



FRIENDS OF THE MIDDLE NEWSLETTER #244 — OCT. 10, 2012

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Home of the Brave

(posted by Steven W. Baker / SteveB, Oct. 10, 2012)

I think it's almost always a good thing to follow your dreams if done passionately, even if that dream is just to sit in a rocking chair on a porch in the shade on a fall day watching the world go by and thinking about how the air feels exactly like fall in college on a football Saturday.

Yet the world is so rich with things to *do!*

It's never too late to give your Plan B a chance, even if that's just to keep it somehow nurtured and growing there in the background somewhere...at least google this or that to see how it looks, what the possibilities are...

Stay as young as you can because, what youth doesn't know, youth is where it's at. And when it occurs at an advanced age, I think that's a valuable thing indeed.



"The Siren Call of Starting Over" by Amy Gutman, *Psychology Today*

Sept. 3, 2012, (<http://www.psychologytoday.com/articles/201208/the-siren-call-starting-over>)

After a long-anticipated Brazilian vacation in February 2009, Sean Ogle had a hard time returning to his stable—if unexciting—job as a financial analyst in Portland, Oregon. For years he'd had two main goals: to travel the world and to become his own boss. Now he saw with new clarity that he wasn't on a trajectory that would help him realize either one.

Still, he had a hard time figuring out what to do. Over the years, his coworkers had come to seem like family, and he felt especially indebted to the man who'd hired him. The economy presented another stumbling block, he says. "I had a better paying job than most, with lots of potential growth. Why would I give up a steady paycheck and a comfortable life to gallivant around Asia when I had no idea what that would bring?"

But in the end, that's exactly what he did. After he was asked to suggest some money-saving ideas for the company, Ogle proposed that he work remotely for a pay cut—which his boss unexpectedly interpreted as his resignation. Rather than focus on finding another traditional job, Ogle embraced the chance to pursue Plan B: a career centered around his passions. Months before, he had reached out to blogger Chris Guillebeau, who, through his website, *The Art of Non-Conformity*, encourages others to make a living doing what they love. With his guidance, Ogle sold his car, landed a half-year, Internet-based gig he could do remotely while starting his own blogging business—and transplanted himself to Thailand.

Follow the money. Follow your heart. For many, these messages resonate—and sometimes compete—as never before. In the wake of the Great Recession, the pressure to think practically about jobs has never been greater. There might be college loans looming or a mortgage to pay, and in a rocky financial climate we're constantly reminded that a stable job with benefits is something to feel grateful for. Yet that hasn't prevented many nine-to-fivers (or increasingly, eight-to-sixers) from fantasizing about more autonomy and authenticity in their careers. As Web-savvy entrepreneurial types claim center stage in the new globalized economy and the marketplace of ideas, the call to take risks and build a brand around one's passions has never been louder—especially on the Internet. In fact, in the blogosphere, a growing number who've taken the plunge now claim that in volatile times, following your dreams may very well be the safest bet. No wonder we're more conflicted about what work means and what it should be than ever before.

Of course, for millions of Americans struggling to make ends meet, the push-pull between work that fuels the spirit and work that fuels the bank account isn't even on the radar. It's white-collar workers who tend to grapple most with their expectations: the desire to be fiscally responsible competes with a nagging anxiety that as accountants or marketing executives they're not fulfilling their promise, that they might be happier opening a brewery or making films.

Personality also plays a role. Anyone open to different types of experience is inclined to see the appeal of forging a new path, says Ronald Riggio, an organizational psychologist at Claremont McKenna College. "Those who tend to be creative or independent are likely to fit this pattern; they want careers that allow them to express who they are," adds Katharine Brooks, author of *You Majored in What? Mapping Your Path from Chaos to Career*.

Concerns about career identity are particularly acute among Millennials, who came of age with extraordinary expectations for themselves, boosted by Boomer parents who encouraged them to dream big. "They see themselves as having many career options. They're interested in doing what they want, rather than acquiescing to norms," says psychiatrist Gabriela Cora, a corporate consultant at the Executive Health & Wealth Institute in Miami.

Having grown up in a time of prosperity, many members of Gen Y have trouble reconciling the belief that they should be creating their bliss with the reality that it can be financially risky—and likely won't allow them to live at the level they did with their parents, Cora notes. "It seems clear that there's a growing gap between expectations and reality," confirms San Diego State University psychologist Jean M. Twenge, author of *Generation Me: Why Today's Young Americans Are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled—and More Miserable Than Ever Before*.

Yet it's not just Millennials who desire careers that align with their passions; a generational study of high school seniors led by Twenge suggests that Boomers, Gen Xers, and Millennials all place an extremely high value on jobs being interesting. Underscoring the widespread nature of the strife over what matters most in a career is a study by Encore.org, a think tank focusing on Boomers, work, and social purpose. Among its findings: Financial concerns are holding back millions of Americans between the ages 44 and 70 who would like to move into "encore careers" that place their talents in service to the greater good. "The urge to create something new seems very invigorating to people," says Encore.org Vice President Marci Alboher. "What I hear a lot is, 'If not now, when?'"

