

The Fortnightly Rant

The Doom Comet of 2024

The former guy is saying that he might run for President again.

There it is: one simple declarative statement that all by itself could cause another pandemic. It wouldn't be the viral sort; we're talking depression this time, and probably with two variants: personal and financial.

During the prior maladministration, the nation spent four years—years we could ill afford to lose—sliding backwards rapidly on a host of issues like the climate, racism, economic inequity, voter suppression...we'll stop there lest we start making tasteless jokes about self-destruction. Losing four more years would be unthinkable.

Our first instinct is not to believe him. After all, paraphrasing Mary McCarthy on Lillian Hellman, every word he says is a lie, including "and" and "the." Most likely it's just another scam, a ploy for attention and another chance to fleece the rubes. If that's the case, we just fell into the trap. It's an occupational hazard.

Then there's his appalling diet. Common sense tells us that Mickey D cheeseburgers and a dozen Diet Cokes a day will catch up with you eventually. Throw in his high cholesterol, and it hardly seems possible that he'll be alive on Inauguration Day, 2025, at the age of 78.

Thirty seconds spent conferring with The Google disabused us of that hopeful notion.

After examining all publicly known data on the health of the person in question—the poster child for questionability—a team of gerontologists published a paper last fall which concluded he is likely to be a "super ager."

That is a person who's been blessed by nature with "a higher than average probability of surviving the next four years relative to other men." This band of boffins put that

probability at 90.3 percent, compared to 86.2 percent for normal mortals. Not much difference, in our view—and not much grounds for optimism, either way.

Hopes dashed, we consoled ourselves with the knowledge that yet again, folk wisdom has proven to be true: only the good die young.

A trained psychologist—or even a random person plucked from the sidewalk—could probably tell from the text above that we're desperately trying to find some reason to think that the catastrophe we are contemplating here cannot, will not happen. Lately, though, whether we're scanning the news, consulting the Magic 8-Ball™, or examining sheep entrails, all the signs are dire.

If you think that reference to sheep entrails was distasteful, you may want to skip these next few paragraphs.

A new Super PAC was announced on Monday: Make America Great Again, Again!—"the ONLY [former guy] approved Super PAC, replacing Make America Great Again Action."

Why, one might ask, did the latter PAC need replacing? Because it had been run by New Hampshire's own Corey Lewandowski.

Lewandowski is now said to be "pursuing other endeavors"—as a consequence of having aggressively pursued, on September 26th, a woman actually named Trashelle Odom, who is the wife of Boise, Idaho contractor and Republican campaign donor John Odom.

Britain's *Daily Mail* reported on October 2nd that Trashelle Odom filed a police report alleging that, at a charity event in Las Vegas, Lewandowski had drunkenly and persistently groped her, stalked her, bragged about his genitalia, and told her that on two occasions, once when he was 10, he had stabbed people to death.



If the events alleged by Trashelle Odom took place—and we would take her word before Lewandowski's—this harrowing event will at least have served a worthwhile sociological purpose: the campaign says that it fired Lewandowski, thus demonstrating that it does, in fact, have some ethical boundaries.

Lewandowski, however, denies that he's been removed. And, as one of just two board members of MAGA Action, this time he actually may be telling the truth. Hence the need for the new PAC, Make America Great Again, Again!

One co-chair of this repetitiously redundant endeavor is Pam Bondi, the former Florida Attorney General. This appointment seems inevitable, considering that in 2013, Bondi deep-sixed 22 fraud complaints against Trump University four days after her PAC received a \$25,000 contribution from the former guy's foundation.

Pardon us for a moment, now, as we back up the Irony Dump Truck

[beep beep beep]. The other co-chair is Kimberly Guilfoyle, former-guy Junior's girl friend, who was fired from Fox News for sexual harassment.

Having wrung nearly all the fun that we could out of this, let's get truly depressing.

Rolling Stone's Ryan Bort took a serious look at the "will he, won't he?" question Tuesday. His piece leaves little doubt that #44 plans to add #46 to his unspeakable name.

"As long as Trump doesn't explicitly announce he's running for president," Bort writes, "he can essentially raise as much money as he wants from whomever he wants, and spend it unfettered by the restrictions or transparency requirements imposed upon actual candidates."

Running for president without announcing he's a candidate allows him to bounce around the country like a demented ping pong ball, preening for the cameras, yukking it up in front of his fans, and pocketing whatever loot he can extract from them.

In other words, the next 37 months threaten to be indistinguishable from his first term.

Desperately clinging to the fragile hope that it can't happen here—again—again—readers might rightly point out that supporters of TFG are actually in the minority.

It is our duty as designated party-poopers to remind them that for the last thirty or forty years—as Democratic shepherds debated how best to compromise with wolves—the Republican Party has been lavishly funding its most devious minds as they furiously worked to assure the irrelevance of such trivialities.

Dare we hope, at this last ditch, for a *deus ex machina*? For the sake of argument, and to give our more bloodthirsty readers a consolation prize, let's imagine for a moment that the former guy *does* die before the election. At this point in our precipitous political devolution, who's to say Republicans wouldn't pull a "Weekend at Bernie's" and nominate his corpse?

The Alleged News®

Trump's Mar-a-Lago Buddies Tried to Get the VA to Sell Access to Veterans' Medical Records

by Isaac Arnsdorf, for ProPublica

Sept. 27, 2021—Former President Donald Trump empowered associates from his private club to pursue a plan for the Department of Veterans Affairs to monetize patient data, according to documents newly released by congressional investigators.

As ProPublica first reported in 2018, a trio based at Trump's Mar-a-Lago resort weighed in on policy and personnel decisions for the federal government's second-largest agency, despite lacking any experience in the U.S. government or military.

While previous reporting showed the trio had a hand in budgeting and contracting, their interest in turning patient data into a revenue stream was not previously known. The VA

provides medical care to more than 9 million veterans at more than 1,000 facilities across the country.

"Patient data is, in my opinion, the most valuable assets [sic] the VA has," a consultant said in a June 2017 email released Monday by Democrats on the House Oversight Committee. "It can be leveraged into hundreds of millions in revenue" by selling access to major companies, he said.

The consultant, Terry Fadem, ran a private nonprofit for Bruce Moskowitz, a West Palm Beach, Florida, physician who was one of the three Trump associates given sweeping influence over the VA, known to officials as "the Mar-a-Lago crowd."

In response to Fadem's email, Moskowitz told then-VA Secretary David Shulkin that he had discussed

the plan with interested companies including Johnson & Johnson, CVS and Apple. Shulkin replied that he liked the idea, according to the documents.

Senior officials scrambled to hire Fadem as a contractor, the emails show, but it's not clear whether his contract was awarded. "I am working on trying to understand why and where [h]is contract is stuck," Poonam Alaigh, then the agency's top health official, said in a June 2017 email. "I agree, having him on board as soon as possible will be critical."

