



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #196 — AUG. 3, 2012

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INDEX: Click here.

Will He Get Away With It?

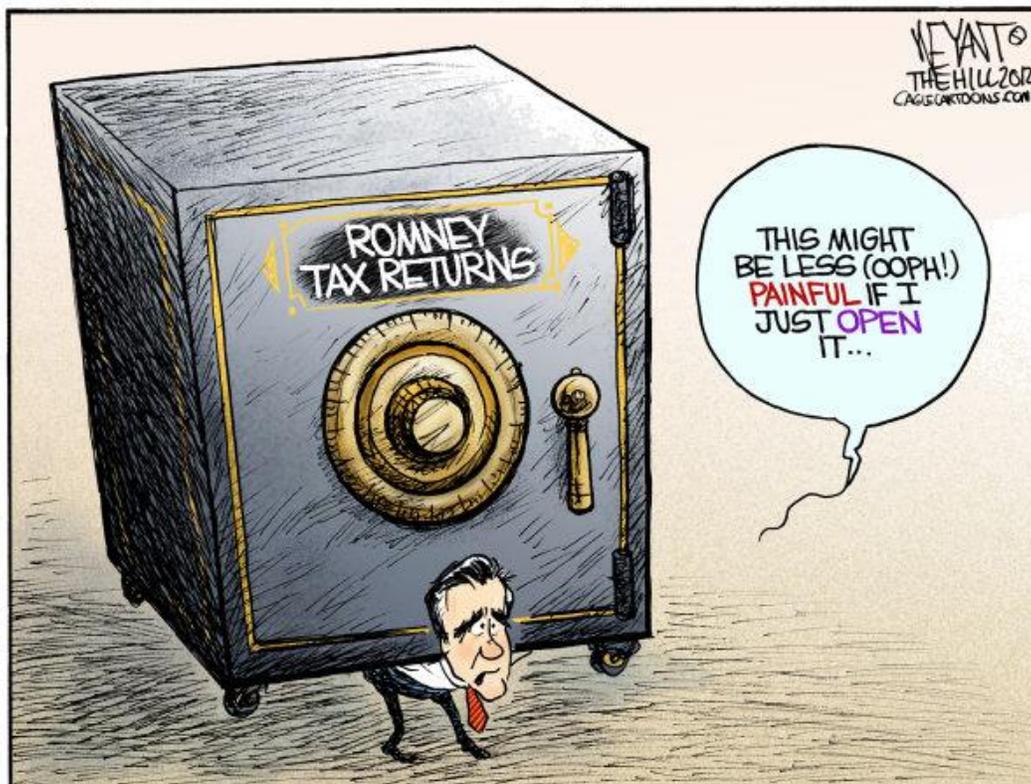
(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Aug. 3, 2012)

Everyone knows our “#1 Foreign Affairs Expert” is hiding something big. For how much longer?

“10 Theories About What Mitt Romney’s Really Hiding in Those Tax Returns” by Joshua Holland, AlterNet

Aug. 1, 2012, (<http://www.alternet.org/election-2012/10-theories-about-what-mitt-romneys-really-hiding-those-tax-returns>)

Everyone knows it's something that would damage an already weak candidate, but nobody knows exactly what it is.



Mitt Romney knows how to do a cost-benefit analysis, and he's determined that it's better to be dogged by reporters for failing to release his tax returns for the duration of the 2012 campaign than it is to make the documents public. Never mind that a majority of Americans – and a third of Republicans – think he should come clean.

It's beyond obvious that whatever's in those returns must be enough to do serious damage to Romney, or even sink his candidacy completely.

What might it be, exactly? In the vacuum Romney has created by not disclosing, any number of theories have been floated as to what his returns could reveal. For your convenience, we've collected 10 theories that are making the rounds in the political press.

1. Mormon Tithes

Mormons are expected to fork over 10 percent of their income to the Church of Latter Day Saints. And that fact leads us to two theories.

First, Rachel Zoll of the Associated Press speculated [3] that Romney doesn't want to remind evangelical Christians that he belongs to what many consider a non-Christian "cult." "The Republican candidate's commitment to the church is a double-edged sword in the contest for the presidential nomination," she wrote. "Many GOP voters are Christians who do not consider Mormons to be part of historic Christianity. Romney supporters worry that details of his church donations contained in the tax returns could fuel opposition to him based on his religion."

But it may be the other way around – perhaps he doesn't want to piss off Mormons. After all, the right-wing *Daily Caller* reported that in 2010 and 2011, the two years for which Romney released partial returns, it looks like the former Mormon bishop under-tithed the church, paying 7 percent of his income one year and 9.7 percent over the two-year period. As the *Caller* noted [4], "Romney recently told Fox News Sunday host Chris Wallace, 'I made a commitment to my church a long, long time ago that I would give 10 percent of my income to the church, and I've followed through on that commitment. So, if I had given less than 10 percent, then I think people would have to look at me and say, 'Hey, what's wrong with you fella — don't you follow through on your promises?'"

Of course, if he were sheltering additional income in offshore accounts, then the degree to which the *Caller* says he shortchanged the Mormons might be even greater.

2. Things That Might Infuriate the Base

Mitt Romney, who just four years ago was dubbed the "conservative alternative" to John McCain is probably, as he claims, "severely conservative." But when he wanted to become governor of Massachusetts, he played to that state's politics, swearing to protect a woman's right to choose, saying that climate change isn't a socialist plot and generally being reasonable. He passed the precursor to Obamacare, which he now condemns as a sign of looming tyranny.

Rick Newman at *US News and World Report* wonders [5] whether Romney really stopped supporting those causes when he claims to have converted himself into a far-right Republican. Could he have a bunch of itemized deductions to, say, Planned Parenthood listed on those returns? We'd be wrong not to speculate.

3. Harry Reid, Lazy Blogger

That's how Wonkette characterized [6] Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid's unsourced, second-hand rumor that Mitt Romney paid no taxes at all over a 10-year period. (This is very unlikely, due to the Alternative Minimum Tax.)

But many, many people have speculated that the reason Mitt doesn't want to reveal his tax returns is that they will show that he paid a significantly lower rate than his campaign has claimed in the years prior to 2010.

