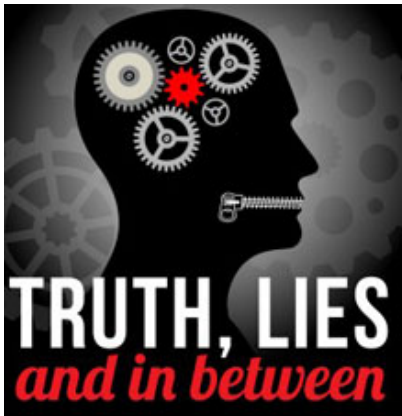




It was miserably hot last week. Again. Honestly. Since you can't stay home forever, though, I headed out to a local discount store to buy a few things and maybe see how others were coping with this weather.

Shopping complete, I ambled over to the checkout line. A half dozen kids, ages roughly 3-10, skittered around noisily. Grabbing things to show their moms. Can we get this ball? Soda? Candy? Hair thingy? Standing silently behind them was the tallest woman I ever saw. About six foot three. Perhaps forty, she wore a black and white horizontally (of course) striped cotton dress and cork soled shoes that barely added to her stunning height.

The scurrying kids had to quickly navigate around Cork Sole, like dolphins steering through pilings. The three year old, though, stopped to survey the situation. Gazing skyward, her two economical words greeted those of us paying any attention. "She tall," we were told. Cork Sole, patient amidst the hubbub, gazed floor-ward silently, a Mona Lisa smile creeping across her stately face. "*She tall*" announced our cute as a button little reporter, *again*. No one commented on Button's observation.

Aha, I thought. A blatantly honest citizen. What's with almost everyone else? Too experienced (mature?) to be trusted to just tell the truth automatically, without any self-censorship? Too many swats on the fanny for telling Aunt Sara or Uncle Charlie that they smell funny at a family picnic? Too many frowns or admonishments from teachers? Too much taking the easy way out and bending the truth instead of telling it straight? Simple politeness? Hey, not enough wine?

This musing, of course, takes place against the backdrop of perhaps the most contentious, nasty, truth deprived political season of all time, at least in America. Encouragingly, we seem as

a nation to value honesty and take little at face value from our politicians, certainly if they are from a party other than our own. The data are striking on this matter. Nearly six out of ten of us say we don't believe Mr. Trump is honest and trustworthy; about *two thirds* say this about Mrs. Clinton. Bottom line: Americans overall don't believe either candidate is honest and trustworthy with an edge to Mr. Trump.

So much for opinion data. If we turn to relatively objective, third party analyses of the two candidates, the honesty picture favors Mrs. Clinton. Pulitzer Prize winning Politifact's researchers, for example, concluded recently that over 90% of the things Donald Trump says are not accurate: either "half true" (14), mostly false (17), false (42) or "pants on fire" false (19). If you look for weighting factors applied to his statements and their veracity, there isn't much available right now. Certainly some of his lies seem more egregious than others, though, such as his bizarre claim that he "watched when the World Trade Center came tumbling down. And I watched in Jersey City, N.J., where thousands and thousands of people were cheering as that building was coming down."

This NEVER HAPPENED, say police, nor is there any supporting film. And Trump University students didn't love his phony program as he has insisted, far from it. Much of the rest of his self-touted business record doesn't stand up to scrutiny either, including his *yugely* (over 100%) exaggerated wealth per Forbes, Fortune and Bloomberg. He has left a trail of six bankruptcies and hundreds of contractors shortchanged for work they performed for him. The litany of Trump lies stretches to the horizon. Think I'm biased against Don? It's true I would absolutely never vote for him. But consider the measured words of Pulitzer Prize winning presidential historian Jon Meacham, writing recently in Time magazine:

"Here is how it tends to go: Trump will say something provocative and factually dubious; the world will react, even recoil; Trump will not apologize—not exactly—but will slowly and sporadically amend his remarks, thus leaving everything in a kind of haze. In a campaign, this addiction to chaos is one thing; in the White House, it would be something else entirely."

Maybe this is why Trump peppers his remarks with "*believe me*" (have fun listening for this). Perhaps at some level even he knows he's a walking baloney factory. Apart from the incessant, insufferable bragging and gross narcissism.

Then we have Hillary Clinton. Few doubt how brilliant and tireless she is, but her e-mail history has been a dumb disaster. If one can't trust lifelong Republican James Comey, FBI Director, to

She Tall

Written by Jack Sparacino

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tell the truth, one could be left back at little Button's doorstep. Comey made it clear on July 7 that contrary to her claims, she did indeed handle classified material on her personal server. In a few cases, we're talking material that was *marked* "classified." Even to many supporters, this is a big deal. While Mr. Trump appears to lie for a living, repeatedly and pathologically, Mrs. Clinton has apparently uttered a series of whoppers when it comes to her e-mails. And many question her integrity vis-à-vis Clinton Foundation activities.

I wonder how honest cutie pie Button will be someday as an adult. Will she continue to say "She Tall" when looking skyward at a very, very long woman? Will she state only facts on her tax returns? Will she tell her best friend that she's being a jerk when she's being a, well... jerk? Will she call a spade a %\$^& [*#@% shovel](#) , as my dad used to say? Time will tell.

If I was betting, though, I'd say no. How many of us are truly honest in our personal and professional dealings, all or at least nearly all of the time?

There's plenty of relevant data on this, thankfully. If Button grows up to be a nurse, the odds might well be in her favor, as Gallop polling revealed that fully 85% of respondents rated nurses as very high or high in honesty and ethical standards. We can contrast this with a mind blowing 8% and 7% for members of congress and lobbyists, respectively, at the other extreme. Sadly, business executives didn't fare so well either at 17%. Nor did lawyers at 21% and bankers at 25%. More encouragingly, high school teachers came in at 60% and doctors at 67%. Near the middle we have funeral directors with 44% seen as similarly honest and ethical. The truth dies hard, does it? Perhaps it just gets stiffed (ha).

Maybe not all that hard. Pass an acquaintance on the street or meet people at a gathering and ask someone, "How are you?" What do they tend to say? Fine thanks, good, ok or not bad are typical, facile answers. At least from folks over ten or so. Much less likely are responses to this seemingly simple question that provide any detail whatsoever about how they are *really* feeling. Aside from seniors who are eager to tell you about their arthritis, PSA level, hip or cataract surgery (including yours truly). Or their grandchildren, sure.

Should we go a little easier on politicians (egad) or harder on the rest of us? Do most of us tell "tall" tales too much of the time? We could talk to a nurse about it. Or just ask Button.