The documents do not show what became of the plan or whether the VA ever sold access to patient data. Nor do the records include evidence that Moskowitz or the other Mar-a-Lago associates were in a position to profit personally.

A spokesman for the trio said as far as they know Fadem was not hired and the VA never acted on the licensing idea. "We were asked repeatedly by former Secretary Shulkin and his senior staff, as well as by the President, to assist the VA and that is what we sought to do, period," the three said in a statement.

Shulkin, Alaigh, Trump's office, the VA, Johnson & Johnson, CVS and Apple did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Fadem died in 2019.

The latest revelation helps complete the picture of the Mar-a-Lago triumvirate's extensive influence over Trump's agenda for veterans, a signature issue in his 2016 campaign. ProPublica's revelations about the men's day-to-day involvement prompted investigations by congress-

sional committees and the Government Accountability Office, as well as a court challenge.

House Oversight Committee chairwoman Carolyn Maloney, D-N.Y., and House Veterans Affairs Committee chairman Mark Takano, D-Calif., said in a statement on Monday that the documents show "the secret role the trio played in developing VA initiatives and programs, including a 'hugely profitable' plan to monetize veterans' medical records."

"Ike Perlmutter, Marc Sherman, and Dr. Bruce Moskowitz, bolstered by their connection to President Trump's private Mar-a-Lago club, violated the law and sought to exert

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from page one

improper influence over government officials to further their own personal interests," the chairs said.

Perlmutter, Sherman and Moskowitz have previously said that they obtained no personal benefits, had no official role and exercised no formal authority.

But the newly released documents show that they did view themselves as an official advisory committee—and disregarded repeated warnings that they needed to comply with a Watergate-era transparency law.

"As the President asked, we can now formally create an official committee," Perlmutter, the group's leader and chairman of Marvel Entertainment, wrote in a February 2017 email after a meeting with Trump. Perlmutter is a Mar-a-Lago member and one of Trump's biggest political donors.

Perlmutter went so far as to rebuke White House staff for holding discussions without him.

"I am shocked and extremely disappointed with the manner in which

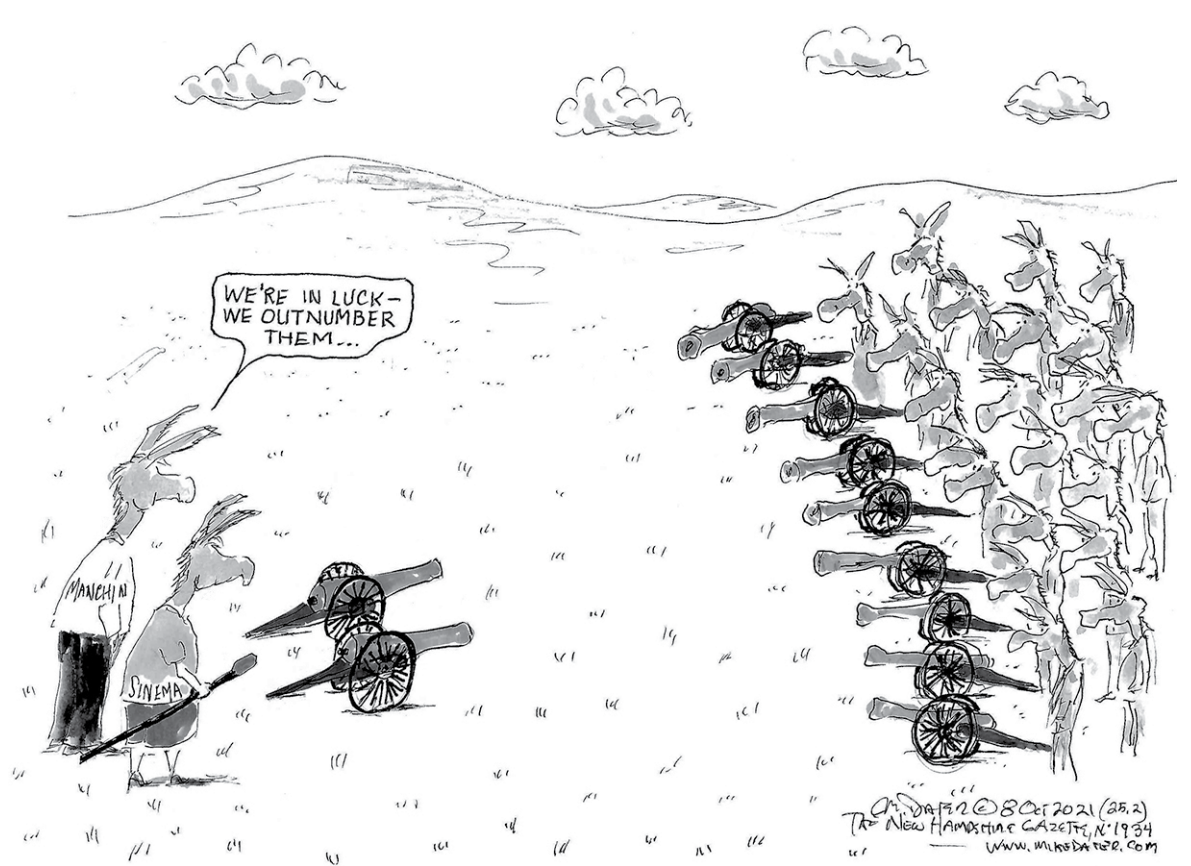
you have engaged in individual communications with Apple—and intentionally excluded our broader team of subject matter experts," Perlmutter said in a March 2017 email to White House aides. "I understand that these backdoor discussions have apparently been occurring almost daily for weeks, and you have not told anyone and refuse to return phone calls and emails."

Official advisory committees are governed by the Federal Advisory Committee Act. The 1972 law, known as FACA, requires federal agencies to inform the public when they consult outside experts.

Administration officials repeatedly told the Mar-a-Lago trio that they would have to comply with the law. The law compels advisory committees to represent a range of views and disclose their activities to the public.

"It appears FACA may be implicated," a VA lawyer said in a January 2017 email that Shulkin shared with Moskowitz.

That April, White House aide Reed Cordish told Perlmutter directly, "You will need to form a



Saturday saw hundreds, if not thousands, of people assembling in Market Square in support of women's right to an abortion. Five hundred other such demonstrations took place across the country. We're confused as to why this right needs defending. Abortions have no impact on the health of others. The same people, though, who oppose abortions, protest quite loudly against mask mandates and vaccines. In doing so they jeopardize everyone's health. Sadly, logic these days seems outmoded, superseded by fervent expressions of faith. Surely the Supreme Court will sort all this out. All they need to do is cite the Constitutional bar against laws based on religion.

FACA group."