Through much of the last century, work trajectories seemed relatively clear. "Thirty years ago, people started a career believing they would do well and then grow old in that same job. People valued stability," Cora says. Ideals have since shifted: "Now, people want a calling." At the same time, traditional work is getting worse—jobs have become more demanding even as they offer fewer rewards, she asserts. Workers frequently find themselves with less autonomy and more tedious dead-end projects. Many of the old security guarantees are gone—without a compensating upside. "When our fathers took jobs, they at least knew they could buy a house and raise a family," says one financially strapped freelance writer, weighing the pros and cons of seeking full-time employment.

For those who are feeling less than satisfied with the corporate grind, the idea of a Plan B can be undeniably alluring—and all the more so as self-starters who've made the transition have been lionized in the media in recent years. It's also increasingly billed as practical by those who've succeeded at it, like Harvard Law School grad turned career coach Tama Kieves. "You probably have a voice of fear telling you to play it safe, heed convention. I want to represent your other voice, the one that tells you to really play it safe, by following your desire," she writes in her new book *Inspired and Unstoppable: Wildly Succeeding in Your Life's Work!*

The clamor over the benefits of taking a risk is especially conspicuous on the Web. One voice among many in the digital chorus: Ogle's. Today he's a visible exponent of one particular brand of the pursue-your-passion message; he promotes a "location independent" lifestyle through his blogs Location 180 and Location Rebel, while also traveling the world. (To make ends meet, he juggles other projects, including part-time work for his mentor, Guillebeau.)

"The more time you spend on the Internet, the more you get a sense that following your dreams and starting your own business is the norm," says Judith Donath, a faculty fellow at Harvard's Berkman Center for Internet & Society. While experts agree that entrepreneurship has become more common in the past decade, "the startup community is disproportionately represented online," she explains. "Someone may say, 'I quit my job, so I'm going to start a blog about my new wine business.' But there aren't many who will say, 'I'm going to start a blog about my day as a middle manager at Staples.'" All the bandwidth devoted to entrepreneurship may make it seem less of a gamble—but while that likely helps boost the appeal, it doesn't mean such ventures readily succeed.

For some, it might be relatively obvious which road makes the most sense. "A lot depends on whether you have kids," notes University of Texas, Austin, psychologist Kristin Neff, author of *Self-Compassion: Stop Beating Yourself Up and Leave Insecurity Behind*. Among other things, how comfortable you are with ambiguity may also play a role in whether or not you take a leap of faith. "Folks who have a high tolerance for it are better able to deal with the uncertainty that comes with following your heart, while having a low tolerance often leads to sticking with a 'safe' path," Claremont McKenna's Riggio says.

Still, knowing what's right doesn't mean that letting go of a dream and making peace with a workaday job is easy. "Concentrating on the good aspects of your current job—the reasons you chose it in the first place—can help you go from feeling like a victim to someone who's actually in control of the situation," Cora advises. In addition, she recommends thinking of ways you can bring what interests you about a Plan B career into your current position: "If you've always wanted to start something from scratch, look for ways that you can head up a new project within your company."

It may also be helpful to know research suggests career satisfaction is linked to obtaining work that offers scope for autonomy, a sense of impact and mastery, and creativity. "When you recognize that these conditions have little to do with following a pre-existing passion, you can abandon the myth that there's one perfect job for you," says Georgetown professor Cal Newport, author of *So Good They Can't Ignore You: Why Skills Trump Passion in the Quest for Work You Love*.

Meanwhile, for those still awash in confusion, Harvard Graduate School of Education's Robert Kegan, author of *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life*, counsels finding ways to tease out and reflect upon the various competing voices. One strategy he suggests is creating a four-column document identifying, in turn: a goal ("I want to better follow my own heart"), behaviors that run counter to this goal ("I accept jobs that aren't meaningful to me"), competing commitments ("I can't let down my family"), and last, assumptions that keep the third column responsibilities feeling necessary ("If my career change disappoints my family, they will stay unhappy with me"). Simply getting these ideas out of your head and onto paper will often lead to a profound shift in perspective, Kegan says.

If that ultimately convinces you that it's time to give Plan B a chance, Cora stresses the importance of pragmatism and careful planning. Rather than just quitting your job and diving right in, "work part time on your own—begin testing the water, making it an opportunity," she says. Not only will this help you determine how viable your plan is financially, you'll get the chance to find out if you actually like the work involved.

Another critical step in any successful transition: getting support. Having voices of encouragement is key to handling the stress of making a career jump, Neff points out. Fortunately, it's possible to get support 24 hours a day via the Internet—through Facebook, Twitter, and an array of niche online communities. Moreover, "the access to information and the ability to find collaborators and people who can offer advice actually reduces the real risk of starting something new by giving you practical resources for doing it," says Harvard's Donath.