4. It's the IRAs

Mitt Romney has an Individual Retirement Account, just like you probably do! But unlike you, Mitt has somewhere between \$20 and \$101 million in his account.

We know that the maximum amount one can contribute to an IRA account is \$17,000 per year (employers can match that with up to \$30,000). So that would be a pretty impressive performance – what an investor!

Or what a cheat. Michael Graetz, a professor of tax law at Columbia University and a former official in the senior Bush's Treasury Department, suggested [7] that to get such a fat IRA, "we have to presume that Mr. Romney valued the assets he put in his retirement account at far less than he would have sold them for."

He continues:

The I.R.A. also allows Mr. Romney to diversify his large holdings tax-free, avoiding the 15 percent tax on capital gains that would otherwise apply. His financial disclosure further reveals that his I.R.A. freed him from paying currently the 35 percent income tax on hundreds of thousands of dollars of interest income each year.

5. The Mini-Mitts

Graetz has a second theory about what Mitt might be hiding, and it also has to do with dramatically undervaluing his assets in order to screw over Uncle Sam.

It has to do with a trust he set up for his five sons in 1995. Graetz explains that until this year, there was a \$1 million life-time exemption on such gifts, and after that they should have been taxed at between 29-44 percent. So Mitt would have been on the hook for between \$29 and \$44 million in gift taxes.

"Based on his aggressive tax planning," writes Graetz, "my bet is that — if Mr. Romney filed a gift tax return for these transfers at all — he put a low or even zero value on the gifts, certainly a small fraction of the price at which he would have sold the transferred assets to an unrelated party."

Wouldn't he get busted with such a brazen strategy to avoid paying taxes? After all, that's some pretty serious tax fraud. Well, catching Mitt in this kind of scheme might be harder than one would think. Graetz explains that "every good tax professional knows that gift tax returns are rarely audited, except after the transferer's death. And normally the I.R.S. cannot challenge such a return after three years from its filing."

6. Is It All About 2009?

BusinessWeek's Joshua Green thinks Romney may not want to reveal his taxes for one year in particular – 2009. That's because Romney probably took some significant losses when the economy crashed in 2008. Green explains [8]:

It's possible he suffered a large enough capital loss that, carried forward and coupled with his various offshore tax havens, he wound up paying no U.S. federal taxes at all in 2009. If true, this would be politically deadly for him...

The "zero tax in 2009" theory—again, this is sheer speculation—gains further sustenance when you consider it's the only year for which nobody knows anything about Romney's taxes. He's revealed what's in his 2010 and 2011 returns, and he reportedly submitted 20-some years' worth of returns to the McCain campaign when he was being vetted for vice president in 2008. Steve Schmidt, McCain's chief strategist in that campaign, said on MSNBC,,, that while he didn't examine Romney's

returns himself, nothing that McCain's vetters found in them disqualified Romney from consideration.

7. CEO, President and Chairman of Bain

You probably know that Mitt claims he retired – or perhaps retired “retroactively” – from Bain Capital in 1999. You probably also know that almost three years later, as the Huffington Post reported [9], “Romney was listed as the CEO, chairman and president of the company... in documents filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission; took a six-figure salary; signed corporate documents related to major and minor deals and attended board meetings for at least two Bain-affiliated companies.”

It's possible that releasing his returns could clarify exactly what involvement he had with Bain after 1999. And that might reveal that Romney was, contrary to his claims [10], involved in Bain's decision to invest in Stericycle, a medical waste company that disposed of aborted fetuses. Ben LaBolt, an Obama campaign spokesman, told Fox News: “If he released more documents, like further tax returns, we would know the extent of his involvement at Bain during this period.”

8. Is Mitt a Felon?

Relatedly, in 2011, Mitt Romney signed a financial disclosure form and sent it to the Federal Election Commission. In it, he stated emphatically that he had no active role in the company after February 1999. That claim appears to be contradicted by a number of other documents.

It's a felony to lie on an FEC financial disclosure form [11]. Some forms of tax evasion are also felonies. Mitt's tax returns might offer proof that he committed a crime.

9. Are There Other Non-Disclosures?

There's lying on a disclosure form, and then there's not filing required forms. The *LA Times* reports [12] that “at least 23 funds and partnerships listed in [Mitt's] 2010 tax returns did not show up or were not listed in the same fashion on Romney's most recent financial disclosure, including 11 based in low-tax foreign countries such as Bermuda, the Cayman Islands and Luxembourg.”

More tax returns might reveal other investments that Romney has failed to disclose, as he is required to do by law.

10. There's Nothing – It's Just His Sense of Entitlement

Esquire's James Wolcott doesn't think there's any there [13]. Sure, Romney's tax returns would provide an object lesson in how the ultra-rich avoid paying their fair share of taxes, but everyone already knows that those at the top of the pile game the system. For Wolcott, the issue comes down to Romney refusing to bow to the little people on principle.

It is helpful always to remind yourself that, in the mind of Willard Romney, there are only two kinds of people — himself and his family, and the Help. Throughout his career, and especially throughout his brief political career, Romney has treated the Help with a kind of lordly disdain...

The Help has no right to go pawing through the family books, giggling at the obvious loopholes and tax dodges, running amok through all the tax shelters, and probably getting their chocolate-y fingerprints all over the pages of the Romney family ledger. And, certainly, those members of the Help in the employ of the president of the United States, who is also part of the Help, have no right to use the nearly comically ostentatious wealth of the Romney as some sort of scimey political weapon. He does not have to answer to the Help. I mean, jeepers, he's running for office.

This isn't stubbornness. That's often an acquired trait. What this is, fundamentally, is contempt. Contempt for the process, and contempt for the people who make their living in that process, and contempt for the people whose lives depend on that process. There are rules for the Help with which Willard Romney never has had to abide, and he has no intention of starting now. My dear young fellow, this simply is not done.

The Most Likely Explanation

Given Romney's refusal to release his returns, this kind of speculation is entirely predictable. But the most likely reason Romney doesn't want to release his returns is that they'll cast a bright light on the aggressive tax avoidance strategies the super-rich use every day – strategies David Cay Johnston outlined so well in his excellent book, *Perfectly Legal* [14]. The Romney campaign keeps assuring us that he paid all taxes required by law, and that very well might be the problem.

