



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #209 — AUG. 22, 2012

Welcome to always lively political discussion and whatever else comes up.
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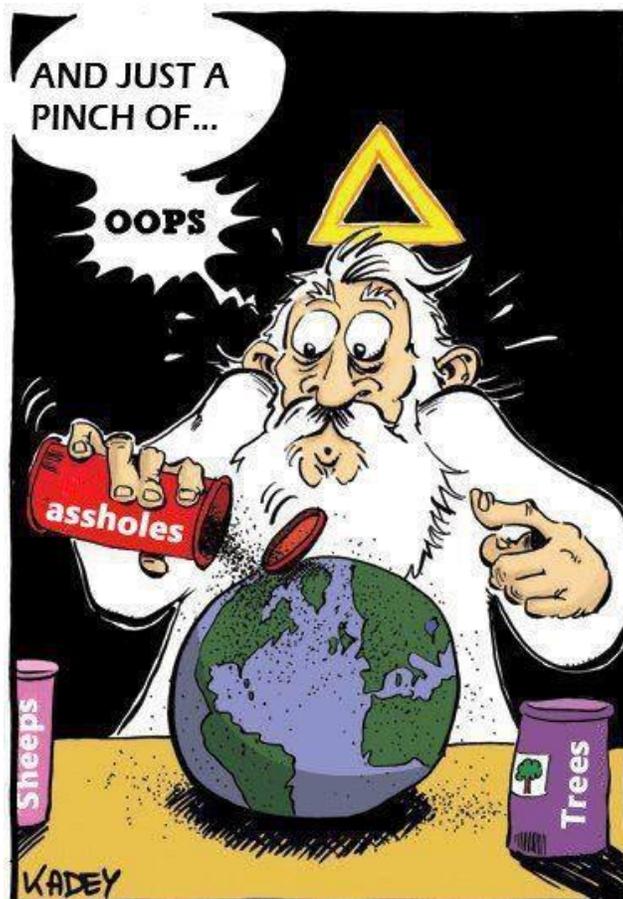
God vs. the GOP?

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Aug. 22, 2012)

Maybe this is what "intelligent design" really means... Is there a special place in Hell for hypocrites after all?

"Signs of Divine Intervention for Republicans?" by Dana Milbank, *The Washington Post*

Aug. 21, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/dana-milbank-are-republicans-getting-a-sign-from-above/2012/08/21/3424ba0a-ebd2-11e1-9ddc-340d5efb1e9c_story.html)



Has God forsaken the Republican Party?

Well, sit in judgment of what's happened in the past few days:

- A report comes out that a couple dozen House Republicans engaged in an alcohol-induced frolic, in one case nude, in the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus is believed to have walked on water, calmed the storm and, nearby, turned water into wine and performed the miracle of the loaves and fishes.
- Rep. Todd Akin, Missouri's Republican nominee for Senate, suggests there is such a thing as "legitimate rape" and purports that women's bodies have mysterious ways to repel the seed of rapists. He spends the next 48 hours rejecting GOP leaders' demands that he quit the race.
- Weather forecasts show that a storm, likely to grow into Hurricane Isaac, may be chugging toward...Tampa, where Republicans will open their quadrennial nominating convention on Monday.

Coincidence? Or part of some Intelligent Design?

By their own logic, Republicans and their conservative allies should be concerned that Isaac is a form of divine retribution. Last year, Rep. Michele Bachmann, then a Republican presidential candidate, said that the East Coast earthquake and Hurricane Irene — another "I" storm, but not an Old Testament one — were attempts by God "to get the attention of the politicians." In remarks later termed a "joke," she said: "It's time for an act of God and we're getting it."

The influential conservative broadcaster Glenn Beck said last year that the Japanese earthquake and tsunami were God's "message being sent" to that country. A year earlier, Christian broadcaster and former GOP presidential candidate Pat Robertson tied the Haitian earthquake to that country's "pact to the devil."

Previously, Robertson had argued that Hurricane Katrina was God's punishment for abortion, while the Rev. John Hagee said the storm was God's way of punishing homosexuality. The late Jerry Falwell thought that God allowed the Sept. 11 attacks as retribution for feminists and the ACLU.

Even if you don't believe God uses meteorological phenomena to express His will, it's difficult for mere mortals to explain what is happening to the GOP just now.

By most earthly measures, President Obama has no business being reelected. No president since World War II has won reelection with the unemployment rate north of 7.4 percent. Of the presidents during that time who were returned to office, GDP growth averaged 4.7 percent during the first nine months of the election year — more than double the current rate.

But instead of being swept into office by the worst economic recovery since the Great Depression, Republicans are in danger of losing an election that is theirs to lose. Mitt Romney, often tone-deaf, has allowed Obama to change the subject to Romney's tax havens and tax returns. And congressional Republicans are providing all kinds of reasons for Americans to doubt their readiness to assume power.

The Politico report Sunday about drunken skinny-dipping in the Sea of Galilee gave House Republicans an unwanted image of debauchery — a faint echo of the Capitol page scandal that, breaking in September 2006, cemented Republicans' fate in that November's elections. The 30 Republican lawmakers on the "fact-finding" mission to Israel last summer earned a rebuke from Majority Leader Eric Cantor and attracted the attention of the FBI. The naked congressman, Rep. Kevin Yoder (R-Kan.), admitted in a statement: "[R]egrettably I jumped into the water without a swimsuit."