No one knows this better than Ogle. "From a business standpoint and an emotional standpoint, none of this would be possible without the Internet," he says, reflecting on the road he's traveled in the past few years. "As I built my sites, I developed a support system. I had people to turn to if things didn't work out. If you sit down at a bar, what are the odds that someone next to you will share your goals and interests? Through the Internet you can find people who want the same things you do."

As attitudes toward lifelong careers have SHIFTED, FOR MANY Plan B has come to represent a work CHANGE born of passion rather than necessity. here's HOW it paid OFF FOR THREE risk-takers:

KENNY LIKIS, Cambridge, MA, Age: 61

In 2009, Kenny Likis was exploring postcollege opportunities for his son when he discovered that Teach for America didn't have an upper age limit. "I instantly decided to apply," says Likis, who became fascinated with the program after hearing founder Wendy Kopp speak in 2006.

Having previously spent more than two decades in the Boston-area high-tech world as a technical writer, a manager, and a vice president of engineering, by the mid-aughts, he was ready for something "that had more social impact." Inspired by his wife, who had moved from the tech world to education, in 2005 he left a job that felt like an increasingly poor fit. But he struggled to find his place, dealing with stretches of being "unemployed and underemployed."

Finally, Likis made a U-turn back to the tech world, a foray that was cut short by a layoff in the wake of the financial crisis. That, coupled with a life-threatening pulmonary embolism 10 days later, brought new clarity. "It all had me thinking, 'Do what you want to do,'" he says; when the Teach for America option appeared, he was more than ready.

For Likis, who began his working life as a college English teacher in his native Alabama, the five-week Teach for America summer training was "as invigorating as anything I've ever done." He spent the past two years teaching high school English and Special Education in South Boston. The good: It's exactly where he wants to be. The bad: The school where he spent the past year has no openings for this one. Despite the uncertainty, Likis has no regrets about his full-circle journey. "Once I started teaching again, I remembered how much I loved it. Finishing my working life in the classroom was a good choice for me."

NED MENOYO, Los Angeles, Age: 42

Having completed a B.F.A. in drama, Ned Menoyo, then 22, took a deep breath and assessed his next steps. "I loved acting, but I also lived in perpetual terror when I saw how actors live," he recalls. Born into a family of lawyers, it wasn't long before he found himself considering the obvious, time-tested option.

After law school and several years working in Boston, he and his wife moved to Maine, where he shuffled between the private and public sectors before landing a job in government relations. By then, he was divorced—and finally ready to take a risk.

When his best friend announced a move to Los Angeles, Menoyo was inspired to do the same and give acting another shot. As crazy as it might have seemed to others, "the decision was clear for me. Acting felt like unfinished business. I wanted to put that to rest," he says. In the years that followed, he enjoyed a certain success: a few commercials, student films, a single scene with Tatum O'Neal—capped by being cast as the lead in a (yet-to-be-released) independent action film.

Then life intervened. While Menoyo didn't find fame out West, he did find a second chance at love and a family, which led him to re-imagine his career once again. Now a married father of two, he's spent the past six years as a staff attorney at a Los Angeles law firm. He's grateful for the law degree and stable career he once took for granted, even as he continues to pursue his love of acting. "I've found a way to do both—for now, that's good enough for me."

RACHEL COOK, New York, Age: 28

At 25, Rachel Cook was making more money than she'd expected, but as a futures and equities trader, "I wasn't creating a product or helping anyone. I especially wanted to help women," she recalls. It was fun, but unfulfilling.

After happening upon a story in *The New York Times* about how microlending is transforming life in impoverished communities by providing women with small loans to start businesses, "I decided on the spot to make a global documentary exploring the impact of microfinance."

With no film industry connections to speak of, Cook's first stop was Craigslist, where she posted an ad seeking a director of photography. Among the respondents was Steven Hiller, a veteran of dozens of Hollywood studio films, including *Terms of Endearment*. Once he signed on, others quickly followed. Funding came from Duke University, Royal Roads University, Kickstarter donors, and Cook's own savings. Shooting began in South America in April 2010; next came stops in India, Bangladesh, Kenya, and even Detroit.

With the film slated to premiere this October at Duke, Cook's alma mater, she's also deeply focused on a related for-profit venture: a (patent-pending) social game called *Seeds*, which combines micro-lending with the lucrative online game world. "I believe what I'm doing can transform the world in positive ways while also generating healthy financial returns," Cook says, noting that microfinance and social gaming are both multi-billion-dollar industries. "Profitability and social conscience are not mutually exclusive."

While her days are far longer and her bank account far lighter than in her trading days, "I've never been happier," Cook says. "I care deeply about what I'm doing. I feel I'm making an impact—so I have the energy to do whatever needs to be done."