A *Vanity Fair* investigation [15] into the trickle of tax documents that Romney has disclosed – under intense pressure – found that they “provided a lavish smorgasbord for Romney’s critics. Particularly jarring were the Romneys’ many offshore accounts.”

To give but one example, there is a Bermuda-based entity called Sankaty High Yield Asset Investors Ltd., which has been described in securities filings as “a Bermuda corporation wholly owned by W. Mitt Romney.” It could be that Sankaty is an old vehicle with little importance, but Romney appears to have treated it rather carefully. He set it up in 1997, then transferred it to his wife’s newly created blind trust on January 1, 2003, the day before he was inaugurated as Massachusetts’s governor. The director and president of this entity is R. Bradford Malt, the trustee of the blind trust and Romney’s personal lawyer. Romney failed to list this entity on several financial disclosures, even though such a closely held entity would not qualify as an “excepted investment fund” that would not need to be on his disclosure forms. He finally included it on his 2010 tax return. Even after examining that return, we have no idea what is in this company, but it could be valuable, meaning that it is possible Romney’s wealth is even greater than previous estimates. While the Romneys’ spokespeople insist that the couple has paid all the taxes required by law, investments in tax havens such as Bermuda raise many questions, because they are in “jurisdictions where there is virtually no tax and virtually no compliance,” as one Miami-based offshore lawyer put it.

While James Wolcott thinks that it's “hardly a secret anymore” that “our tax code — and, indeed, our entire economic system — has been gamed to benefit the folks in Romney's economic stratum,” most people probably don't have a firm grasp on precisely how the vaunted “job creators” avoid paying their fair share, and the release of Romney's returns would offer a teachable moment.

As real estate billionaire Leona Helmsley once said, “Only the little people pay taxes.” That's not the message Mitt Romney wants to convey during a campaign that has a lot to do with tax cuts for the wealthiest.

Links:

[1] <http://www.alternet.org>

[2] <http://www.alternet.org/authors/joshua-holland>

[3] http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/01/25/romney-tax-returns-mormon_n_1230613.html

[4] <http://dailycaller.com/2012/01/24/romney-tax-returns-indicate-that-he-underpaid-mormon-church-tithe/#ixzz22KIraVGR>

[5] <http://www.usnews.com/news/blogs/rick-newman/2012/07/19/what-might-be-hiding-in-mitt-romneys-tax-returns>

[6] <http://wonkette.com/479612/harry-reid-is-pretty-much-a-blogger-now>

[7] http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/31/opinion/the-mysteries-of-mitt-romneys-financial-records.html?_r=2&ref=opinion

[8] <http://www.businessweek.com/articles/2012-07-17/whats-romney-hiding-in-his-tax-returns>

[9] http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/15/mitt-romney-bain-capital_n_1674209.html

[10] <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/07/romney-bain-abortion-stericycle-sec>

[11] <http://news.firedoglake.com/2012/07/25/more-evidence-emerges-that-romney-committed-felony-by-lying-to-the-fec/>

[12] <http://articles.latimes.com/2012/jan/26/news/la-pn-romney-tax-returns-detail-funds-not-identified-in-ethics-forms-20120126>

[13] <http://www.esquire.com/blogs/politics/why-mitt-romney-wont-release-tax-returns-10719962>

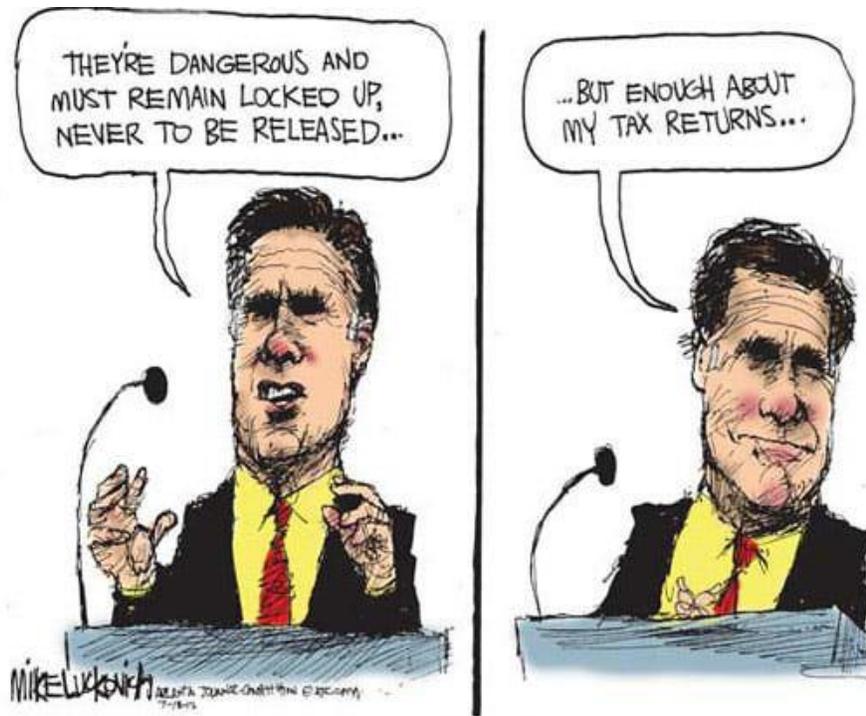
[14] <http://www.amazon.com/Perfectly-Legal-Campaign-Benefit-Everybody/dp/1591840198>

[15] <http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/2012/08/investigating-mitt-romney-offshore-accounts>