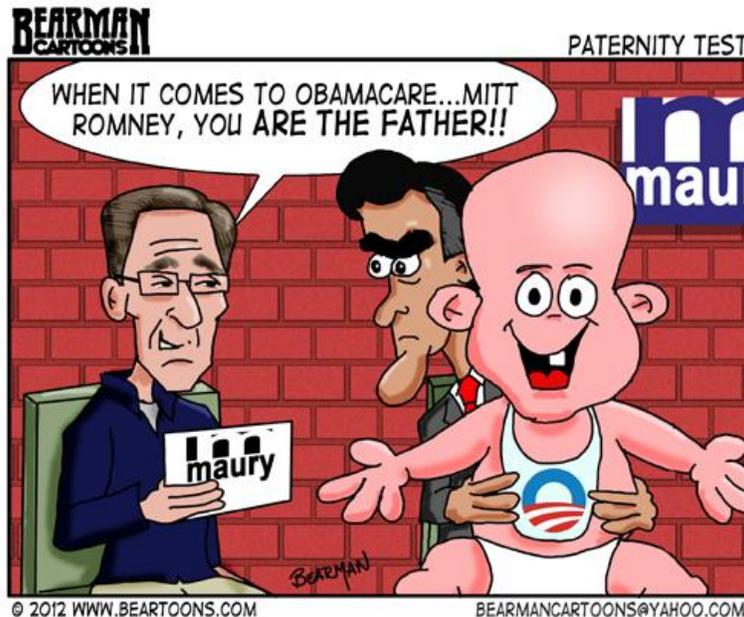
A boozy frolic at a Christian holy site might have been a considerable embarrassment for the party, but it was eclipsed by a bigger one: Akin's preposterous claim on a St. Louis TV program that pregnancy is rare after a "legitimate rape" because "the female body has ways to try to shut that whole thing down."

Republican leaders spent the next 48 hours trying to shut Akin's whole thing down, but after a period of panic (a no-show on Piers Morgan's show led the CNN host to show his empty chair and call him a "gutless little twerp"), Akin told radio host Mike Huckabee on Tuesday that he would fight the "big party people" and stay in the race.

The big party people had a further complication: In Tampa on Tuesday, those drafting the GOP platform agreed to retain a plank calling for a constitutional amendment banning abortion without specifying exceptions for cases of rape. In other words, the Akin position.

For a party that should be sailing toward victory, there were all the makings of a perfect storm. And, sure enough: Tuesday afternoon, the National Weather Service forecast that "Tropical Depression Nine" would strengthen into a hurricane, taking a northwesterly track over Cuba on Sunday morning — just as Republicans are arriving in Florida.

What happens next? God only knows.



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20120821-01	06:18	SteveB	Two Lovely
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My beautiful grandchildren, Zachary and Natalie, on the first day of First Grade for Zach. I have no idea what happened to all the boy's teeth—he used to have some. Zach loves trains and wants to be a "train engineer". Natalie swims like a fish, and could she be any cuter in her little sun dress? I love their fake "camera smiles"!



20120821-02 07:15 MarthaH "The Real Medicare Question"

Snake oil or Ryan's Medicare!

"The Real Medicare Question" by Eugene Robinson, *The Washington Post*

Aug. 16, 2012, (http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/eugene-robinson-the-real-medicare-question/2012/08/16/7cc8038a-e7b7-11e1-936a-b801f1abab19_story.html)

Republicans and Democrats are being equally nasty in their campaign rhetoric, but they're not being equally truthful. To cite one example, much of what the GOP is saying about Medicare simply isn't supported by the facts.

Former New Hampshire governor John Sununu, one of Mitt Romney's more pugnacious surrogates, almost had a conniption fit Tuesday when CNN's Soledad O'Brien pressed him on his assertion that President Obama "gutted Medicare by taking \$717 billion out of it." As Sununu knows but refused to acknowledge, this is not true.

The claim is part of an attempt to shore up a vulnerability Romney created by choosing Paul Ryan as his running mate. The budget that Ryan authored, and persuaded House Republicans to pass, would eventually change

Medicare into a voucher program: Seniors would be given a certain amount of money each year to buy health insurance.

If that amount isn't enough to pay for the kind of coverage you want or need — under Ryan's latest plan, you could buy a policy from a private insurer or buy Medicare from the government — you pay the difference out of pocket. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the average Medicare recipient would pay an extra \$6,500 a year.

It doesn't take a genius to recognize the political problem this causes for Romney, especially in states where older voters are a key voting bloc. The Romney campaign decided to deal with the anticipated Democratic onslaught by striking first with the claim that it is Obama, not Romney, who wants to take away your Medicare.

Like many lies, this one uses a grain of truth as raw material. The Affordable Care Act, otherwise known as Obamacare, slows the rate of growth of payments to Medicare service providers by more than \$700 billion over a decade. But no impact is felt by seniors themselves, whose benefits and costs remain the same.

When O'Brien reminded Sununu of these facts, he barked that she should "put an Obama bumper sticker on your forehead." But the claim that Obama had "gutted Medicare" remained false, and O'Brien told Sununu: "You can't just repeat it and make it true, sir."

Sununu knows that. He just wants the focus to be on Romney's pledge to undo Medicare "cuts" that aren't really cuts at all. The Romney campaign knows that as long as people are trying to sort out the facts of this specific allegation, they aren't talking about the real differences between the two parties on the very nature of entitlement programs such as Medicare.

Ryan's plan — which Romney has semi-endorsed and now cannot credibly disown — effectively would "end Medicare as we know it" — the phrase voters will hear a bazillion times between now and Election Day, especially those who live in Florida. This is one piece of campaign rhetoric that happens to be true.

Medicare as we know it is a form of social insurance, a guarantee that citizens over 65 will have adequate medical care regardless of how healthy they are or how much money they have. Medicare, as the GOP wants it to be, is a voucher program that will be adequate for some seniors and inadequate for others.

