obama was a secret Muslim, a terrorist, and a Black liberationist. Then, he was a secret, Kenyan citizen with a forged birth certificate. And now, he's a secret, Black communist who wants to be the leader of a Swedish, Constitutional Monarchy. What will they think of next?

[OMFG! Not Sweden? We're not becoming like Sweden, surely? That would be so un-American! Sweden is one of the happiest nations on Earth—maybe not a good direction for a bunch of anal-retentive Puritans! I mean, where's the existential pain we require if we end up being commies like Sweden? –SteveB]



[“Buy yer books and buy yer books and all ya ever do is eat the pages.” (old southern Hoosierism) –SteveB]

“Michigan Man Has 29 College Degrees and Counting” by Christina Ng, “Good Morning America”/ABC News

June 18, 2012, (<http://gma.yahoo.com/michigan-man-29-college-degrees-counting-191653707--abc-news-topstories.html>)

Every June, students all over the country don their caps and gowns for graduation. Whether it's from high school, college or graduate school, most people could easily count their own graduations on one hand.

But not 71-year-old Michael Nicholson of Kalamazoo, Mich. Nicholson has earned 29 degrees and is now pursuing his 30th.

"I just stayed in school and took menial jobs to pay for the education and just made a point of getting more degrees and eventually I retired so that I could go full-time to school," Nicholson told ABCNews.com.

"It's stimulation to go to the class, look at the material that's required and meet the teacher and students. It makes life interesting for me," he said. "Otherwise, things would be pretty dull."

Nicholson has one bachelor's degree, two associate's degrees, 22 master's degrees, three specialist degrees and one doctoral degree.

Most of the degrees are related to education such as educational leadership, library science and school psychology, but other degrees include home economics, health education and law enforcement.

Nicholson is currently working on a master's degree in criminal justice.

"I would like to get to 33 or 34. I'm almost there," he said. "When I complete that, I'll feel like I've completed my basic education. After that, if I'm still alive -- that would take me to 80 or 81 -- I would then be free to pursue any type of degree."

Nicholson's early interest in education came from the encouragement of his parents, who wanted him to be well-educated. His Canadian father was forced to drop out of school after the third grade to work and his mother graduated from high school.

"We were motivated to continue with our educations and go as far as we could go," he said of himself and his siblings. "She [his mother] wanted something better for us than simply working at a factory, so she kept doing the necessary for us to continue."

Nicholson's first degree was a bachelor's in religious education from William Tyndale College in Michigan in 1963.

Five degrees later, he was pursuing his doctorate in education from Western Michigan University in 1978.

While pursuing the doctorate, he met Western Michigan University Professor Tom Carey when Nicholson was working as a parking lot attendant writing tickets for the university. He wrote Carey three tickets in one day and the two have now known each other for 35 years.

"I've had 18,000 students in class and I've never heard of anybody like this," Carey told ABCNews.com. "He's the ultimate life-long learner. I marvel at his tenacity to go to school."

Nicholson has earned all of his degrees; none of them have been honorary or awarded degrees. Though Carey was never Nicholson's professor, the two meet at least once a year for Nicholson to give Carey an updated resume, which he shows students in his classes.

"He's intrinsically motivated. It's unique, but it almost sounds bizarre," Carey said. "Some people collect animals and he collects tassels."

And collect tassels he does. Nicholson has been to 28 of his 29 graduation ceremonies.

What does he enjoy about the graduation ceremonies? "Just the pomp and circumstance. ... I could do without the speeches," he said with a laugh.

"Eventually, it became getting as many as I could," he said. "There's the excitement of graduation, but the overall objective was to get the degree."

He has earned degrees from a dozen schools in places including Michigan, Texas, Indiana and Canada, and he always goes to class.

"I would not take an Internet class. That's far too difficult," Nicholson said. "I'm not one of those all-A students."

He still works on a typewriter and his wife Sharon Nicholson helps him type up his assignments. His wife is highly educated in her own right, with seven degrees of her own.

"She helps me with my homework all the time," he said. "I cannot function on a computer, so she has to do it."

When asked what advice he would give to recent graduates, Nicholson paused before saying, "Don't quit too soon. Keep up with your aspirations. A lot of people tend to throw in the towel and have to come back to it later. Don't give up on your aspirations too soon."

And the admittedly competitive Nicholson has no plans to give up on his own aspirations, hinting that he has his eye on a few more degrees in the next few years.

"He likes going to school and doesn't want responsibility," Carey said. "This is what Mike lives for. He's about 70 and he's not going to stop. It wouldn't surprise me if at one point he tried law school or something else."



There's gridlock in Washington to put America back to work and fix our crumbling infrastructure.



Bernie Sanders, Vermont Senator and
Conscience of Congress

"You have a republican mindset that says 'Hmm, we can repair the infrastructure, save money long term, create millions of jobs—bad idea. Barack Obama will look good, and we've got to do everything we can to make Barack Obama look bad.'"

~ June 12, 2012 comment by Bernie Sanders on Tea Party-controlled House of Reps that blocked movement on bi-partisan Senate-passed infrastructure spending bill

Who could be responsible for that?

<http://fineartamerica.com/featured/pitons-at-sunset-st-lucia-chester-williams.html>

"Pitons At Sunset" (St Lucia), by Chester Williams



—Friends of the Middle,
Steven W. Baker (SteveB), Editor/Moderator

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