[16] <http://www.alternet.org/tags/romney-0>

[17] <http://www.alternet.org/tags/election-2012>

[18] <http://www.alternet.org/tags/taxes-0>



FotM NEWSLETTER #196 (Aug. 3, 2012)—HYPERTEXT INDEX

<u>DATE-ID</u>	<u>TIME</u>	<u>FROM</u>	<u>SUBJECT/TITLE</u>
20120803-00		SteveB	Will He Get Away With It? by Steven W. Baker / SteveB ("10 Theories About What Mitt Romney's Really Hiding in Those Tax Returns")
20120802-01	11:20	SteveG	Romney's Taxes and the Olympics
20120802-02	11:28	SteveM	"Could 2012 Be America's Last Presidential Election?"
20120802-04	14:12	SteveB	Re: "Could 2012 Be America's Last Presidential Election?" (reply to SteveM, above)
20120802-06	16:01	SteveM	Re: "Could 2012 Be America's Last Presidential Election?" (reply to SteveB, above)
20120802-08	22:45	SteveB	Re: "Could 2012 Be America's Last Presidential Election?" (reply to SteveM, above)
20120802-03	13:56	SteveB	From the Right: "Obama's Signature Move: Unsealing Private Records"
20120802-05	15:22	MarthaH	"Heaven Recovering Following Tractor Accident"
20120802-07	17:57	SteveB	"Libelous Big Lies About Liberals"
20120802-09	23:57	SteveG	Graphic: Cooperation
20120802-10	23:58	Marci	"Why Men Shouldn't Write Advice Columns"
20120802-11	23:59	SteveB	Photo: Rock Climbing in the Black Hills, the Dakotas

20120802-01	11:20	SteveG	Romney's Taxes and the Olympics
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What have people read about the rumor that Mitt Romney paid zero taxes for ten years?

How long have Olympic athletes received stipends for winning gold (\$25,000), silver (\$15,000), and bronze (\$10,000) medals? To this point they are to pay taxes on their money. Yesterday Marco Rubio introduced a bill to make the Olympic stipends tax free. Is this a knee jerk reaction for politics in an election year given that Phelps has gotten over \$40 million out of his swimming career, the basketball teams is primarily NBA players, Ann Romney has written her horse off as a business?

20120802-02	11:28	SteveM	"Could 2012 Be America's Last Presidential Election?"
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[As usual, the Right tries to disguise their plans and strategies with the lying claim that their plans and strategies are those of their opponents. It's an interesting ruse from a psychological perspective. You see, it's all a left-wing conspiracy disguised to look like a right-wing conspiracy. I guess Republicans never progressed beyond the John Birch Society. They love their conspiracy theories! –SteveB]

"Could 2012 be America's Last Presidential Election?" by Michael Savage, Free Republic/World Press

March 8, 2012, (<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/bloggers/2860316/posts>)

I've asked this question to a number of people and most them respond as if I were crazy for asking. They tell me that this is America , land of the free and that there will always be elections. I tell them that we are no longer the land of the free and that if Obama gets re-elected in 2012, that this just may be America 's last election. In the past three years, the Obama administration has been very carefully crafting the nation for a political take over by his Marxist regime and this isn't just my opinion.

Popular radio talk show host Michael Savage is the son of Russian immigrants and is very familiar with Soviet and European history. Savage warned his listeners this week saying, "I have to tell you that if this man, God forbid, is the next president of the United States, we're going to be living in something along the lines of – people say Europe. I don't believe it's going to be like Europe – I think it will be closer to Chavez's South American dictatorship.

"This is the most corrupt, incompetent, dangerous tyrannical administration in American history. It's not politics as usual. It's not just Democrats versus Republicans. Obama has a long history of being at odds with American values and with America itself and the core principles of this country. They don't want government-sponsored opinions. They only want government-sponsored 'Pravda.' That's exactly what the government-media complex tells you on a daily basis – nothing but the government-media complex party line. Pay attention. Your freedom may be at stake."

Over the weekend, Republican presidential candidate Rick Santorum told a small group of people in an Iowa coffee house that, "Barack Obama is not incompetent, ladies and gentleman. He knows exactly what he's doing and why he's doing it. He sees America differently than you see America . [Obama] has gone out of his way to divide this country in a way I haven't seen since the Great Depression when Franklin Roosevelt went around to divide his country. That's his hero. What makes America great [in Obama's mind is that] the government takes money from somebody and gives it to somebody else. No, that's what makes America , France."

With his control over the Executive and Judicial branches of the government, the stage is set for a complete takeover of the government. Think about it. Since taking office, instead of helping the economy, Obama has purposely escalated the economic crisis by plunging the country into unprecedented debt. He has a number of programs that are designed to go into effect in January 2013, just in time for his second term of office. The economic burden and increased taxes on everyone will be enough to cause the final economic collapse of the country. As soon as that happens, Obama declares Martial Law and assumes dictatorial control of the nation.

The Department of Justice has already been subverting federal laws to strip us of a number of freedoms. The Supreme Court and many of the other federal courts have been seeded with socialistic liberal judges that will rule in Obama's favor on virtually anything, thus ending constitutional rule and law.

He's already changing the face of America's military. Allowing homosexuals to openly serve along with changing the retirement program is causing many conservative military leaders to resign commissions and leave the military. Some Pentagon officials are also noting that an increase in the enlistment of radical Muslims into the US military where they get all the training they need on weapons and defense systems.. We have no idea how many of them there are in the armed forces or in what positions they may hold.

Obama has been wielding executive powers this past year as if he were already a dictator. When Congress is not doing his bidding, he simply bypasses them and used an executive order to accomplish it anyway. This has set the stage for his disbandment of Congress. He would not be the first world leader to take control of a nation and disband the legislative branch of government.

He has been effectively using the media to anesthetize the public to the dangers he poses. Like a patient being prepped for surgery, people are numb to the changes and won't have a clue what took place until they wake up in recovery and realize that free America has been removed and replaced with a regime that may parallel those of Stalin, Lenin, Mussolini, Hitler, Chavez and Castro.

For the sake of our children and grandchildren, vote him out!

20120802-04	14:12	SteveB	Re: "Could 2012 Be America's Last Presidential Election?" (reply to SteveM, above)
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This is the biggest bunch of lies I think I've ever seen in one place!

Heaven help us if Mr. Tax-Cheat wins!

20120802-06	16:01	SteveM	Re: "Could 2012 Be America's Last Presidential Election?" (reply to SteveB, above)
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If anyone would know about lies it would be you. You've swallowed enough of them

20120802-08

22:45

SteveB

Re: "Could 2012 Be America's Last Presidential Election?" (reply to SteveM, above)

No. It is really very simple.

I seek the truth in all things. My work proves that.

You seek to destroy one good man. Your emails prove that. They show no regard for the truth whatsoever. I've proven them to be lies and distortions time and time again.

You have yet to refute one point I've ever made. Your election predictions also have left something to be desired.

But I am always willing to listen and reconsider. Are you?