Ryan prefers the term "premium support" to describe his plan. But as Gertrude Stein surely would have noted, a voucher is a voucher is a voucher.

Everyone agrees that something has to be done about skyrocketing costs for Medicare and Medicaid, the health-care program for the poor. Obama took the first step toward "bending the curve" of cost increases with the Affordable Care Act. Leave aside, for the moment, the fact that Romney now pledges to undo the progress Obama has made. The question is what do we want Medicare to be?

There is no reason Medicare cannot be reformed as social insurance. Other industrialized countries provide universal health coverage for their entire populations for a fraction of what we spend in the United States, and those other countries achieve equal or better health outcomes. Surely we can continue to do so for those of retirement age — if we still want to.

The question to ask Romney is whether he believes in social insurance — whether his objections to the way Obama has begun to reform Medicare are fiscal or ideological. Ask him and Ryan whether they agree that markets are often efficient but seldom compassionate. Ask him whether he sees the free market as our servant or our master.

20120821-04	09:22 Art	Re: "The Real Medicare Question" (reply to MarthaH, above)
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Thanks. Great article.

Maybe the best summary I have read on this latest issue of Medicare and the magical \$700B. What bothers me is this concept of distortion of the facts is becoming more and more prevalent and no one seems to be outraged. It's like, 'This is what I want to believe, therefore it is'. Not good science nor good planning for the future.

20120821-03	07:40	MarthaH	"A Cheat Sheet to What Makes Today's College Freshmen Click"
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OUR grandkids!

"A Cheat Sheet to What Makes Today's College Freshmen Click" by Mary Beth Marklein, *USA Today*

Aug. 21, 2012, (<http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/story/2012-08-21/class-2016-college-freshmen-mindset-list/57171478/1?csp=34news>)

For this year's crop of college freshmen, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and Kurt Cobain have always been dead, women have always piloted warplanes and space shuttles, and M&Ms have never been tan.

The class of 2016 grew up in cyberspace, a factor that has increasingly influenced how today's undergraduates approach the world, authors of two recent works say.

These cultural touchstones are part of a 100-item "Mindset List," released Tuesday by Beloit College, that describes what "normal" looks like for students born in 1994. Produced annually since 1998 as a cheat sheet to help faculty avoid making outdated references, the Mindset Lists have evolved into a catalog of generational change.

In a companion guide published for the first time this year, list creators Ron Nief and Tom McBride say members of the fall 2012 entering class are addicted to all things electronic and "think nothing of texting a friend whom they know is only a block away."

Nief and McBride stress that they're drawing a portrait of the incoming class, not judging it. Still, many of their observations parallel those in a book, to be published in September, that takes a starker view.

In *Generation on a Tightrope: A Portrait of Today's College Student*, authors Arthur Levine and Diane Dean conclude that today's undergraduates are electronically far more sophisticated than their parents or teachers, yet woefully unprepared for the real world. The authors characterize them as coddled, entitled and dependent.

"This is a generation with an average of 241 social media friends, but they have trouble communicating in person," says Levine, president of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation and author of two previous books about college students.

The book and this year's Mindset List note the impact of the worldwide recession. Today's freshmen have "entered college with questions about jobs, whether the college degree has value," Nief says. "Their attitude toward life in America and the future is different from those of just a few years before."

The Mindset List has drawn the attention not only of educators but of police departments, military services and employers. At NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, this year's Mindset Lists will be featured in a leadership conference open to employees who span four generations.

"We want everybody to increase their awareness and understanding of what makes generations unique and different, so that we can better work together," says Gail Williams, who is coordinating the program.

Other items on the Mindset List for the Class of 2016:

- Exposed bra straps have always been a fashion statement, not a wardrobe malfunction.
- Gene therapy has always been an available treatment.

- Bill Clinton is a senior statesman of whose presidency they have little knowledge.
- They have lived in an era of instant stardom and self-proclaimed celebrities, famous for being famous.
- They watch television everywhere, but on a television.
- Their folks have never gazed with pride on a new set of bound encyclopedias on the bookshelf.

(Source: Mindset List, Beloit College)

20120821-05	10:37	SteveM	Re: Laundry List of Obama's Failures (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #208)
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Congress is controlled by the Democrats for 4 years and all they can do pass a much despised health-care reform law? Which has a direct impact in the net loss of private-sector jobs, the addition of 3.6 million Americans to Social Security's disability roles (a way of concealing unemployment realities), GDP growth that slowed to a 1.8% crawl in 2011, chronically high unemployment, and a \$5 trillion increase to the national debt.

Do I have to spell it out for you every day? The Socialist ABM and policies are a failure, and even the liberals who supported him in the past have awakened and realized the Emperor has no clothes.

20120821-06	12:36	SteveB	Re: Laundry List of Obama's Failures (reply to SteveM, above)
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As I said, can you spell "filibuster"? And, since you choose to go back two more years, can you spell "Bush veto"?

Can you spell "DO-NOTHING REPUBLICAN CONGRESSMEN willing to destroy America just to defeat President Obama"?

20120821-17	15:56	SteveM	Re: Laundry List of Obama's Failures (reply to SteveB, above)
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More like a Geo Soros controlled Obama out to break the USA, stop drinking the cool aid.

20120821-07	13:53	Dale	"Romney Slightly Ahead in Wisconsin"
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This is a Democratic Polling Firm, by the way.

Despite the Obama smear campaign and vast spending on advertising, the wave is starting to move in the other direction. Start thinking about who you are going to blame after the election in November.