But Perlmutter demurred, replying, "We have been advised that FACA does not apply because we are not a formal group in any way."

Instead, the group took efforts to conceal its activities, documents show. "We are still unsure what can be put in emails and what to discuss verbally," Moskowitz wrote to Shulkin in February 2017.

The group's spokesman maintained they weren't a formal committee and said complying with FACA was the agency's responsibility.

In March 2021, a federal appeals court in Washington held that a liberal veterans group could proceed with a lawsuit to enforce FACA's disclosure requirements around the Mar-a-Lago trio.

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Primus Gets National Recognition

Primus X—or, less formally, Primus—made another unexpected appearance on September 29th. He is mentioned in the latest *New Yorker*. A caption below the photo on page three (*opposite*) explains why.

This latest incident caused us to reflect yet again that without Primus' forced labor, this newspaper might never have survived the 18th century—never mind until today. Our debt to him is both incalculable and unpayable. All we can do is operate this paper intending to make reparation as best we can.

Primus' most recent manifestation caused us to reflect that we have not yet assembled, in one place, the various items about him which we have published over the years in this newspaper.

In the meantime, we offer our readers, once again, the following column prominently featuring Primus. It was written by Tobias Ham Miller (1801–1870), and published in the *Portsmouth Chronicle* on October 11, 1861.

Recollections of Old Acquaintance by Uncle Toby (Tobias Ham Miller) Old Printers And Printers Of Old – John Melcher, Samuel Whidden– Fowle And Old Prime

Don't get to thinking, gentle reader, that Uncle Toby knew all these; for some of them died before he was born; but he knew a part of them, and they knew the rest. Through one of them (Whidden) Uncle Toby claims a regular (though not exactly apostolic) succession from Fowle and Old Prime, who were the first printers in New Hampshire, of which undisputed succession he is as proud as any man ought to be of so high a distinction. The order of succession is this: Fowle, who established the *New Hampshire Gazette*, had the old negro Prime, or Primus, for a pressman; John Melcher was an apprentice to Fowle; Whidden (who died here only a year or two since) was an apprentice to Melcher; and Uncle Toby was an apprentice to Whidden.

With this man, who was as kind a man as need be, Uncle Toby wrought

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Sometimes Old is Good

The Fechheimer Building, one of the finest examples of a cast-iron facade in Portland, Oregon, was built in 1885. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, it was restored in 1981 by Russell Fellows Properties, the principals of which enjoy a subscription to this newspaper.

THE NEW-HAMPSHIRE GAZETTE

A MAN
 becomes languid, irritable and despondent, through loss of nerve vigor. Life seems a mockery. The courage, force, vigor and action which characterize full-blooded men, are lacking.

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at printing some time since; in an office belonging to John Melcher, who was the first State Printer New Hampshire ever had, and who lived till a very recent period. When Uncle Toby was a boy with a stint, Mr. Melcher would sometimes send him on an errand—but would always take his 'stick,' and 'set' for him while absent, and when he returned would commonly tell him a story when he laid down the stick or emptied the "stickful." He was always certain to set a little more than the boy would have done; to mark the copy where he left off;—and always to deal in this little matter so justly and fairly, that Uncle Toby was well pleased to listen to his stories. Some of these stories were of Old Prime, who was a negro pressman, belonging to Daniel Fowle, founder of the *New Hampshire Gazette*.

Mr. Melcher was a correct compositor, a careful proofreader, and a good press-man; and if any man ever hated blotches and bunglers, he did. When he lost all patience with bad press work, he would say, "Why, I have seen a negur, who could not tell a letter in a book, who did better press-work than any of you!" Some-

times I have tried to imagine what old Primus Fowle thought of his business, and how much pleasure he must have taken in printing books he could not read, and working hard without pay. He could not strike for wages, but he could grumble—and tradition says that he did sometimes; and probably he did it pretty often, for his temper was rather peppery, and he could snap out a reply quite as tart as any reproof that was given him. Some time before the Revolution, Mrs. Fowle died; and in those days, at funerals, the negroes in a family walked with the whites, as mourners, each white member of the family having a black yokefellow at the left hand. Primus and his master on this occasion were chief mourners; but when they took their places in the procession, Primus inadvertently got on the right hand, which, in this case, was evidently the wrong side. His master saw the error, and winked, and nodded, and pointed with his finger for Primus to exchange places; but to no purpose; he touched him, but the negro remained immovable. At last he whispered, "Go to the other side," expecting to be promptly obeyed in



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It's been 230 years ago since the chariot came and carried Primus home. For a man who's been dead so long, he comes back around pretty regularly. He is always welcome in these pages. Most recently he appeared in *The New Yorker*. An article by Jill Lepore, headlined "When Black History Is Unearthed, Who Gets to Speak for the Dead?", mentions Primus because he is known to be buried here, in Portsmouth's African Burying Ground. Meanwhile, the grave of his enslaver Daniel Fowle remains unknown. We can almost hear Primus saying to Daniel, "Bottom rail on top now."

so slight and reasonable a request; but, to his surprise and that of the bystanders, Primus screamed out, "Go tudder side ye'sef, ye mean jade!" The master of course complied, and the procession moved off.

In due time Mr. Fowle himself died, and, as he left no children, his newspaper and printing office passed into the hands of his apprentice, Mr. Melcher, whose term of service being nearly run out by its own limitation, was now closed by the death of his master. With the press went the pressman, and old Primus probably did the same work in the same way, under the new master, as he did under the old, and perhaps noted no change. Bowing down to the press, as he toiled year after year, he had a permanent stoop, and stood at his work something in the shape of a capital F. In this posture he labored and grumbled for years, and seemed to grow no older—but he did—and by and by he became so stiff and dull and feeble as to be incapable of any labor whatsoever. He was, however, cared for by his master,

as to food and shelter, and suffered to spend his time as he pleased. Without companions, and with no ability to read, he seemed to have no higher pleasure than to seat himself on the door-steps of shops or houses in the old paved street of Portsmouth, and sit for hours together, generally in the sunshine. The boys often amused themselves by offering him a copper for standing straight—a feat utterly impossible; but he would attempt it, and with much effort and strange grimaces, straighten himself out as nearly as possible.

To the honor of the boys, be it said, he commonly got his copper; and then he sat down again to sun himself, to look at the passengers' feet as they went by, and possibly to muse on the passage back to Guinea, whither all the negroes here used to think all black friends went after death. That was the most beautiful superstition of which their minds were capable—and surely nothing of the kind could be more harmless. Primus returned, however, to the dust, not of Guinea, but of New

Hampshire, the scene of his toils, and has long occupied that narrow house where the weary are at rest! Primus was buried, with all the negroes of his day, in the old negro burying ground, front of the old jail; in other words, his dust now reposes either under the south, end of Chestnut street, or perhaps under the north side of Court street.