20120802-03

13:56

SteveB

From the Right: "Obama's Signature Move: Unsealing Private Records"

"Obama's Signature Move: Unsealing Private Records" by Ann Coulter, *Human Events*

Aug. 1, 2012, (<http://www.humanevents.com/2012/08/01/ann-coulter-obamas-signature-move-unsealing-private-records/>)

Mitt Romney presents one enormous problem for Barack Obama's campaign: No divorce records. That's why the media are so hot to get their hands on Romney's tax records for the past 25 years. They need something to "pick through, distort and lie about" — as the Republican candidate says.

Obama's usual campaign method, used in 100 percent of his races, has been to pry into the private records of his opponents.

Democrats aren't going to find any personal dirt on the clean-cut Mormon, so they need complicated tax filings going back decades in order to create the illusion of scandal out of boring financial records.

Romney has already released his 2010 tax return and is about to release his 2011 return. After all the huffing and puffing by the media demanding those returns, the follow-up story vanished remarkably quickly when the only thing the return showed was that Romney pays millions of dollars in taxes and gives a lot of money to charity.

Let's take a romp down memory lane and review the typical Obama campaign strategy. Obama became a U.S. senator only by virtue of David Axelrod's former employer, the Chicago Tribune, ripping open the sealed divorce records of Obama's two principal opponents.

One month before the 2004 Democratic primary for the U.S. Senate, Obama was down in the polls, about to lose to Blair Hull, a multimillionaire securities trader. But then the Chicago Tribune leaked the claim that Hull's second ex-wife, Brenda Sexton, had sought an order of protection against him during their 1998 divorce proceedings.

Those records were under seal, but as The New York Times noted: "The Tribune reporter who wrote the original piece later acknowledged in print that the Obama camp had 'worked aggressively behind the scenes' to push the story." Many people said Axelrod had "an even more significant role — that he leaked the initial story."

Both Hull and his ex-wife opposed releasing their sealed divorce records, but they finally relented in response to the media's hysteria — 18 days before the primary. Hull was forced to spend four minutes of a debate detailing the abuse allegation in his divorce papers, explaining that his ex-wife "kicked me in the leg and I hit her shin to try to get her to not continue to kick me."

After having held a substantial lead just a month before the primary, Hull's campaign collapsed with the chatter about his divorce. Obama sailed to the front of the pack and won the primary. Hull finished third with 10 percent of the vote.

As luck would have it, Obama's opponent in the general election had also been divorced! Jack Ryan was tall, handsome, Catholic — and shared a name with one of Harrison Ford's most popular onscreen characters! He went to Dartmouth, Harvard Law and Harvard Business School, made hundreds of millions of dollars as a partner at Goldman Sachs, and then, in his early 40s, left investment banking to teach at an inner city school on the South Side of Chicago.

Ryan would have walloped Obama in the Senate race. But at the request of — again — the Chicago Tribune, California Judge Robert Schnider unsealed the custody papers in Ryan's divorce five years earlier from Hollywood starlet Jeri Lynn Ryan, the bombshell Borg on "Star Trek: Voyager."

Jack Ryan had released his tax records. He had released his divorce records. But both he and his ex-wife sought to keep the custody records under seal to protect their son.

Amid the 400 pages of filings from the custody case, Jack Ryan claimed that his wife had had an affair, and she counterclaimed with the allegation that he had taken her to "sex clubs" in Paris, New York and New Orleans, which drove her to fall in love with another man.

(Republicans: If you plan a career in public office, please avoid marrying a wacko.)

Ryan had vehemently denied her allegations at the time, but it didn't matter. The sex club allegations aired on "Entertainment Tonight," "NBC Nightly News," ABC's "Good Morning America," "The Tonight Show With Jay Leno," and NBC's "Today" show. CNN covered the story like it was the first moon landing.

(Interestingly, international papers also were ablaze with the story — the same newspapers that were supposed to be so bored with American sexual mores during Bill Clinton's sex scandal.)

Four days after Judge Schnider unsealed the custody records, Ryan dropped out of the race for the horror of (allegedly) propositioning his own wife and then taking "no" for an answer.

Alan Keyes stepped in as a last-minute Republican candidate.

And that's how Obama became a U.S. senator. He destroyed both his Democratic primary opponent and his Republican general election opponent with salacious allegations about their personal lives taken from "sealed" court records.

Obama's team delved into Sarah Palin's marriage and spread rumors of John McCain's alleged affair in 2008 and they smeared Herman Cain in 2011 with hazy sexual harassment allegations all emanating from David Axelrod's pals in Chicago.

It's almost like a serial killer's signature. Unsealed personal records have been released to the press. Obama must be running for office!

So you can see what a pickle the Obama campaign is in having to run against a Dudley Do-Right, non-drinking, non-smoking, God-fearing, happily married Mormon.

They've got to get their hands on thousands of pages of Romney's tax filings so that the media can — as Romney says — lie about them. It will be interesting to see if Obama can pick the lock of the famously guarded IRS.

Our blessing for several years has been to have this man as our physician. While he was educated as a chemical engineer at Rose-Hulman with honors, he later also graduated with honors from medical school and has been active as a popular, astute doctor, as dedicated to his patients as we are to him. This summer he has also been grandson Jake's employer. This is what happened Saturday night. A few years ago, he deemed a commuter flight to Mayo's for classes as too expensive and chose to drive himself up there; the flight he passed up then crashed in northern Indiana with no survivors. Now this new chapter and our second blessing, too. He is also a Parkinson's patient but keeps on serving his community that loves him dearly. He isn't much--and thankfully like too many of today's doctors. There are many lessons for all within the story.

Here's the news that spread fast in our community:

"Heavin Recovering Following Tractor Accident" by Jared Jernagan, *Greencastle Banner-Graphic*

Aug. 2, 2012, (<http://www.bannergraphic.com/story/1877402.html>)

(BAINBRIDGE, In.) Sixteen hours trapped under a tractor gives a man a lot of time to think and pray.

After all that time alone, Dr. Robert Heavin believes he experienced a miracle this weekend.

Heavin, 60, is the previously unidentified man rescued by Floyd Township and Danville firefighters on Sunday morning following a Saturday evening tractor accident on his rural Bainbridge farm.