"Romney Slightly Ahead in Wisconsin" by Public Policy Polling

Aug. 21, 2012, (<http://www.publicpolicypolling.com/main/2012/08/romney-slightly-ahead-in-wisconsin.html>)

PPP's first Wisconsin poll since Mitt Romney announced Paul Ryan as his running mate finds him taking a small lead over Barack Obama in the state, 48-47. That represents a 7 point shift from PPP's last look at the state in early July, which found Obama ahead 50-44.

The biggest change Ryan's selection seems to have brought about is the unification of the GOP. Romney's gone from a 78 point lead with Republicans on our last poll (87-9) to now an 88 point lead with them (93-5). There's also

been a tightening with independents. Obama still has a 4 point lead with them at 47-43, but that's down from a 14 point advantage at 53-39 six weeks ago. Democrats are unchanged from the previous poll.

Ryan isn't exactly a universally popular figure in his home state. 49% of voters have a favorable opinion of him to 45% with a negative one. But that does give him the best numbers of anybody on either ticket in the state. Obama has a 46% approval rating with 50% of voters disapproving of him, Romney has a 45/48 favorability rating, and Joe Biden stands at 41/48.

A big reason Wisconsin remains so competitive for the GOP is that the electorate looks like it will be considerably more Republican leaning than it was in 2008, reflecting the continued high energy level of the party's voters after its victory in June's recall election. We find an electorate that's 34% Republican and 32% Democratic. Exit polls in 2008 showed Democrats with a 6 point turnout advantage, 39% to 33%. Although the enthusiasm gap that plagued Democrats nationally in 2010 has dissipated some places, it appears to still be a real issue for them in Wisconsin.

Choosing Ryan as his running mate isn't giving Romney any trouble with seniors in Wisconsin. That's actually where his greatest strength is, leading Obama 52-43 with them. Which isn't to say the Ryan Plan is popular in Wisconsin- only 40% of voters support it to 46% who are opposed. But the concern with it is coming much more from young voters than seniors.

This could just be a bounce for Romney that will fade away as the election gets closer but for now Wisconsin looks very much like a swing state.

[20120821-11](#) 15:36 SteveB Re: "Romney Slightly Ahead in Wisconsin" (reply to Dale, above)

Good to hear from you. I hope you've been having a happy, eventful, and wet summer!

It's getting interesting and I'm worried about Wisconsin, that former bastion of liberalism and unions. Then again, Mr. O should have Florida to compensate. Virginia? Nevada? Colorado? The few states in question will mean huge battles there, and, hopefully, the other states won't be forgotten. Good thing for all that Super-PAC money, heh? What an aid to the democratic process.

Personally, I think Romney-AndAyn might peak around convention time, but it will be all downhill after that.

I guess we'll see. How 'bout we bet a dinner on it for when I come visit and stay at your house for two weeks next year?

[20120821-16](#) 15:55 Dale Re: "Romney Slightly Ahead in Wisconsin" (reply to SteveB, above)

:~)

[20120821-10](#) 15:22 Pam Re: "Romney Slightly Ahead in Wisconsin" (reply to Dale, above)

I think a lot will depend on luck, like weather and people believing their vote makes a difference. The mood of the country is so perverse right now, I wouldn't be surprised by a Romney victory. I fear we're in for a bumpy ride. I just hope and pray African-Americans, Latinos, and old people turn out in record numbers.

[20120821-12](#) 15:39 SteveB Re: "Romney Slightly Ahead in Wisconsin" (reply to Pam, above)

I hope something will happen to boost the enthusiasm of those groups. They seem a little shell-shocked right now.

20120821-20 18:29 Art Re: "Romney Slightly Ahead in Wisconsin" (reply to Dale, above)

Hi, Dale. Probably a little early to predict any wave but of course we have always realized that R&R might win. We are not going to "blame" anyone after the election. I believe strongly that the reason will be a persistence and disgusting streak of racism and bigotry in the country. That is the underlying strength of the Republican party today. It is all white and all biased. I know you don't agree but to paraphrase John Stuart Mill "not all conservatives are stupid but all stupid people are conservative". And to quote my mom, "you're known by the company that you keep."

I know you are not stupid but I cannot for the life of me understand how you support lairs and bigots. In just one week as a VP candidate Ryan lied about trying to steer stimulus funds to his district. When confronted with the letters he signed he punted. He then said President Obama had closed a automobile factory in his district. The factory was closed well before President Obama took office. Then Ryan claimed President Obama has stolen \$700B from Medicare. Also a distortion of the facts to say the kindest thing about that lie and also in the Ryan budget just to make it more fun. Three pretty outright lies in one week! Either Ryan is really stupid or he is a liar, seems to me. What bothers me most is he doesn't seem to be even phased when he gets caught with his fingers in the till.

Again we know you don't agree and you may win but so the NAZIs in 1929. Hate does prevail on occasion and everyone suffers.

Just how I see it.

20120821-21 19:16 SteveB Re: "Romney Slightly Ahead in Wisconsin" (reply to Art & Dale, above)

Kinda like Ryan was saying today — another 'inversion' of the truth, or 'the truth inside out':

(CARNEGIE, Pa.) **Paul Ryan said today that President Obama "sort of drops his veil" at times**, apparently suggesting the president doesn't always reveal his true beliefs. "Every now and then President Obama sort of drops his veil, he's less coy about his philosophy. He sort of reveals his true governing policy, what he really believes," Ryan said to a crowd of over 2,000 people. (<http://news.yahoo.com/ryan-says-obama-drops-veil-184047326--abc-news-politics.html>)

Obama drops his veil??? Which one? The Wall St. mole secret identity? LOL.