Dreams Hold Strong

Don't let go of your dreams
Hug them tight.
Remember them long
Not dreams of the night
But of possibilities I sing.

Nothing can prevent
 But the fear.
 Yet when fear is gone
 Life is ever clear
 And dreams hold strong.

We live our lives
 Day by day.
 No, moment by moment
 Our dreams hold sway
 Above the abyss you know.

Not easy for me here
 Not being there.
 Let me accept all blame
 And Zen breath share
 As we live our human art.

No past and no future
 Except our dreams.
 May your heart be filled with love
 Though nothing's as it seems
 Your dreams hold strong.

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FotM NEWSLETTER #244 (Oct. 10, 2012)—HYPERTEXT INDEX

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<u>20121009-01</u>	11:45	Pam	Re: "6 Ridiculous Lies You Believe About the Founding of America" (reply to Tom, FotM Newsletter #243)
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And the hits just keep coming. Thank you, Mr. Tom.

I don't know my American history well enough to comment on the veracity of Tom's revisionism, but if what he says is true, I find it extremely interesting, not disturbing, as he seems to assume we would. OK, so the Vikings discovered America. Great. I'd like to know more about that. I have no problem at all learning that things I

thought were factually true turn out to be somebody's spin. All history is somebody's spin. New things are discovered, and the narrative changes. That's why there are new books on history; the last word has not yet been spoken. It is not deception to concoct a national story. That's been going on at least since Homer. The early Greeks read "The Iliad" to learn about their past. Was there actually a siege of Troy? Did Achilles actually live? For centuries no one thought so, and "The Iliad" was considered "myth," fabrication by a poet, based on earlier fabrications by other poets. Then in the 19th c. an archaeological site in Turkey was discovered that matched many of the details in the ancient poem. Here was evidence that at least some of what Homer had declaimed was true. History is just that: a story, the story we tell about ourselves. All societies have collective myths that over time, with access to better information, transmute into something more closely approximating the "truth." I did not know that a plague wiped out 90% of the Native Americans before Europeans came to our shores. If that's so, I find it fascinating. Disease has certainly affected history at other times in other places--ancient Athens, for one. It makes sense that America would create a myth that displays our character, or what we would like our character to be. What is the American myth? You find it everywhere in literature, art, even advertising. America is a new world, an Edenic world, populated by a new Adam, who ventures forth to conquer the frontier and bring civilization and a "city on the hill." America is about the individual, strong male loners and brave, long-suffering women. The Lone Ranger. Davy Crockett. Read "The Last of the Mohicans" if you want an interesting take on European/Native American relations, and read it against the background of what was actually going on at the time. The Marlboro man, with his eye on the horizon. Charles Bronson meting out justice, Rambo going it alone in the jungle, Gary Cooper in one of the great movies of all time, "High Noon." Boy, is that film ever archetypal! We can compare our myth with those of other countries for interesting insights into our national character. Canada and the U.S. are alike in lots of ways, but our national myths are quite different. Canadians are rather more fatalistic than we, more concerned with survival than with conquering. In America men go out and tame the wilderness. In Canada, when a man goes out into the wilderness (in their myth), he either dies or goes insane. Same goes for the women. There are lots of crazy pioneer women in Canadian lore. One side of the border believes it is invincible, the other knows that a small miscalculation will almost certainly end in annihilation. These distinct myths continue to inform our societies, our politics, our assumptions about human nature. It's all contingent. Trying to nail down the past is like trying to nail down jello. No, I am not shocked to learn that Columbus was a rat or that Native Americans had built great civilizations. What do I take from this? Nothing is entirely what it seems, and nothing lasts forever. Arrogance and aggression can accomplish much, as America abundantly demonstrates. But holding onto a worn-out myth because it suits your world view can be dangerous. It can blind you to other ideas about what constitutes the good life, and that can, perhaps, lead to Armageddon, as any visitor to the Middle East could undoubtedly tell you.

[20121009-02](#)

11:54

Pam

Re: Video: Obama's Second Term Tax Plans (reply to Tom, FotM Newsletter #243)

Well, I watched Dick Morris attempt to terrorize the well-off, and I see Obama's proposed tax plan very differently from him. Hell, yes, we need to increase revenue. You make \$250,000 and your taxes go up to \$20,000? And your point is? Raising the cut-off for Social Security from \$100,000 to \$150,000 is a problem? You're kidding, right? If you think the government should "live within its means," then you should scale back on your vacations in Aspen or your purchase of a new car every year. If Americans are so all-fired individualistic, shouldn't the individual exercise a little prudence in his own life, as well as expect it at the societal level. It is obscene for the well-off to whine about not wanting to share like a bunch of three-year olds. J---s!

[20121009-03](#)

11:59

Pam

Re: "The Maimed" (reply to SteveB, FotM Newsletter #243)

I thought Chris Hedges speech to the veterans was magnificent. I just finished reading Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*, his autobiographical novel about the Viet Nam war. My grandmother used to say that "childbirth is women's war," and it's true: childbirth is hard as hell in ways no man will ever understand. But war IS hell in ways I will never understand. Which is harder to live with in the aftermath?