Heavin was trapped beneath this tractor for nearly 16 hours on Saturday night.

How Heavin managed to avoid serious injury under an overturned tractor -- he suffered only two broken ribs and "a bunch of bruises" -- is next to impossible to explain.

"I take it to be a miracle," Heavin said. "I don't know how else to explain it, in terms of that."

Heavin contacted the *Banner Graphic* on Wednesday to recount his ordeal and thank those who prayed for him during his hospital stay.

It all started with some simple cleanup on Heavin's property at around 7:30 p.m. Saturday.

"I was moving a pile of rock that had been there for a while and I just picked up too heavy a load," Heavin said.

As he was moving the rocks, Heavin came over a small rise and began to pick up speed as he went down a hill. He quickly knew something was wrong, but could not shut the tractor down or lower the bucket fast enough.

"It just kept going faster and faster, like a demon possessed," Heavin said. "There were no brakes because the load was too heavy in the bucket. So I just shut the throttle down and started lowering the bucket, but it wouldn't go down fast enough.

"Then it dropped off into a little hole and I felt it start to turn over. I tried to get off of it. Unfortunately, when I got off of it, I got my foot caught and fell over."

The tractor kept turning over, but Heavin was fortunate to find himself in a place he would not be crushed.

"I was in the only place that I could be, in between the fender and the loader arm," Heavin said. "When it inverted itself totally over, my head came into a little hole in the ground and the steering wheel was on top of my head and across my neck. I was pinned there. I couldn't move."

Although his head and neck were pinned, Heavin said he was fortunate with their exact placement -- his head was between two spokes of the wheel, and the rim of the wheel was across his neck -- but he could still breathe.

He was able to dig some of the rock from around his head with a Leatherman knife but could not free himself.

At that point, all that was left was to wait and pray.

"Me and my Good Lord had a good, long talk," Heavin said.

As a man who lives alone except for a couple of dogs, Heavin could not expect anyone to come looking for him terribly soon. He said one of the animals stayed with him and even tried to get help a couple of times.

"I told her to go get help," Heavin said. "Actually, around 3 a.m. she went over and got all the dogs in the neighborhood barking. My neighbor actually came out on the porch and looked, but he couldn't see me from where he was at."

The same thing happened again at 5 a.m., unfortunately with the same result.

As Heavin continued to wait under the tractor, things were complicated when the hydraulics in the power steering failed. This meant the wheel tried to settle, with the steering knob continuing to turn back toward his neck.

"I was getting tired of trying to hold the knob off of my neck," he said.

As dawn broke, the situation began looking worse.

"The tractor settled again around daybreak and got a little bit closer. I thought, 'This is gonna be it,'" Heavin said. "I just kept praying. I felt like if God was going to do me in, at least not to torture me too long."

A visit from Heavin's son Kyle in late morning set the rescue in motion.

"Around 10 o'clock or so, little white lights showed up and I thought, 'Well I'm hallucinating, getting heat exhaustion.' Then I heard a four-wheeler but it went the other direction."

Heavin assumed it was the sound of his neighbor feeding his hogs.

"My son came over to get some fire wood. He knew I didn't make it to early church," Heavin said. "He came in the house and saw the crockpot was still on. The cell phone was on the four-wheeler, unfortunately."

Knowing something was wrong, Kyle searched the property. When he found the overturned tractor with his father underneath, he thought the worst.

"He kind of went ballistic when he found me. With my legs sticking out there, he thought I was dead," the elder Heavin said. "I couldn't talk very loud, so I had to wait for him to kind of quit screaming before I could tell him I was OK."

The authorities were soon alerted, with both fire departments, as well as Operation Life and St. Vincent Stat Flight responding to the scene.

"My sons came over there and they helped hold the steering wheel out of my neck for the 45 minutes it took to get the tractor raised up," Heavin said. "I only needed about two or three inches to get my head out. I had it dug out but I just couldn't quite make it all the way. Plus, I was getting pretty weak and tired at that point."

Somehow, his most serious injuries were the broken ribs, sustained when the loader arm poked him in the side.

The longtime Putnam County Hospital physician lobbied his rescuers to take him to those familiar walls, but he was overruled.

"I tried to get them to take me to Greencastle, but they said the helicopter doesn't take you to critical access hospitals," Heavin said.

Upon arrival at St. Vincent in Indianapolis, he found familiar caretakers anyway.

"It turned out that the doctor I normally use up at St. Vincent was the one on call that day. Actually, a nurse I had worked with at Greencastle was working in the ER too, so I felt in good hands," he said.

With minimal injuries considering the circumstances, Heavin was out of the hospital as of Wednesday morning, staying with one of his sons in Greencastle.

"I think I'm gonna make it," he said. "I just really want to thank everybody for their prayers and concern. I truly appreciate that."

Perhaps as an aid to the recovery process, Heavin was even able to find a bit of humor in certain details of his ordeal.

"It was an interesting experience, I guess," the doctor said with a chuckle. "I was a little claustrophobic but I don't think I'm claustrophobic anymore."

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"Libelous Big Lies About Liberals" by Thomas Magstadt, NationofChange

Aug. 2, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/libelous-big-lies-about-liberals-1343913686>)

Democrats have allowed the Republican Party to brand liberals and liberalism as a radical ideology rather than a mainstream alternative to the extreme right-wing ideology that now passes for conservatism in this country.

The Republican definition of what it means to be a liberal is false and fictitious but has now become so infused into the political vernacular and fixed in the public mind that simply setting the record state requires a Herculean effort.

As a first step, here is a short list of big lies about liberals.

Big Lie #1: Liberals are all alike – tree hugging clones who agree about everything from abortion and arms control to Zoloft and Zoroastrianism.

No, in fact that would be the new Republicans – the folks who watch FOX News religiously, follow the party line like lemmings, and are not in the least troubled by the tawdry methods that FOX uses to distort the words and views of those it opposes.

One of the reasons why liberals are so astonishingly ineffectual at hammering home specific messages is precisely because, unlike today's knee-jerk conservatives, liberals do not march in lockstep on much of anything, including the burning issues of the day.