20120821-22 19:36 Pam Re: "Romney Slightly Ahead in Wisconsin" (reply to all, above)

Romney wants poor kids to borrow the money for college from their parents. Ryan wants everyone to start a small business and assumes, I guess, that most small businesses succeed. I am an educated, semi-competent person, but the thing that has always scared the beejeebers out of me is the idea of starting a business. That is a talent, like any other, and not everyone has it in equal measure. Why is "entrepreneurship" the great be-all and end-all? Don't most people just want a steady paycheck and the peace of mind to sleep at night? Our politicians praise risk-takers and disdain the cautious folks who don't want to gamble on the economy or anything else. I say, let the high-flyers soar, if that's what makes them happy, but recognize that the vast majority of us simply want to do a job, get paid a fair wage for it, and live a prudent life. Self-made men (and women, I suppose, though I think ruthless aggressiveness is more a male preserve) always think that if they did it, so can everyone else. I've always wondered about the value of "meritocracy." Yes, I want the best surgeons to operate on me and the best teachers in the classroom, but there needs to be a "respectable" place for ordinary people. They are the ones who will be quickest to become disillusioned and angry, which makes them prey to demagogues who flatter them into feeling bigger than they actually are. I've always had a soft spot for the English quality of down-playing one's work and finding satisfaction in a private activity.

It was great. Golden skin, pure white fish protein, soft as butter, perfectly flaky. Grilled asparagus. Grilled fennel bulb, and a tasty, zesty, slightly peppery tomato sauce with a delicious tapenade. Sorry to tattle and run, but I took yesterday off so Susette and I could return from our Sunday night San Antonio BB King concert at leisure, and there is much to do.



Seared Striper with Grilled Fennel and Asparagus



Paneer Makhani with Tomato Cashew Curry

20120821-13 15:40 SteveB Re: Today's Lunch at Apple (reply to Ben, above)

Did you take a sack lunch yesterday?

20120821-14 15:43 Ben Re: Today's Lunch at Apple (reply to SteveB, above)

Thanks for asking, but no, Susette and I drove down to San Antonio on Sunday to see BB King at the incredible Majestic Theater in S (Google the theater: built in 1928, its hall is a demented hallucination of Spanish Colonial Mushroom)

I took Monday off, so we could have a leisurely and well rested ride home.

Nevertheless, I earned myself a speeding ticket.

20120821-15 15:48 SteveB Re: Today's Lunch at Apple (reply to Ben, above)

F*cking pigs! Things never change.

20120821-19 16:08 Ben Re: Today's Lunch at Apple (reply to SteveB, above)

Aw, Steve; the cop was polite and doing his job. In fact, on that particular stretch, it's pretty wavy and uneven as interstates go, and traffic was pretty dense.

I am angry with myself, as I usually remember to stay below the 10-over mark inside any city's city limits. It's a \$180 plus bumper, but it's on my head. Really, although \$180 for 72-in-a-60 seems rather dear to me.

I am all empathy for polite cops: it's a boring job, it's a very dangerous job, and pulling folks over to the side of a narrow high-speed road with a minimal shoulder is scary in its own right, especially once the officer is out of his car. Besides, it really IS me and the others around me he's trying to protect.

Dude had a really slick very black, very un-marked Mustang, too. Bet he has a lot of fun with it!

20120821-09 15:03 SteveB "The Five Reasons Why the Ryan-Romney Economic Plan Would Be a Disaster for America"

"The Five Reasons Why the Ryan-Romney Economic Plan Would Be a Disaster for America" by Robert Reich, NationofChange

Aug. 21, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/five-reasons-why-ryan-romney-economic-plan-would-be-disaster-america-1345561944>)

Video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=cO1F7EcGFAC.

Mitt Romney hasn't provided details so we should be grateful he's selected as vice president a man with a detailed plan Romney says is "marvelous," "bold and exciting," "excellent," "much needed," and "consistent with" what he's put out.

So let's look at the five basic features of this "marvelous" Ryan plan:

1. It would boost unemployment because it slashes public spending next year and the year after, when the economy is still likely to need a boost, not a fiscal drag. It would be the same austerity trap now throwing

Europe into recession. According to the Economic Policy Institute, Ryan's plan would mean 1.3 million fewer jobs next year than otherwise, and 2.8 million fewer the year after.

2. Ryan would take from lower-income Americans and give to the rich – who already have the biggest share of America's total income and wealth in almost a century. His plan would raise taxes on families earning between 30 and 40 thousand dollars by almost \$500 a year, and slash programs like Medicare, food stamps, and children's health. What would Ryan do with these savings? Reduce taxes on millionaires by an average of over \$500,000 a year.

3. Ryan wants to turn Medicare into vouchers that won't keep up with the rising costs of health care – thereby shifting the burden onto seniors. By contrast, Obama's Affordable Care Act saves money on Medicare by reducing payments to medical providers like hospitals and drug companies.

4. He wants to add money to defense while cutting spending on education, infrastructure, and basic research and development. America already spends more on defense than the next five biggest military spenders put together. Our future productivity depends on the public investments Ryan wants to cut.

5. Ryan's budget doesn't even reduce the federal budget deficit – not for decades. Remember: He's adding to military spending, giving huge additional tax cuts to the very rich, and stifling economic growth by cutting spending too early. The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities estimates Ryan's Roadmap would push public debt to over 175 percent of GDP by 2050.

So there you have it. The Ryan – Ryan-ROMNEY – economic plan.

And the five reasons why it would be a disaster for America.