Let no true lover of our noble craft blame Uncle Toby for selecting such a subject for a sketch. One of the earliest printers in New Hampshire was a black slave; and the early history of the State always seems imperfect to him if Prime is not seen working at the press, printing he knows not and cares not what.

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This text comes from a binder of Uncle Toby's collected columns which was assembled by Richard Candee and is preserved at the Portsmouth Athenaeum. The column originally appeared in the Portsmouth Chronicle (1852-1918). We have made a few minor changes in punctuation.

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Murph's Fortnightly Quote
"Scratch any cynic and you will find a disappointed idealist."
— George Carlin (1937-2008)

"Never try to discourage thinking for you are sure to succeed."
— Bertrand Russell
john@wordpraxis.com

"Be alone, that is the secret of invention; be alone, that is when ideas are born."
— Nikola Tesla
— Not-So-Random Thoughts from an Oregon Subscriber

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Ayotte Gets It Wrong Again

Dear Sir:
It seems that former Senator Kelly Ayotte is somewhat confused about which medical procedures should be a private decision between a patient and their physician and those which have societal implications beyond the individual's choice. At a recent Republican rally, Ms. Ayotte stated that, "I am pro-vaccine and think we as a state did a great job. That is a decision (vaccination) between an individual and their doctor. Bureaucrats do not belong in that decision." Unfortunately Ayotte is wrong on two counts, the state has not done a "good job" with regard to vaccinations, and vaccinations have benefits not just for the vaccinated person, but as a protection of the entire community against diseases.

With regard first to vaccinations, children attending day care, schools and colleges are all required by state law to receive certain vaccinations. In New Hampshire, only those with a certified medical or religious exemption are allowed to attend schools without these vaccinations. The reason for this mandate is to protect the entire community, not just the individual child, they are not decisions made by the individual and their physician, but rather by State Bureaucrats. In contrast, Ms. Ayotte who is "pro life," does not have a problem with bureaucrats requiring women to receive unnecessary transvaginal ultrasound examinations that have no public health benefit, and without their physician's involvement, while objecting to mandatory vaccinations that actually save lives.

Ms. Ayotte also claimed that the State "did a great job" in reference to the level of residents fully vaccinated. Unfortunately, the data published in the same edition of the *Portsmouth Herald*, where Ayotte is quoted, do not support such a proclamation. While New Hampshire started off very well at the beginning of the vaccination campaign, that effort has seriously deteriorated in recent months. New Hampshire reports that only 54.3 percent of residents are fully vaccinated and 61.6 percent had at least one

dose. In comparison, Maine reported that 65.06 percent of all residents have been vaccinated, with 73.84 of the eligible residents having been vaccinated. Among all States, New Hampshire ranks 16th, which by any reasonable standard is not "a great job."

Rather than holding rallies opposing vaccine mandates, Ms. Ayotte and her fellow "Pro-Life" Republican colleagues might save more lives by holding rallies encouraging their followers to get vaccinated, and debunking anti-vaccine junk science, and not pass laws that prevent government agencies at all levels in the State from requiring vaccines if they so choose. Unfortunately, that would not go over well with their political base. Better to be opposed to anything that saves lives, than actually doing something positive to save lives.

Rich DiPentima
16 Dunlin Way
Portsmouth, N.H.

Rich:
We're grateful to have an experienced health care professional such as yourself setting the former Senator straight.

Well, making clear to readers where she's wrong—we're not expecting facts to change her opinion.

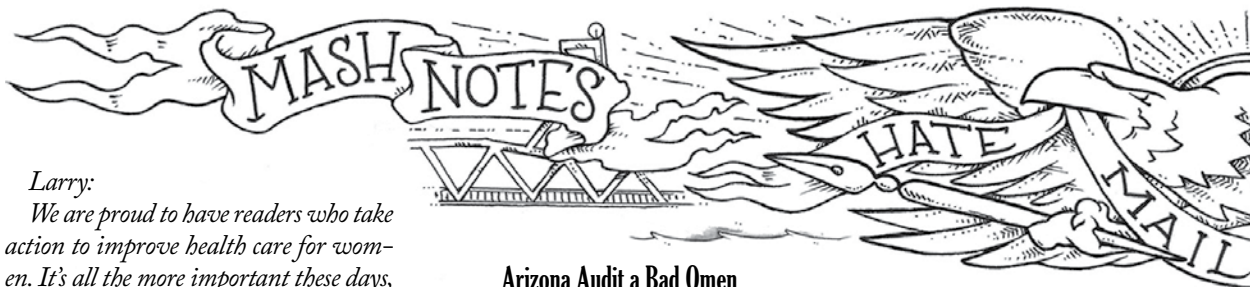
The Editor

Women's Health Services

To the Editor:
Much like Governor Sununu, I'm not in favor of Drama. That's why, together with my wife, I support the work of the Fistula Foundation, dedicated to the repair of gynecological trauma in childbirth. There is no drama quite like that of a body being ripped apart against its owner's will. And, there is no way for me to understand the bravery of women who accept those risks by choice.

The U.S. has the highest maternal mortality rate of the western industrialized countries. For every 100,000 births close to 20 mothers will die. For fathers, that rate is zero. Were those numbers reversed, N.H. Executive Council funding for Planned Parenthood just might go up.

Larry Brown
Milton, N.H.



Larry:
We are proud to have readers who take action to improve health care for women. It's all the more important these days, when so many people seem bent on denying women health care altogether.

The Editor

Why Kentucky, Governor?

To the Editor:
I have questions concerning Governor Sununu's Covid trip to Kentucky. Why travel to a state that has far worse health outcomes in general and for Covid in particular than New Hampshire? It is equivalent to the President of France making a pilgrimage to England to learn about fine cuisine. Why fly to Kentucky when he could drive to either Vermont which has the lowest death rate per 100,000 for Covid or Maine which ranks fourth? New Hampshire is ninth.

Could it be that Chris Sununu went to Kentucky to ask Senator Mitch McConnell how many millions of campaign dollars he will receive if he runs for the Senate? Hospital Corp of America (HCA), which owns Portsmouth Regional Hospital, paid for this junket. Did HCA also promise to spend boatloads of money in return for him protecting their ability to charge whatever they can get away with?

Chris Sununu should be more concerned with the pandemic in our state today than in running for the Senate in 2022.

Walter Hamilton
Portsmouth N.H.

Walter:
The Governor's trip was absurd, for all the reasons you point out. Let's face it, the Governor is absurd in general.

Have you any proof, though, that HCA paid for any part of the Governor's junket? We have not seen any.

InDepthNH has reported that Dean Kamen flew the crew down to McConnell country. Surely that was the bulk of the expense.