Unlike the Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, and Bill O'Reilly, liberals tend to treat people of all hues and views with respect. That respect, however, is put to the extreme test when we are constantly bombarded with toxic untruths extolling the trickle down theory (purporting to show how the extreme concentration of wealth in society benefits us all) or the dickish idea that greed is good – dickish as in Dick Cheney, Dick Arme, and Dick Tuck.

Big Lie #2: Liberals and progressives are wannabe European socialists (and as all "real Americans" know in their bones, that's a bad thing).

Here's Dick Arme speaking to the National Press Club in 2010: "Jamestown colony, when it was first founded as a socialist venture, dang near failed with everybody dead and dying in the snow."

As though that bit of historical buffoonery wasn't enough, he continued, "The small-government conservative movement, which includes people who call themselves the tea party patriots and so forth, is about the principles of liberty as embodied in the Constitution, the understanding of which is fleshed out if you read things like the Federalist Papers."

And then came the zinger: Democrats and other "people here who do not cherish America the way we do," he explained, "did not read the Federalist Papers." The publication Arme referenced (but apparently hasn't actually read) is, of course, the collection of papers forever associated with James Madison and Alexander Hamilton. Hamilton was an ardent advocate of a strong central government – the very antithesis of Arme's wondrous "small-government conservative movement". Anyone who reads and understands the Federalist Papers, or knows anything at all about the controversy among the Founders over this fundamental question, cannot fail to see the absurdity in this Dick's version of reality.

To confuse liberalism with socialism is to prove conclusively that a) you have no idea what socialism is, b) you know nothing about the long and venerable tradition of liberal and progressive political thought in America, c) you have absolutely no regard for the truth, or d) all of the above.

Moreover, it's an insult to the vast majority of voters whose everyday values (for example, fairness, honesty, and civility) are far more closely aligned with those of liberals and progressives than with ultra-conservative apologists for the plutocracy. Paul Ryan, Scott Walker, and, above all, Walter Mitt Romney, have come to personify wealth and privilege – the 1% - in the mind of most middle-class Americans. (If you happen to be betting the farm on a Republican victory in November, you ought to be pushing the panic button about now.)

Big Lie #3: Liberals and progressives are anti-business and don't understand basic economics, including the role of competitive markets in promoting prosperity and creating the world's most technologically advanced societies.

That's dead wrong. In fact, 20th century conservatives are deeply indebted to 19th century liberals. By contrast, today's so-called conservatives lie not only about liberals but also about markets and about the relationship between government and a functioning market economy. They incessantly sing the praises of the "free market" and condemn all manner of "state regulation" – the red tape, rules, and oversight that supposedly strangle business and stifle initiative.

They inveigh against subsidies and government handouts aimed at helping the needy (or ever-so-slightly leveling the playing field), but they demand (and get) special tax breaks for the rich, subsidies for oil companies, and bailouts for banks too big to fail, not to mention insurance giants (think AIG), auto manufacturers, et cetera. These are but a few of the more egregious examples of the fiscal hypocrisy stalking the corridors of Capitol Hill and the suites of Corporate America.

The truth is that there is no free market, never has been, never will be. All markets are regulated, shaped in a political mold of rules, privileges, and protections. It's not the rules that make markets dysfunctional; it's the privileges and protections that distort the natural forces of supply and demand. In other words, it's big business that gets in its own way by recognizing no limits and observing no self-restraint in the pursuit of plunder, prey, and profit. How else to explain the mysteries of the New Derivative Economy, the ascendancy of a feral company called Wal-Mart (ranked #1 on *Fortune's* Global 500), or the baneful business model of "venture capitalists" and commercial vultures like Bain Capital?

Liberals understand that without vigorous competition markets can't work their magic. Competition, not domination, is the key to efficiency and innovation. When conservatives talk about "creative destruction" it's a ruse; what they are saying is the best way to compete is to kill off the competition – precisely what Marx meant when he observed that modern capitalists (the "bourgeoisie") produce their own gravediggers.

The proper role of the state in a market economy is not to protect producers but to insure competitiveness. Republicans once embraced this principle. Liberals still do.

Big Lie #4: Liberals don't care about deficits; they want to redistribute money from the most productive members of society (the rich) to the least productive (loafers and laggards) who love living on "welfare"; liberals are in favor of "handouts" and "giveaways" and throwing good money after bad.

This is one of the most invidious charges the far right levels at liberals. Talk about hypocrisy! Remember the guy who declared back in 2002 that Ronald Reagan proved "deficits don't matter"? That was Dick Cheney. And speaking of Reagan, the national debt grew by 189% during President Reagan's two terms in office (1980-1988). Under Reagan's Democratic predecessor, Jimmy Carter, the national debt did not exceed 35% of GDP; at the end of Reagan's tenure in the White House it was 52.6% (advancing at an average annual rate of 23.6%).

During the Clinton presidency (1992-2000), annual deficits were reduced (to a manageable 4.4% per year on average) and something approximating a balanced budget was actually achieved during Bill Clinton's tumultuous second term. When George W. Bush succeeded Clinton, the federal deficits rose sharply and the national debt ballooned to 74% of GDP.

True, it has risen to 95% of GDP under President Obama. But the attack dogs for the Republican Party conveniently fail to mention that federal deficits since 9-11 were (and are) tied to defense spending and, since the 2008 Wall Street meltdown, to the multibillion dollar bank bail-out. Big defense budgets and big bank bailouts are both Republican causes. Not a penny of the national debt can be blamed on the new Patient Protection and Affordable Health Care Act, which is phased in and doesn't really take effect (with health care exchanges) until 2014.

Meanwhile, the federal government, with zealous support from Republicans, continues to outspend the rest of the world on military weaponry and self-defeating wars. By the narrowest measure (excluding many items that are clearly related to national security) the US accounts for some 43% of total global defense spending. Including intelligence, nuclear energy, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (treated as "supplemental funding" until 2010 and thus, in defiance of all logic, not reflected in annual military spending prior to that time), the US spends more than the rest of the world combined.

Similarly, the big Bush and Obama stimulus packages went primarily to big banks and corporations, not the middle class. These big "giveaways" – combined with the tax cuts for the rich – were (and are) subsidies (or "tax expenditures") that primarily benefit those least in need of federal assistance. To use the term Republicans throw around so loosely, it is socialism for the super rich.