20120821-18	16:06	SteveM	"Our Next Vice President?"
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"Our Next Vice President?" by JustCommonSense, Lost in America

Aug. 13, 2012, (<http://justcommonsense-lostinamerica.blogspot.com/2012/08/our-next-vice-president.html>)

Well, early Saturday morning we learned that Congressman Paul Ryan, Republican from Wisconsin, is to be Mitt Romney's pick for the next Vice President of The United States.

What are we to think of this selection? He's not a graduate of Columbia University. He's not a graduate of Harvard. He wasn't selected as the President of the Harvard Law Review. He didn't get a special free quota scholarship ride to any prestigious university and, instead, had to work his way through Miami University of Ohio. For God's sake the man drove the Oscar Mayer Wiener Truck one summer and waited tables another!

One morning when Paul Ryan was sixteen years old he went in to wake his father up and found him dead of a heart attack. He didn't write two books about that experience. Instead, he assumed the role of adult at an early age, never having the luxury to pursue youthful drug use and the art of socialist revolution.

Instead, Paul Ryan and his mother took his grandmother, suffering from Alzheimers, into the household and served as the primary care provider for his grandma. His grandma wasn't the Vice President of the Bank of Hawaii so she could offer nothing in return, except the element of "need".

Once Paul Ryan got his BA in Economics from Miami University of Ohio he was hired as a staff economist in Wisconsin Senator Kastin's office. The job must have not paid well because young Ryan moonlighted as a waiter and fitness trainer. No one offered him a "token honor" position at the University of Chicago and a \$200,000 dollar a year salary.

When a still young Paul Ryan returned to Wisconsin to run for Congress he didn't demonize his opponent and dig up dirt to shovel against him. He waited until the standing Congressman vacated the office before seeking the office.

In Janesville, Wisconsin they don't have a big political machine to promote you, to criminalize your opponent; instead Paul Ryan had to go door to door and sit at kitchen tables and listen to his future constituents.

After getting elected to Congress Paul Ryan didn't triumphantly march into Washington, buy himself a Georgetown townhouse and proceed over to K Street to rub elbows with lobbyists. He bunked in his Congressional office and used the house gym for showers and a fresh change of clothes.

Paul Ryan then married and took his bride back to Janesville. He lives on the same street he lived on as a kid and shares the neighborhood with eight other members of the Ryan clan. He hunts with the local Janesville hunt club and attends PTA meetings and other civic functions.

For those who can't make those public functions, Paul Ryan bought an old bread truck, converted it into a "mobile constituent office" and drives around to meet with those who need his help and attention.

No, I don't know if we can vote for a guy like this. He doesn't have a regal pedigree; he's Irish for God's sake! No one awarded him a Nobel Peace Prize two months after getting elected. No one threw flowers or got "chills down their leg" as he took his seat in Congress.

What is most despicable about Paul Ryan is that he has had the nerve to write the House Budget for three years in a row. He's is brazen and heartless in advocating in that budget for a \$5 trillion dollar reduction in federal spending over the next ten years! The House passed his budget three years in a row and three years in a row the Democratically controlled Senate has let it die in the upper house, without ever proposing a budget of their own. What is wrong with this guy? If Congress were to cut \$5 trillion dollars from the budget where would the President get the money to give \$500 million dollars to a bankrupt Solyndra? Or \$200 million dollars for bankrupt Energy 1? Or \$11 billion dollars to illegal aliens filing INIT, non-resident tax returns to claim \$11 billion big ones in child tax credits, even for their children living in Mexico?

I don't know. Paul Ryan seems heartless to me. He keeps wanting to cut government waste, he keeps wanting to put a halt to those big GSA conventions in Vegas and, worse, he keeps trying to make people look at that \$16.7 trillion dollar deficit! The guy's no fun at all!

Who wants a numbers cruncher? Who wants someone spoiling the party by showing folks the bill? Nothing will spoil a party quicker than sending the host the bill before the party's over.

Party Hearty folks! At least until November.

20120821-23 20:19 Art Re: NRA Video: "Borderless!" (reply to SteveM, FotM Newsletter #208)
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Interesting. I've been very busy rescuing dogs, so don't have the time to respond to all of this but I certainly appreciate your passion and interest in this issue. We may have gotten a little off subject somewhere along the line, but I will definitely defer to your experience and focus on the border. I don't really have many details about the few friends I have along the border and most of them are ex-military combat veterans, so they may view things from a slightly different viewpoint. Bottom line is you live there, so you have a first-hand experience base none of us can truly know unless we live there also.

Having said that, the issue I was focusing on was guns and the facts, as I understand them. We buy the drugs the cartels move north and sell them guns in return. I have no idea what congressional records you're referring to with regard to gun sales to Mexican cartel members, but, even if we accept his figures that only 20% come from the US, how does that happen? That's still a lot of guns.

As you also say, this has been going on for 40 years (I think much longer), so how can we hold the current Administration responsible for all the mayhem? 40 years covers a lot of Republican presidents also. I agree it is ugly and has become more ugly primarily because of guns and the mayhem that comes with them. What's the solution? FYI if someone wants to come north and visit the nation's capitol, I'll take you north of 14th street at night and drop you off and let's see how well you do getting home. Point being there is ugliness everywhere made

so much more lethal because of the proliferation of guns. Thanks largely to the NRA, anyone can buy a semi-automatic assault rifle and 100-round magazines as easily as they can buy a bag of potato chips.