The Editor

Arizona Audit a Bad Omen

Dear Editor,
The so-called "audit" of votes in Arizona's largest county was fraught with fraudulent failings from the beginning. A partisan band of Republican legislators commissioned it after three legitimate audits, by duly-appointed professionals, had confirmed President Biden's victory. It was run by a self-proclaimed trump-supporter [sic] with no experience conducting vote audits, and it operated under shoddy, inconsistent and somewhat secretive rules. Nevertheless, even the Cyber-Ningas were unable to justify trump's [sic] lies about losing the election.

Trump's reaction was to double-down on his lies, as he always does when the lie is exposed, with his Republican puppets now clamoring for even more fraudulent audits. This reminds me of trump's [sic] "birther" campaign against President Obama, when he falsely accused Obama of not being born in the U.S.A., despite release of Obama's birth certificate. That was a training session for fascist attacks on truth itself, which have now metastasized into a democracy-threatening epidemic.

Bruce Joffe
Piedmont, Calif.

Bruce:
Yup.

The Editor

Pilot Error

To the Editor:
Did you know that 90-percent of all patients admitted to N.H. hospitals with COVID infections are fully vaccinated? So says Republican Rep. Ken Weyler, chairman of N.H.'s powerful house finance committee.

Where did this alleged critical thinker and keeper of the public trust obtain such a jaw-dropping statistic? He claims he heard it on talk radio, so

it must be true. Really?
Representative Weyler graduated from MIT and flew commercial jets for a living, so he's not stupid. That opens the door to a litany of darker possibilities.

Everyone's entitled to have their fun, but Weyler couldn't resist taking his anti-vax mis-information war a step further by tabling federal funding that would expand vaccine availability across the state. By his reckoning, N.H. doesn't need the money and the vaccine doesn't work anyway, so what's the point? Now even the Governor's upset, which possibly pleases Weyler no end.

Most airline pilots I know gripe endlessly about federal regulators and government mandates. Fair enough. However, at the same time, they would put their own life on the line in a split second to avoid a single passenger fatality.

So how about it, Captain Weyler? How many injuries and fatalities are you willing to accept on your manifest?

Rick Littlefield
Barrington, N.H.

Rick:
We're not afraid of flying—but now we're afraid of pilots!

The Editor

State Motto Not Meant to be Taken Literally

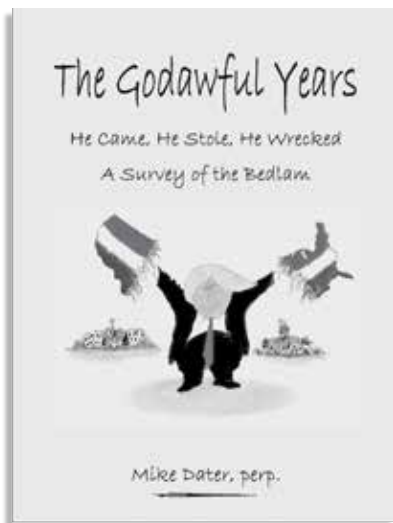
To the Editor:
"Live Free or Die": Freedom is our oxygen. And we fiercely value our political freedom.

Our freedom is reduced to less than a whisper when we are denied free access to the legislative process. Sure, we can go to the polls every two years to show our approval of our legislators, or to "vote the bums out." But a thumbs up or down, after legislation has been completed, is not participation.

Last year, political freedom was

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thriving in New Hampshire. To slow COVID's spread, sessions at the State House were accessible through Zoom. The legislative process was open for all to view, to comment on, to participate in. Legislators had continuous access to the opinions of New Hampshire's citizens on all areas of legislation—they did not have to wait for our vote next November.

And we were engaged. We were able to see the complexity of issues our legislators must balance, and we were able to assist in their deliberations. If we had day jobs, we could review the taped legislative sessions in the evening. We might live two hours from Concord, but we could join our legislators via Zoom.

COVID is back. But remote access has been stopped. A number of legislators are medically fragile, and once again cannot safely attend sessions in Concord. If these legislators are denied Zoom access, their constituents are denied their freedom, their representation. For all of us citizens and our legislators with health concerns—without Zoom access, our freedom dies.

Susan Richman
Durham, N.H.

Susan:
We don't want to seem overly paranoid, but maybe that's the plan.

The Editor

=====
Hofstadter's Theory In Action

To the Editor:

The historian Richard Hofstadter has defined the "paranoid style in American politics." The concept refers to the recurrent tendency among political parties to conjure wide-reaching and sinister conspiracy theories to explain perceived threats to their power or values. The party that proposes conspiracy believes that they are being

dispossessed of their rightful standing by a hidden, relentless and evil opponent who uses positions of authority and trust to attack them. Therefore, they tend to distrust those who occupy positions of influence such as government officials, scientists, the educated elite and the mainstream media. These groups become the target of conspiracy theories which often spiral into unsubstantiated even crackpot allegations not corroborated by fact. Hofstadter describes the witch hunts of Joseph McCarthy and the anti-Communist red scares of the fifties as an example of the paranoid style.

If Hofstadter were alive today, he would find the present day party of Trump a particularly virulent example of the paranoid style. In fact, it would be difficult to conceive of a political party more mired in conspiracy than the Trump Republicans who require public fealty to a false conspiracy theory in order to remain in good standing. Any Republican who rejects Trump's Big Lie that Democrats perpetrated massive fraud in the 2020 presidential election is subject to ostracism by Trump partisans. It is irrelevant to party loyalists that dozens of audits and court cases have failed to find any examples of large scale fraud.

The Big Lie is not the only conspiracy theory that drives Republican politics. The politicization of health measures taken to combat the Covid-19 pandemic is supported by conspiracy theories promulgated on Facebook groups and bizarre QAnon web sites. False facts regarding masking and Covid vaccines have ranged from simple misinformation to stone cold stupidity with the common rationalization that they are part of a plot to enhance the power and control of government. One crackpot theory proposed that the vaccines contained tiny bots that would reveal the loca-

tion of the vaccinated to government authorities. Believers in these conspiracy theories reject the science that supports the efficacy of masking and vaccination and demonize the scientists who support the measures as active participants in conspiracy.

In addition to the Big Lie and myths relating to the pandemic, Republicans have relied on conspiracy theory to oppose measures to alleviate climate change. Claims that climate scientists have collaborated to falsify data to obtain government research grants have been used to create doubt regarding the science that explains climate changes due to excess carbon dioxide emissions.

The Republican tendency to generate unfounded conspiracy theories has consequences. Trump's Big Lie motivated the January 6th insurrection that resulted in death and destruction at the U.S. Capitol. It also has damaged trust in the process of democratic elections and spawned several attempts by Republican state legislatures to deny voting rights to minority groups. These efforts threaten the Constitution itself and have driven a firm wedge between Republicans and Democrats. Hare-brained theories regarding vaccines and masking have helped to generate a pandemic of the unvaccinated with unnecessary sickness and death within red states and Trump supporters. Unsupported criticism of climate science has helped to hamstring efforts to reduce the effects of climate change and has contributed to the damages produced by the unprecedented heat, drought, fire and flooding that has ravaged the globe this summer.