Big Lie #5: Conservatives are patriotic and love this country more than the dovish liberals who have proven time and again that they lack the courage, vigilance, and resolve to meet and defeat the enemies of freedom and democracy.

Pure rubbish. Guess what socio-economic strata ("social classes" to use the time-honored term) have produced the foot soldiers for America's wars in the post-Vietnam era? Clue: the peak of the income pyramid is not the correct answer.

Nor have the children of upper income families in general been well represented among the ranks of the enlisted men and women. And you'd be hard-pressed to find offspring of members of the US Congress in the enlisted ranks. And be it noted that neither Willard Mitt Romney nor any of his five sons has ever served a single day in the U.S. military.

Military service means different things to different social classes. For the sons and daughters of legacy families and the *nouveau riche*, it likely means attendance at one the elite military academies – an all-expenses paid undergraduate education and a gold brick road to becoming an officer. Officers in the U.S.

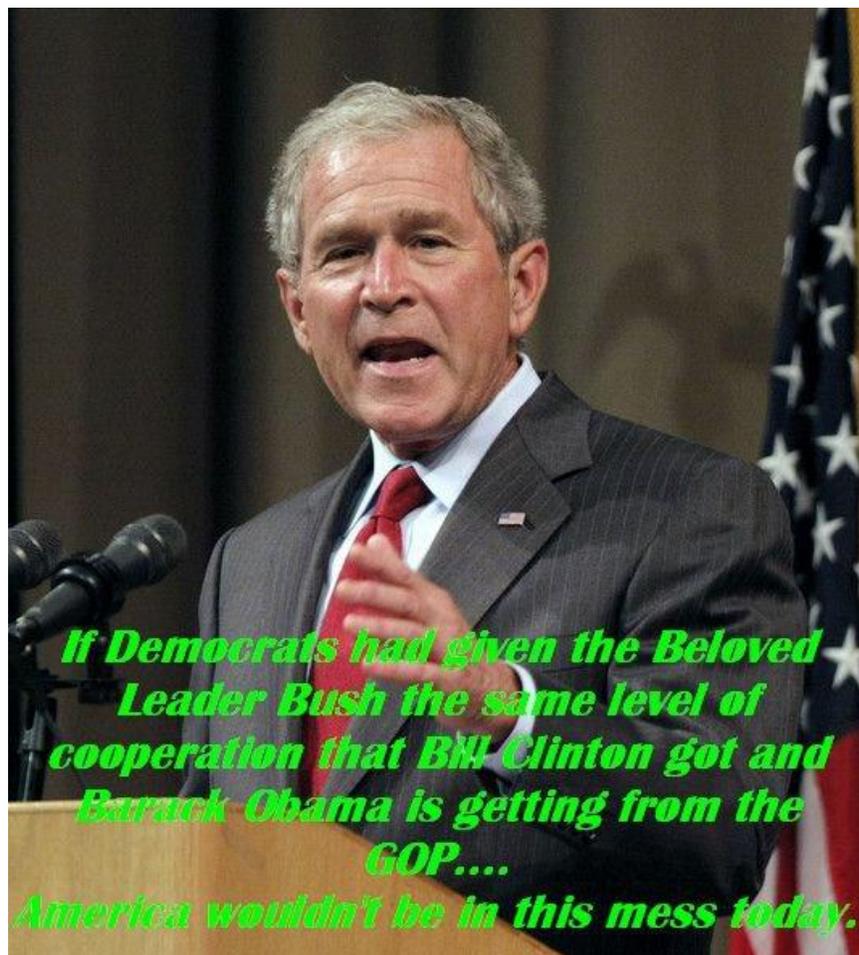
armed forces are paid on a different scale than enlisted soldiers ("privates") and receive generous benefits that continue even after they are no longer on active duty.

It's true that many military officers equate patriotism with Fox News, the Republican Party, monogamy, and regular church-attendance, but troops in the "trenches" are a different story altogether. They mostly come from the ranks of the lower middle classes and minorities – the rising socio-ethnic rainbow that overwhelmingly supports the Democratic Party.

It's no surprise the liars who have taken over the Republic Party would say things about liberals that aren't true. The surprise is that the leaders of the Democratic Party have not done more to expose these lies – in effect, allowing the vilest politicians to discredit liberalism, malign liberals, and misrepresent what it means to be a responsible citizen in a society that values honesty, decency, fairness, and, above all, the healing power of truth.

(Tom Magstadt earned his Ph.D. at The Johns Hopkins University School of International Studies. He is the author of *An Empire If You Can Keep It: Power and Principle in American Foreign Policy*, *Understanding Politics: Ideas, Institutions and Issues*, and *Nations and Governments: Comparative Politics in Regional Perspective*. He was a regular contributor to the Prague Post in 1998-99 and has published widely in newspapers, magazines and journals in the United States. He was a Fulbright Scholar in the Czech Republic in the mid-1990s and a visiting professor at the Air War College in 1990-92. He has taught at several universities, chaired two political science departments, and also did a stint as an intelligence analyst at the CIA. He is a member of the board of the International Relations Council of Kansas City. Now working mainly as a free-lance writer, he lives in Westwood Hills, Kansas.)

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Why men shouldn't write advice columns

Dear John,

I hope you can help me. The other day, I set off for work, leaving my husband in the house watching TV. My car stalled, and then it broke down about a mile down the road, and I had to walk back to get my husband's help. When I got home, I couldn't believe my eyes. He was in our bedroom with the neighbor's daughter!

I am 32, my husband is 34 and the neighbor's daughter is 19. We have been married for 10 years. When I confronted him, he broke down and admitted they had been having an affair for the past six months. He won't go to counseling, and I'm afraid I am a wreck and need advice urgently. Can you please help?

Sincerely, Sheila

Dear Sheila,

A car stalling after being driven a short distance can be caused by a variety of faults with the engine. Start by checking that there is no debris in the fuel line. If it is clear, check the vacuum pipes and hoses on the intake manifold and also check all grounding wires. If none of these approaches solves the problem, it could be that the fuel pump itself is faulty, causing low delivery pressure to the injectors.

I hope this helps,
John

— Forwarded by Steve Sanderson,
Gilbert, S.C.



<http://www.blackhillsbadlands.com/home/thingstodo/outdoorrecreation/summerfun/rockclimbing>



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

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