[20121009-04](#)

12:26

SteveB

"Highly Debatable: The Big Liar's Biggest Lies"

"Highly Debatable: The Big Liar's Biggest Lies" by Joe Conason, NationofChange

Sept. 9, 2012, (<http://www.nationofchange.org/highly-debatable-big-liar-s-biggest-lies-1349788797>)

"It's not easy to debate a liar," complained an email from one observer of the first presidential debate — and there was no question about which candidate he meant. Prevarication, falsification, fabrication are all familiar tactics that have been employed by Mitt Romney without much consequence to him ever since he entered public life, thanks to the inviolable taboo in the mainstream media against calling out a liar (unless, of course, he lies about sex).

Yes, President Obama ought to have been better prepared for Romney's barrage of blather and bull. The Republican's own chief advisor, Eric Fehrnstrom, had glibly described the "Etch-a-Sketch" strategy they would deploy in the general election, to make swing voters forget the "severe conservative" of the primaries. Romney executed that pivot on Wednesday night, but he could do so only by spouting literally dozens of provably fraudulent assertions — which various diligent fact-checkers proceeded to debunk.

Knowing that he is vulnerable on taxation and the budget for many reasons, including his own peculiar and secretive tax history, Romney made several contradictory claims regarding his economic plan. He has no plan to lavish \$5 trillion in tax breaks on the wealthy. He won't cut taxes for the rich at all. He vowed to provide tax relief to the middle class and won't increase their tax burden. He swore that his tax cuts would not increase the deficit.

Finally, he said that with all of that, he would grow the economy enough to shrink and eventually eliminate the deficit — without raising taxes on anyone. And he claimed that there are several studies proving he can fulfill all of these conflicting promises — even though he refuses to provide any specific tax proposals beyond a broad tax cut.

There is no study proving that Romney can do what he promised, and among his lies is his description of editorials in the *Wall Street Journal* as "studies" of his plan. The most complete and unrefuted study of his claims remains the Tax Policy Center's bipartisan report on the Romney plan, which shows that there is simply no way to pay for his \$5 trillion, across-the-board tax cut without raising taxes on the middle class. None of the alternative studies he has cited proves otherwise — and some of them actually amass additional evidence that he is wrong.

Undoubtedly he knows all that. He knows that eliminating the estate tax, a mainstay of his plan, will benefit the rich enormously and almost nobody else.

He also knows that when he claims economic growth alone will erase the deficit, without raising taxes, he is inventing impossible numbers. As The National Memo's Howard Hill demonstrated yesterday, the assumptions behind his claims are ridiculous.

For the numbers to work, he would have to create not 12 million jobs, as he promised to do by 2016, but 162 million — more than the total current U.S. workforce. Or else the jobs created would have to pay more than \$443,000 per year on average, which is even less likely than Rafalca winning the dressage medal at the next Summer Olympics.

At the same time, Romney accused the president of increasing the federal debt by an amount that is "almost as much as all prior presidents combined." This charge, which he leveled before, is patently false and by now Romney must know it. The prior debt, mostly run up by George W. Bush and his Republican congressional cronies, stood above \$10 trillion when Obama took office. The debt is now just over \$16 trillion, mostly due to costs incurred by Bush and by Obama's successful effort to prevent a Depression.

Having essentially disavowed the health care reforms that were his sole significant achievement in his single term in elected office, the former Massachusetts governor suddenly claimed ownership of Romneycare. Presumably, this will make him more appealing to swing voters, too. But he still wants to do away with Obamacare, except for the parts that are popular.

For this maneuver, he must misrepresent his own proposed federal health care overhaul. He says there will be no change to Medicare for current beneficiaries, but repealing the Affordable Care Act will deprive them of free

preventive care, increase their costs for prescription drugs and do irreparable harm to Medicaid, which provides assisted care for nine million destitute Medicare patients.

But Romney has been lying about the Affordable Care Act for years, according to his own former advisor Jonathan Gruber, the chief intellectual architect of Romneycare. Nearly a year ago, Gruber complained that Romney's attempt to draw a sharp distinction between the Massachusetts legislation and Obamacare was phony. He told Capital New York in November 2011 that "they're the same fucking bill. He just can't have his cake and eat it too. Basically, you know, it's the same bill. He can try to draw distinctions and stuff, but he's just lying."

Lying again? Indeed, the falsehoods flowed on every conceivable subject. Concerning energy, Romney claimed that "about half" of the renewable energy firms that received federal assistance under Obama administration programs went bankrupt — a claim that cannot be justified by any measure. Of the 28 firms that got federal loans or loan guarantees, three went under, representing less than 11 percent — and less than 5 percent of the funds committed. (This assertion was so blatantly untrue that the Romney campaign withdrew it the next day.)