The purpose of Republican conspiracy theorizing is not to provide rational explanation nor to reveal relevant facts regarding an event. It is to provide a simple, relatively coherent story that will engage and create buy-in for naïve followers even if the story is false. As Hofstadter points out, the believers in paranoid conspiracy theories are not

deterred by rational discussion nor by facts. False conspiracy theories must be refuted, if only to prevent further spread, and any policy initiatives proposed by conspiracy-addled Republicans must be opposed and defeated until the mania has run its course.

Robert D. Russell, Ph.D.
Harrisburg, Pa.

=====
Democracy Being Curtailed

To the Editor:

We New Hampshireites enjoy a culture of democratic participation in the spirit of the "town meeting." While the pandemic threatens to limit this experience, accommodations made to ensure participation on both the local and state level have kept us Covid-safe.

To the credit of the State legislature, we citizens were allowed to attend this year's session and testify via Zoom. Yet plans for the 2022 legislative session do not allow for Zoom participation, even though the pandemic still surges in N.H.

As a retired public health professional, I am aware that break-through covid infections are poorly tracked and becoming more frequent. That's why the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) still recommends that everyone, including the vaccinated, wear masks in public places.

Since it is unlikely that the State legislative leadership will require that everyone mask properly during the upcoming session, it is critical that remote access by Zoom be retained. A failure to do so means that those of us who are at high Covid-risk will be robbed of our democratic voice. And that is unacceptable! Please call the Speaker of the House, Sherm Packard, at (603) 271-3661, or email him at sherman.packard@leg.state.nh.leg, to urge safe remote access for all N.H. citizens.

Judith Saum
Rumney, N.H.

Judith:
You are absolutely right, of course. Packard should be inundated with emails, phone calls...the whole nine yards. Odds are against a positive result, though. As we go to press, Packard is still backing Weyler.

This state has long harbored a virulent strain of right wing goofiness. It can easily be traced back as far as William Loeb. Here's a spooky Halloween thought: perhaps he was "Patient Zero."

The Editor

=====
Let's Hope!

To the Editor:

I hope everyone will vote for Maggie Hassan for Senate, Chris Pappas for Congress, and Annie Kuster for Congress in the second New Hampshire Congressional District. We all win if they win! Next year we will still have Jeanne Shaheen in the Senate. Although I don't agree with *everything* each supports, I know that all of us desire a world where community is important above the individual, that freedom does *not* mean that everyone can do as s/he wishes whenever s/he wishes, that democracy means *all* of us, that our foreign policy respects diplomacy as a problem-solver over violence.

To me, this means that each candidate cares about climate change, that each supports all of us being vaccinated, that diplomacy, for instance, in Israel and in Afghanistan should include Palestinians and the Afghan government, that each believes that all people should be able to vote without unnecessary roadblocks to have a voice in what happens to them. We all win if we have access to affordable childcare and eldercare, paid family leave, a minimum living wage, vaccinations, women's reproductive health, safe roads and bridges, sane gun control, *i.e.* a world in which we take care of each other as well as keeping our own house in order.

I hope that our Congressional delegation continues to be a team that works for *all* of us.

Judy Ullman
Portsmouth, N.H.

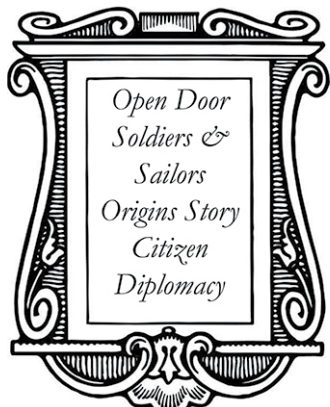
Judy:
You present us with a startling contrast to the way things are these days. Yes, indeed. Let us hope.

The Editor

Mash Notes, Hate Mail, &c.
to page six

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What do we choose to remember with memorial markers, buildings and community projects?



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from page five



Be Careful Around Monsters

Dear Sir:

When you create, nurture and comfort a monster, you must be very careful that that monster does not turn on you. Unfortunately, that is now the case with the former Republican Party since the creation of Trump and his followers. The unleashed Republican-created monster was on full display in Manchester when an angry mob disrupted, and eventually caused the New Hampshire Executive Council to postpone its meeting. The reason for the mob action was to prevent the Council from voting to accept the much needed \$27 million in federal dollars to help New Hampshire effort to control the Covid-19 pandemic and prevent more illness, hospitalizations, deaths and economic turmoil. State employees, who were at the meeting to answer questions about how the funds were to be used, received threats and had to be escorted to their cars by State Police for their safety. And as one mob member shouted, "mission accomplished!"

In response to the mob action, Governor Sununu and House Speaker Sherm Packard of course responded with typical hollow comments calling the actions "unacceptable" and "disgraceful," and postponed the meeting "until our state employees can go before the Council in a safe and orderly manner." However, even with the threats to state employees and Council Members, not one protestor was arrested for disorderly conduct, interfering with official State business, and criminal threatening. Why not? The mob was allowed to leave without any consequences, thus sending the message that mob rule wins, "mission accomplished."

However, what we witnessed in Manchester was the monster that New Hampshire Republicans created, nurtured and supported. How many rallies were held by New Hampshire Republicans, including Speaker Packard, denouncing

Covid-19 mandatory vaccinations, opposing mask mandates, and other actions by President Biden to control the pandemic? Republican leaders, with their own actions and words, have given licence to this anti-public health mob, and even as they now condemn the actions of their monster, they have done nothing to restrain or control the monster that will certainly attack again.

Rich DiPentima
Portsmouth, N.H.

Rich:

By the time we reached the end of your letter, we were wondering if a case could be made against top Republicans for nonfeasance of official duties.

The Editor

High-Stakes Gambling

Dear Editor,

Once again, Mitch McConnell and the Republican senators are pursuing their partisan interests at the expense of what's good for our country. Unanimously, they refused to pass a continuing resolution to keep the government operating, and they refuse to raise the debt limit, thereby attacking the reliability of our credit rating. These destabilizing acts immediately sent the markets into a tailspin.

Why would Republicans want to crash our economy? Simply because it is happening while Biden is President, they scheme that he'll be blamed for their sabotage.

Are voters that stupid?

Bruce Joffe
Piedmont, Calif.

Bruce:

We're going to try to make a subtle distinction, here.

You are suggesting that the GOP is trying to intentionally crash the economy, in order to discredit Biden.

We suspect that they're trying to make it appear that the economy is in danger of crashing, in order to discredit Biden.