[20120821-24](#) 21:54 SteveG

Book: *The Parties Versus the People: How to Turn Republicans and Democrats into Americans*

The Parties Versus the People: How to Turn Republicans and Democrats into Americans, by Mickey Edwards, Yale University Press, 2012, (<http://yalepress.yale.edu/yupbooks/book.asp?isbn=9780300184563>)

America's political system is dysfunctional. While this is a widely held view, it is a problem that—so far—has proved intractable. After every election, voters discover yet again that political "leaders" are simply quarreling in a never-ending battle between the two warring tribes, the Republicans and Democrats. In this critically important book, a distinguished statesman and thinker identifies exactly how our political and governing systems reward intransigence, discourage compromise, and undermine our democracy. He then describes exactly what must be done to banish the negative effects of partisan warfare from our political system.

As a former congressman, Mickey Edwards witnessed firsthand how important legislative battles can devolve into struggles not over principle but over party advantage. He offers graphic examples of how this problem has intensified and reveals how political battles have become nothing more than conflicts between party machines. Edwards's solutions—specific, practical, fair, and original—show the way to break the stranglehold of the political party system. *The Parties Versus the People* offers hope for a fundamental renewal of American democracy.

Mickey Edwards, a congressman for sixteen years and a faculty member at Harvard and Princeton for the subsequent sixteen years, is a vice president of the Aspen Institute. He has been a columnist for the *Los Angeles Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, and other newspapers, and he broadcasts a weekly commentary on National Public Radio's "All Things Considered". He writes an online column for the *Atlantic*.

[20120821-25](#) 21:57 SteveG

Video Interview: "Mickey Edwards Urges Congress, Before Party Affiliation Be 'an American First'"

Video (Aug. 21, 2012, PBS NewsHour): http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/politics/july-dec12/edwards_08-21.html.

Mickey Edwards, former Republican congressman, rails against political division in Washington in his new book, *The Parties Versus the People*. Edwards talks to Judy Woodruff about his suggestions to reform party hostility and create "one congress serving one country."

[Source of original email unknown. –SteveB]



The skunk has replaced the Eagle as the new symbol of the American Presidency. It is half black, half white, and everything it does stinks

[I don't think so! –SteveB]



The name given to President Obama by a gathering of the American Indian Nation, July 7, 2012.

[20120821-27](#) 11:37 SteveM Video: Steve Bridges as President Obama

You may remember Steve Bridges as the guy who imitated George Bush so well on the Jay Leno Show. He has now started imitating Obama and REALLY does it really well. The Administration has tried to put a stop to Bridges' act, because Obama has made it known that he is deeply offended. Yes, he's that good.....

Steve Bridges as President Obama – Aug., 2011:

http://www.youtube.com/watch_popup?feature=player_embedded&v=WH_a0cGVRmI.

[20120821-32](#) 23:42 SteveB Re: Steve Bridges as President Obama (reply to SteveM, above)

Pretty funny! Possibly racist, but funny, and not unsympathetic to the President.

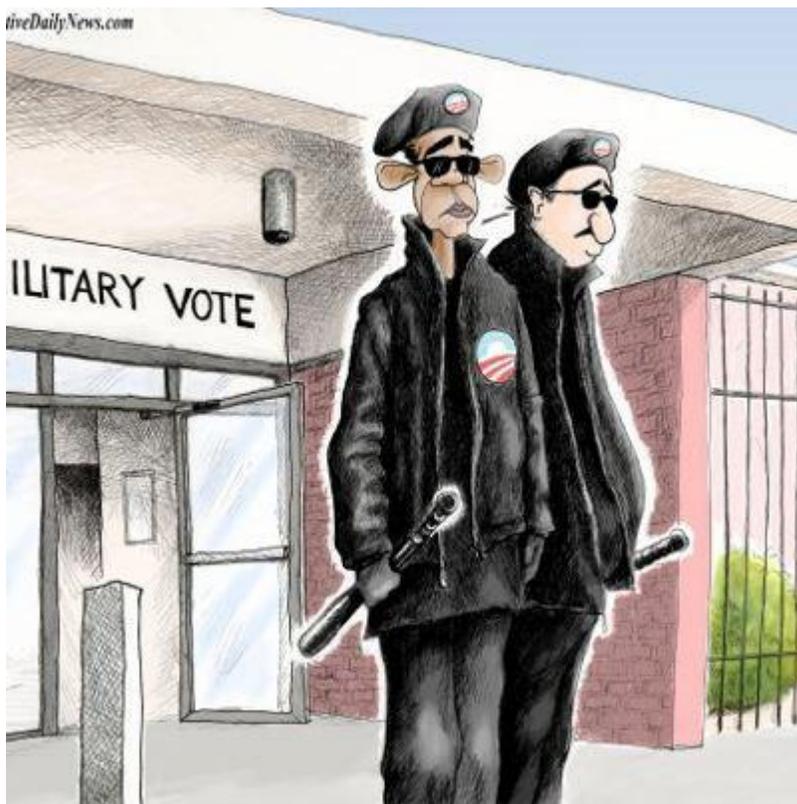
[20120821-28](#) 22:48 Tom There, I Fixed It. (Redneck)

Very Funny!

<http://failblog.cheezburger.com/thereifixedit>

[20120821-29](#) 23:10 Tom Cartoon: New Black Panthers 2012

Stopping the Military Vote! It has Begun:



20120821-33 23:54 SteveB Re: Cartoon: New Black Panthers 2012 (reply to Tom, above)

Tom, I can't believe you'd honestly want wishy-washy Mitt as your CIC! Obama has proven himself to be a steady hand, and the military must be reduced, not enlarged. Mitt certainly ain't the man to do that, with his huge campaign debt to the Kochs hanging over his scruple-less head.

He doesn't know what to do in a campaign, let alone as POTUS. I have no idea why he thinks he wants the job, knowing nothing about government or the world, as he has proven.

Always appreciate your thoughts.