The examples cited above hardly exhaust the deep well of dishonesty in the Republican campaign. What Romney has done presents a fundamental challenge to the American political media. Will news outlets hold him accountable for baldly misleading voters? Are they capable of confronting his continuous mendacity with basic facts? Some have made a beginning, while others have scarcely tried. If that isn't their responsibility, then they no longer have any purpose at all.

20121009-05	14:29	Ben	Photo: Today's Seafood Lunch at Apple
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Swordfish: I've told ya'll before that I hadn't known what swordfish should taste like until having had it here.

My filet was like that today: a reminder of why to some folks, swordfish is a delicacy. Prepared with a rare-to-medium-rare center, swordfish rivals tuna for dense, firm flesh with a fine non-fishy, meaty texture and smooth, rich-yet-mild flavor.

Chef Alejandro topped my steak with a lovely green cilantro-mint-jalapeno-shallot sauce (quite mild, for all that) that set off the rich fish nicely. Creamy chunks of glazed roasted sweet potato brought the Turf to this fine dish, and butter lettuce with cherry tomatoes and pickled cabbage rounded it out.

I have not figured out what those cute crispie red strands are, and I keep forgetting to ask. I can't taste them clearly, which made the first possibility that occurred to me saffron, since I seem not to be able to taste saffron. And that would be an awful lot of saffron, which has a by-weight value in the ball park with gold.

I'll have to ask Alex.

Nothing I like better than a fish and veggies lunch, when the fish is fresh, local vegetables are chosen for balance and harmony, and everything is treated with thoughtful respect to bring out its best qualities.

If I ever retire, I must negotiate access to Caffe Macs...

Larry came to join me today, so... no book update.



Swordfish, Sweetaters, and Salad

20121009-06 21:14 Tom Cartoon: *The New York Times*



20121009-07 21:29 Tom "The Post-Constitutional President"

"The Post-Constitutional President" by Frank Gaffney, Jr., Center for Security Policy

Oct 09, 2012, (<http://www.centerforsecuritypolicy.org/p19113.xml>)

Team Obama insists that next month's presidential election is "a choice, not a referendum." It sure seems to be with respect to the two candidates very different views on the Constitution. Mitt Romney makes plain at every turn his commitment to that document, while Barack Obama's conduct in office has marked him as the post-constitutional president.

Consider just a few examples of Mr. Obama's systematic disregard of, contempt for and/or deviation from a national charter he swore an oath to preserve, protect and defend:

- President Obama has simply refused to uphold federal laws with which he disagrees, including the Defense of Marriage Act and immigration statutes.
- After confirming that, in the absence of congressional authorization, he lacked the authority to give what amounts to an amnesty to young illegal aliens, President Obama went ahead and declared it by executive fiat.
- Despite repeated congressional objections to federal purchase of a state prison in Thomson, Illinois to which the Obama administration has sought to relocate jihadists currently held as detainees at Guantanamo Bay, Mr. Obama last week authorized its acquisition for \$165 million.
- Ever since it came to office, the Obama administration has sought to accommodate Islamist demands that freedom of expression be curbed, lest it offend Muslims and stoke violence. For example, in 2009, it co-sponsored a UN Human Rights Council resolution along those lines. In 2011, it launched the so-called "Istanbul Process" to find common ground with proponents of shariah blasphemy laws who seek to strip us of our First Amendment freedoms.
- And in September 2012, President Obama announced at the United Nations: "The future must not belong to those who slander the prophet of Islam" - a stance indistinguishable from that of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Taliban and al Qaeda.
- A particularly ominous example of Mr. Obama's post-constitutional presidency involves his abdication of his first duty as Commander-in-Chief: to secure the common defense. Having successfully engineered two rounds of deep defense budget reductions totaling some \$800 billion over the next ten years, the President is intent on inflicting a further, devastating half-a-trillion dollar, across-the-board cut pursuant to a process known on Capitol Hill as sequestration.

There is no getting around it: Cuts of this magnitude are going to result in tremendous disruptions of defense programs and attendant job losses in the associated industries. A federal law known as the WARN Act requires companies with more than 100 employees to give them notice of potential lay-offs sixty days in advance. With sequestration due to kick in on January 2, 2013, that means the mandatory warning of potential pink slips to come would arrive just before the November 6th election.

To avoid such a particularly untimely reminder of the president's dismal stewardship of his economic as well as national security portfolios, in July the Obama Labor Department issued guidance to defense contractors saying that the WARN Act's requirements would not be enforced. The pretext given was that, since sequestration's potential effects on particular contracts had not been specified, there was insufficient basis to know the extent of the impact on employment and, therefore, the statute would not apply.