We will discover soon enough which

of these theories is correct.

Unfortunately the outcome is likely to be the same in either case, due to Republican ineptitude. The Dunning-Kruger Effect is strong in that Party.

As for the voters, well, they do elect a lot of Republicans—by which we mean, more than can be accounted for just by gerrymandering, voter suppression, &c., &c.

The Editor

Roadmap to the Ruin of Our Republic

To the Editor:

I suppose it was only a matter of time before clever, unprincipled people and groups would craft myriad ways to disenfranchise many Americans from our Democracy, a great experiment the rest of the world has sought to emulate.

- Money becomes "Speech" in the questionable decision of the Supreme Court in its "Citizens United" ruling

- Protection of election procedures in the 1965 Voting Rights Act went away with the Supreme Court's "Shelby v. Holder" ruling

- Political parties "choose" their voters... gerrymandering, called redistricting, by slicing and dicing voting districts to favor one party or the other in order to create districts more favorable to electing their candidates

- "Purging" of the voter rolls to deny the vote to otherwise legitimate voters

- Limiting the number of voting machines and the number of voting places, to make voting more tedious in their opponent's voting wards

- Restricting the number of vote "Drop Boxes" in voting districts generally unfavorable to their party's governing philosophy; even trying to slow down delivery of mail-in ballots... something that may have negatively impacted US military personnel votes in the 2020 election

- Voter harassment and intimidation at the polls

- Limiting early voting so that people who can't get time off work won't vote

- Replacing duly elected, legitimately selected voting officials with partisans for the purpose of changing election results

- Illegal "Robo-Call" messages to misinform voters about the date, time, and place for voting

- Release of the public airways from the requirement to offer equal media time and space for opposing views... the now defunct "Fairness Doctrine"

- Diluting or negating the official authorities (Secretaries of State and other election officials) to certify the legitimacy of election results... something NOW in legislative form in approximately 18 states.

- Disrupting meetings of Executive Councilors and School Board members by harassing and threatening these public officials because they disagree with a "Mask Mandate" or another policy they support or oppose

It should be clear to most Democracy-loving Americans that these actions and strategies are anathema to a well-functioning Republic, and are a threat to our American future. Your role as a citizen should be to work tirelessly to counter the above and support political candidates with Democracy-promoting values!

Herb Moyer
Exeter, N.H.

Is Supporting Palestinians Anti-Semitic?

To the Editor:

As I get older, I find myself with less and less patient (sic) with those who hide their prejudices behind what they think passes for valid reasons.

In one example, the apologists for Trump, those who believe the 2020 Presidential Election was hijacked, and those who will not mask and

will not be vaccinated, are no longer people I believe can be reasoned with. More than enough proof has been provided that they are incorrect; proof they simply will not accept. I no longer wish to try and persuade them. To be frank, I am firmly convinced that their reasoning powers are deficient, and that they are fascists, and bode very ill for American democracy.

In another example, I do not believe that those who attack Israel are truly concerned about the Palestinians. In a recent letter by Will Thomas you published, he calls Robert Kraft an ardent Zionist, a supporter of an "apartheid regime called Israel." Mr. Thomas is apparently unaware, or worse, has no problem with, the Palestinian organizations which often, loudly, and unapologetically, call for the utter eradication of the State of Israel. I do not believe that anyone should waste breath arguing with Mr. Thomas. I believe he attacks Israel because he's an anti-Semite, pure and simple, and nothing else. And in *The New Hampshire Gazette*, where you almost always comment after each letter published, I see no calling out of Mr. Thomas for his anti-Semitism. Why not? Do you agree with his anti-Semitism?

By the way, in the United Nations, there are these four countries; The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, The Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Think of how disenfranchised the non-Muslim inhabitants of these four "Republics" must feel; when their own country flaunts "Islamic" in its name. No apartheid there. As opposed to Israel, the only true democracy in the area. this, of course, escapes Mr. Thomas' notice.

Carl S. Gurtman

York, Maine

Carl:

We abhor anti-Semitism and denounce it when we see it. We also find abhorrent and denounce collective punishment and denial of civil rights.

The Editor

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Re-thinking American History

by W.D. Ehrhart

I have spent my entire life reading. As Emily Dickinson wrote, “There is no Frigate like a Book / To take us Lands away.” Even in Vietnam, as an 18-year-old, I read whatever I could get my hands on from John Updike’s Rabbit, Run to Voltaire’s *Candide* to John Cleland’s *Fanny Hill: Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*.

I don’t read many books more than once because there are so many good books to read, but I’ve read multiple times David Howarth’s *1066: The Year of the Conquest*, and Cecil Woodham-Smith’s *The Reason Why: The Story of the Fatal Charge of the Light Brigade*. I re-read Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick* every five years or so because it is the greatest epic poem in the English language.

A few books have caused me or forced me to alter my thinking immediately and significantly, most notably Paul Fussell’s *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War*, and Paul Lyons’s *Class of ’66: Living in Suburban Middle America*, which changed my perceptions of the World War II and Vietnam generations respectively.

But never has a book offered such startling new information that it has required me to revise and re-think my entire understanding of the whole of American history.

Until now, that is. Having recently finished Andrew Levy’s *The First Emancipator: Slavery, Religion, and the Quiet Revolution of Robert Carter*, that is exactly what I have had to do.

Who even ever heard of Robert Carter III? Not me, and I’m a pretty solid student of history, especially American history. Yet he was one of the very wealthiest planters in 18th century Virginia, a contemporary and friend of Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, and Patrick Henry, a supporter of the American Revolution.

But what should have made him unavoidably famous was that in 1791, he filed a Deed of Gift with Virginia’s Westmoreland District Court providing for the emancipation of his nearly 500 slaves. Go back and read that sentence again. Yet I’ve never heard of him until a few weeks ago, nor have most of you who are reading this.

Moreover, this was not a precipitous and immediate emancipation, but rather a carefully thought-out and gradual freeing of his slaves over time with adequate provision for elderly and infirm slaves as well as for children.

Thus, while our larger-than-life heroic Founding Fathers were writing eloquently of liberty, freedom, and equality, privately and sometimes publicly deploring slavery, they nevertheless insisted that it was eco-

nomically impossible to escape the tangled web of slavery, and culturally infeasible to free the slaves without also removing them from white society by sending them all west of the Mississippi or back to Africa.

No wonder no one has ever heard of Carter. His story was buried almost before he died in 1804 because he laid bare the hypocrisy of those great Virginians who have become—and were becoming even then—the heroes of our American mythological story. The knights in shining armor. Men who struggled with their consciences and agonized over their unsolvable dilemma. Men who did the best they could with the contradictory circumstances in which they found themselves.