20120821-30 23:21 Tom "Military Vet Detained for Psych Evaluation over Anti-Government Facebook Posts"

When you see them come for me, it is too late for you.

Psychiatric evaluations and detention used by the (old) Soviet Union, Cuba, Venezuela, Red China, and other Totalitarian/Communist countries, is a very common tactic used to silence political enemies. We are seeing this technique being used increasingly by our "homeland security!"

Y'all be careful about what you write on the internet, it seems that Big Brother just might be watching.

"Military Vet Detained for Psych Evaluation over Anti-Government Facebook Posts" by AP, CBS DC

Aug. 21, 2012, (<http://washington.cbslocal.com/2012/08/21/military-vet-detained-for-psych-evaluation-over-anti-government-facebook-posts/>)

(RICHMOND, Va.) A former Marine involuntarily detained for psychiatric evaluation for posting strident anti-government messages on Facebook has received an outpouring of support from people who say authorities are trampling on his First Amendment rights.

Brandon J. Raub, 26, has been in custody since FBI and Secret Service agents and Chesterfield County police questioned him Thursday evening about what they considered ominous posts talking of a coming revolution. In one message earlier this month, Raub wrote: "Sharpen my axe; I'm here to sever heads."

Police — acting under a state law that allows emergency, temporary psychiatric commitments upon the recommendation of a mental health professional — took Raub to the John Randolph Medical Center in Hopewell. He was not charged with any crime.

The Rutherford Institute, a Charlottesville-based civil liberties group, sent one of its attorneys to the hospital to represent Raub at a hearing Monday. A judge ordered Raub detained for another month, Rutherford executive director John Whitehead said.

"For government officials to not only arrest Brandon Raub for doing nothing more than exercising his First Amendment rights but to actually force him to undergo psychological evaluations and detain him against his will goes against every constitutional principle this country was founded upon," Whitehead said. "This should be a wake-up call to Americans that the police state is here."

Raub's mother, Cathleen Thomas, said she was not surprised by her son's plight.

"We're seeing our government overstepping its bounds again and again on the Constitution," she said in a telephone interview. "The bottom line is his freedom of speech has been violated. It was his patriotic right and duty to make those grievances known."

Thomas said her son, who served tours as a combat engineer in Iraq and Afghanistan, is “concerned about all the wars we’ve experienced” and believes the U.S. government was complicit in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. One of his Facebook posts, she said, pictured the gaping hole in the Pentagon and asked “where’s the plane?”

“I want the country to know who he is — that he’s not crazy, he’s a staunch patriot,” Thomas said.

Whitehead said he found nothing alarming on in Raub’s social media commentaries.

“The posts I read that supposedly were of concern were libertarian-type posts I see all the time, so I don’t know what supposedly triggered this,” he said. “I see worse stuff.”

The big concern, Whitehead said, is that government officials are apparently monitoring citizens’ private Facebook pages and arresting people with whom they disagree.

Dee Rybiski, an FBI spokeswoman in Richmond, said there was no Facebook snooping by her agency.

“We received quite a few complaints about what were perceived as threatening posts,” she said. “Given the circumstances with the things that have gone on in the country with some of these mass shootings, it would be horrible for law enforcement not to pay attention to complaints.”

Whitehead said some of the posts in question were made on a closed Facebook page that Raub had just created and that had only three members, so he questioned whether anyone from the public would have complained about them.

“Support Brandon Raub” Facebook pages were drawing significant interest and — along with other Internet sites — had numerous comments from people outraged by the veteran’s detention.

Raub’s supporters are characterizing the detention as an arrest, complaining that he was handcuffed and whisked away in a police cruiser without being served a warrant or read his Miranda rights. But county and federal authorities say it was not an arrest because Raub doesn’t face criminal charges.

Col. Thierry Dupuis, the county police chief, said Raub was taken into custody upon the recommendation of mental health crisis intervention workers. He said the action was taken in accordance with the state’s emergency custody statute, which allows a magistrate to order the civil detention and psychiatric evaluation of a person deemed to be potentially dangerous. He said Raub was handcuffed because he resisted officers’ attempts to take him into custody.

Whitehead said Raub’s only act of resistance was refusing to allow authorities into his home without a warrant. A video of the incident shot by onlookers and posted on You Tube provides no insight because Raub was already in cuffs when the cameras started rolling.

[20120821-31](#)

23:30 SteveB

Re: Obama's Daughters are 'Senior Staffers' (reply to SteveM, FotM Newsletter #208)

Talk about wasteful trips! Your political party? See today’s lead story.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/dana-milbank-are-republicans-getting-a-sign-from-above/2012/08/21/3424ba0a-ebd2-11e1-9ddc-340d5efb1e9c_story.html

The Politico report Sunday about drunken skinny-dipping in the Sea of Galilee gave House Republicans an unwanted image of debauchery — a faint echo of the Capitol page scandal that, breaking in September 2006, cemented Republicans’ fate in that November’s elections. The 30 Republican lawmakers on the “fact-finding” mission to Israel last summer earned a rebuke from Majority Leader Eric Cantor and attracted the attention of the FBI. The naked

congressman, Rep. Kevin Yoder (R-Kan.), admitted in a statement: “[R]egrettably I jumped into the water without a swimsuit.”

A boozy frolic at a Christian holy site might have been a considerable embarrassment for the party, but it was eclipsed by a bigger one: Akin’s preposterous claim on a St. Louis TV program that pregnancy is rare after a “legitimate rape” because “the female body has ways to try to shut that whole thing down.”

[20120821-34](#) 23:59 SteveB Photo: Baby Bolivian Anteater

<http://jessicainboliviasa.blogspot.com/>



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

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