Of course, one reason the potential effects of sequestration are not known with precision less than three months before they are statutorily required to go into effect is that the Obama administration has ordered the Pentagon not to make any plans for implementing that next round of cuts. This directive was reaffirmed on September 27th. Then, Team Obama advised contractors the next day that, as *The Hill* reported: "They would be compensated for legal costs if layoffs occur due to contract cancellations under sequestration - but only if the contractors follow the Labor [Department] guidance." In other words, the administration now wants the taxpayer to pick up the tab for violations of the law by those it has induced to engage in them.

Republican Senators John McCain, Lindsey Graham and Kelly Ayotte, respectively of Arizona, South Carolina and New Hampshire, have been among those tirelessly warning for months of the catastrophe sequestration will inflict on the U.S. military. They issued a joint statement in response to the president's latest post-constitutional action which said, in part, "The Obama Administration is cynically trying to skirt the WARN Act to keep the American people in the dark about this looming national security and fiscal crisis. The president should insist that companies act in accordance with the clearly stated law and move forward with the layoff notices." (Detailed estimates of the

magnitude of that crisis as it is likely to manifest itself in states, counties, cities and congressional districts across the country can be obtained at <http://www.FortheCommonDefense.org/reports>.)

In an important essay published on September 24th in the *Wall Street Journal*, former U.S. Attorney General Michael Mukasey called on legislators to put Mr. Obama on notice: If, as widely expected, he proceeds after the election to yield to Islamist demands that he transfer (presumably to Egypt) or release the lead conspirator in the first World Trade Center attack, Omar Abdul Rahman, it "could be considered the kind of gross betrayal of public trust that would justify removal from high office." The same should apply to Mr. Obama's palpable contempt for the Constitution - something sure to be even more in evidence if he secures reelection and, as he says, "more flexibility" in a second term.

20121009-08	23:10	SteveB	Re: "The Post-Constitutional President" (reply to Tom, above)
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Well...this is a particularly juicy bunch of malarkey!

Perhaps, as *opinions*, some of the article's points could be tolerated, but as *facts*, much is left to be desired.

Though I don't feel much compulsion to defend a stoned President who can't be bothered to defend *himself*, the facts, or the views of his constituents, still...the truth should be told.

Let me address the major points in the bullet text:

- **The Defense of Marriage Act:** "Clinton and key legislators have changed their views and advocated DOMA's repeal. The Obama administration announced in 2011 that it had determined that section 3 was unconstitutional and, though it would continue to enforce the law, it would no longer defend it in court. In response, the Republican leadership of the House of Representatives instructed the House General Counsel to defend the law in place of the Department of Justice (DOJ). Section 3 of DOMA has been found unconstitutional in seven federal courts on issues including bankruptcy, public employee benefits, estate taxes, and immigration. As of 2012 five of those cases are awaiting a response for review from the U.S. Supreme Court." (Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Defense_of_Marriage_Act) If you ask me, the President is doing a good job here of *defending* the Constitution.
- **Illegal Immigration:** The President has actually been surprisingly tough on illegal immigration, deporting record numbers of aliens. It's actually the union-busting Republicans who fight to keep our borders porous. Cheap labor is conducive to higher profits, in their misguided logic. Even Romney seems to take a similar stand in some regards: "Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney said Monday that illegal immigrants who receive temporary work permits because of the recent policy change by President Obama would be allowed to keep them under a Romney administration."
(<http://thehill.com/video/campaign/259645-romney-says-he-would-keep-obama-immigration-deportation-waviers>)
- **Thomson, Illinois Prison:** "According to Durbin's office, the local economic impact of the annual operation of the facilities is expected to generate more than \$122 million in operating expenditures (including salaries), \$19 million in labor income, and \$61 million in local business sales." All good—jobs created and the Feds save the cost of constructing a new prison. But here's the problem that probably resulted in this point being raised above: "U.S. Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Virginia), chairman of the House appropriations subcommittee that controls the Justice Department budget, opposed the sale because of concerns that President Obama would give the order to move Guantanamo Bay detainees to the Thomson location. Durbin stated that Wolf was still convinced, despite repeated assurances to the contrary by Attorney General Eric Holder, including under oath in a Senate hearing, that the detainees would be moved to the facilities." (http://www.pacc-news.com/10-10-12/thomson_prison10_10_12.html)
- **President's Speech at the UN:** (actual context) "The impulse towards intolerance and violence may initially be focused on the West, but over time it cannot be contained. The same impulses toward extremism are used to justify war between Sunni and Shia, between tribes and clans. It leads not to strength and

prosperity but to chaos. In less than two years, we have seen largely peaceful protests bring more change to Muslim-majority countries than a decade of violence. And extremists understand this. Because they have nothing to offer to improve the lives of people, violence is their only way to stay relevant. They don't build; they only destroy. [...] The future must not belong to those who slander the prophet of Islam. But to be credible, those who condemn that slander must also condemn the hate we see in the images of Jesus Christ that are desecrated, or churches that are destroyed, or the Holocaust that is denied."