Carter demonstrated that emancipation was possible, and economically feasible, even providing through his Deed of Gift a detailed blueprint for how it could be done gradually, without removal of Blacks from the southern states, and with minimal economic disruption. Moreover, had more large planters followed his lead, it might well have been possible to build an integrated society that did not give rise to Black Codes, the Ku Klux Klan, and Jim Crow.

We’ll never know, of course, because not one other large Virginia planter had the courage to follow Carter’s lead. Not only that, but

most of his peers—and even some of his heirs—made it clear that they thoroughly disapproved of his decision, and turned him into a social outcast instead of a person to be admired and emulated.

And because Carter was neither a writer nor a politician nor a man who sought attention and acclaim, he left no stirring explanations of what he had done or why he had done it. There was not then and is not now anything so inspiring as Patrick Henry’s “Give me liberty” or Thomas Jefferson’s “All men are created equal” or James Madison’s “We the People.”

We have only Carter’s no-frills, functional, nuts-and-bolts Deed of Gift, which begins, “I have for some time past been convinced that to retain [these human beings] in Slavery is contrary to the true Principles of Religion and Justice, and that therefore [sic] it was my duty to manumit them.”

So much for Jefferson’s “wolf by the ears” analogy. Or even Washington’s freeing of his 125 slaves in his own will—but not until after Martha had gotten her lifetime’s use of their slave labor; they would be freed only upon her death. (She ended up freeing them before she died for fear that they might kill her in order to gain their freedom, but she did not free the scores of slaves she owned in her own right.)

We know very little about what became of the 452 men, women and children who were once Carter’s property. Scattered widely over multiple properties owned and leased out by Carter, some of them were never told they’d been freed. Others were re-enslaved by hook or by crook. But many remained free, as did their children and children’s children down to the present day.

Only in recent decades have descendants of both Carter and the slaves he freed organized the Carter Society, about which you can learn more at the Nomini Hall Slave Legacy Project (<http://nominihallslavel-egacy.com/>).

Meanwhile, especially in these times of Black Lives Matter, George Floyd, and “dog whistle politics,” remember that those Founding Fathers we revere, who enshrined slavery in the Constitution of the United States without ever using the word, could have chosen a different path. Instead, they chose to all-but-obliterate from history the man who took that path.

====

W.D. Ehrhart holds a PhD in American Studies from the University of Wales at Swansea, and spent many years as a Master Teacher of History & English at the Haverford School for Boys.

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Why Corporations Pay Millions for Executive Mediocrity

by Jim Hightower

Most people believe the American economy is being rigged by and for bankers, CEOs, and other superrich elites, because...well, because it is!

With their hired armies of lawmakers, lobbyists, lawyers, and the like, they fix the economic rules so even-more of society’s money and power flows uphill to them. Take corporate CEOs. While 2020 was

somewhere between a downer and devastating for most people, the CEO class made out like bandits, with each of the three top paid corporate honchos pocketing as much as a billion dollars in personal pay!

Are they geniuses, or what? What. All three of their corporations ended 2020 with big financial losses and declining value. So how can such mediocrity produce such lavish rewards? Simple—rig the pay machine.

Today’s corporate system of setting compensation for top executives is a flimflam disguised as a model of management rectitude. On its face, it sounds good—“Pay for performance,” it’s called, meaning the CEO does well if the company does well.

But who defines “doing well?” The scam at most major corporations is that the standard of corporate performance that the chief must meet to quality for a huge payday is set by

each corporation’s board of directors. Guess who they are? Commonly, board members are the CEO’s handpicked brothers-in-law, golfing buddies, and corporate cronies. So, they set the bar for winning multimillion-dollar executive paychecks so low that a sack of concrete could jump over it.

Well, insist these flimflammers, corporate shareholders are the ultimate stopgap against CEO greed. These “owners” can just vote “no” on

any executive pay they consider excessive. However, even “shareholder democracy” is rigged—corporate rules decree that votes by shareholders are merely “advisory,” meaning top executives can simply ignore them, grab the money, and run. This system is fixed...and we need to break it!

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ADMIRAL FOWLE'S PISCATAQUA RIVER TIDAL GUIDE (NOT FOR NAVIGATIONAL PURPOSES)

Portsmouth, arguably the first town in this country not founded by religious extremists, is bounded on the north and east by the Piscataqua River, the second, third, or fourth fastest-flowing navigable river in the country, depending on

whom you choose to believe. The Piscataqua's ferocious current is caused by the tide, which, in turn, is caused by the moon. The other player is a vast sunken valley — Great Bay — about ten miles upriver. Twice a day, the moon

drags about seventeen billion gallons of seawater — enough to fill 2,125,000 tanker trucks — up the river and into Great Bay. This creates a roving hydraulic conflict, as incoming sea and the outgoing river collide. The skirmish line

moves from the mouth of the river, up past New Castle, around the bend by the old Naval Prison, under Memorial Bridge, past the tugboats, and on into Great Bay. This can best be seen when the tide is rising.

Twice a day, too, the moon lets all that water go. All the seawater that just fought its way upstream goes back home to the ocean. This is when the Piscataqua earns its title for xth fastest current. Look for the red buoy, at the upstream end of

Badger's Island, bobbing around in the current. It weighs several tons, and it bobs and bounces in the current like a cork. The river also has its placid moments, around high and low tides. When the river rests, its tugboats

and bridges work their hardest. Ships coming in laden with coal, oil, and salt do so at high tide, for more clearance under their keels. They leave empty, riding high in the water, at low tide, to squeeze under Memorial Bridge.

Table with 7 columns for days of the week (Sunday, October 10 to Saturday, October 16). Each cell contains a list of historical events with dates and a small tide chart showing high and low tide times.

Table with 7 columns for days of the week (Sunday, October 17 to Saturday, October 23). Each cell contains a list of historical events with dates and a small tide chart showing high and low tide times.

Advertisement for Colby's, featuring a cartoon character and text: 'COLBY'S BREAKFAST & LUNCH 436-3033'

Advertisement for La Maison Navarre Macarons Paris, featuring a logo and text: 'LA MAISON NAVARRE Macarons Paris... French Pastry - Bistro - Wine Bar 121 Congress Street, Portsmouth 603.373.8401'

Advertisement for Madore Electric, featuring text: 'Madore Electric Residential & Commercial Wiring Service Serving the Seacoast since 1980 Sid Madore (603) 234-9996'

Advertisement for Adellas Coffeehouse, featuring an illustration of a woman with coffee and text: 'Adellas COFFEEHOUSE Next to City Hall in Downtown Dover, NH 3 Hale Street (603) 742-1737'

Advertisement for Salt Cellar, featuring a logo and text: 'SALT CELLAR SINCE 2011 7 COMMERCIAL ALLEY - 766-1616 WWW.PORTSMOUTHSALTCELLAR.COM'