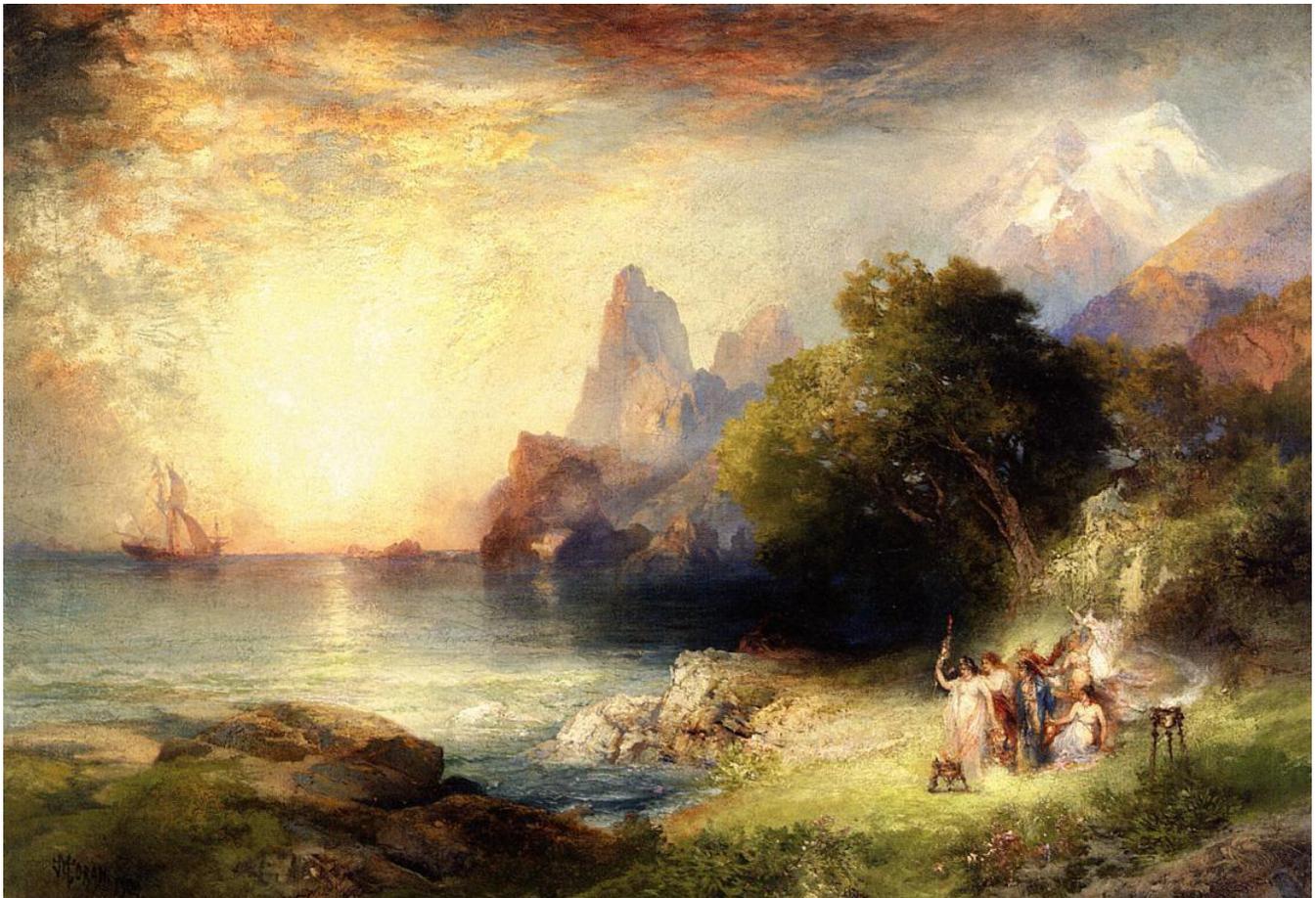
(http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/under-god/post/obama-the-future-must-not-belong-to-those-who-slander-the-prophet-of-islam/2012/09/26/acb9ab92-0810-11e2-a10c-fa5a255a9258_blog.html) To me, this sounds like a passionate *defense* of the Constitution.

- **"Abdication" of Commander-in-Chief duties:** This one is particularly loathsome—as if the President hasn't fought terrorism in an effective and, indeed, merciless manner, unlike his predecessor. The defense budget needs to be cut to *protect* the Constitution! And let's stop pretending that Republicans in Congress and their "fiscal cliff" have nothing to do with American politics. If you ask me, R0mney abdicated these duties even before he took them on—when he snubbed our troops and veterans at the Republican National Convention. (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-13257330>)

20121009-09 23:59 SteveB

Photos: Thomas Moran's "Ulysses & the Sirens" & "Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone"

<http://thefaustianman.tumblr.com/post/3866687798/cutlere-thomas-moran-ulysses-the-sirens>





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

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