

All Ground Up

Written by Jack Sparacino

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June, 1944: Saipan, Mariana Islands: “After a sleepless night, [U.S. Marine] Robert E. Wolin, an amtanker with the Second amphibious Tractor Battalion, considered being alive at sunrise ‘one of the great experiences of my life.’ He didn’t wish to move from his foxhole, fearing that if he did ‘all hell would rain down.’ But a senior officer happened by then, swagger stick under his arm, and said his unit was a hundred or so yards out of position. ‘He suggested we move south, collecting men as we went. Then he concluded: After all, Lieutenant, you don’t want to live forever.’” – *James D. Hornfischer, The Fleet At Flood Tide (Random House, 2016)*

Technological advances notwithstanding, grinders have earned their manufacturing keep for many years. For many of us, belt grinders come to mind when we think of these tools. Along with gear, jig, and bench grinders. Plus cheese grinders, often referred to as graters. Tough customers, these gadgets. For those unfortunates for whom life itself is a grind, there is little joy in Mudville. Unless we’re literally talking sports, where grinding out a hardscrabble run or victory is a realistic way of acknowledging that splashy successes make for great headlines but are often supported by honorable if grimy struggles to meet incremental milestones.

This election season was an agonizingly long grind if nothing else. The American Psychological Association, my former professional gang, revealed recently that some 52% of Americans found it stressful. For those of us battered by Hurricane Matthew, it was a double whammy. Blowhards and hard blows bumping and grinding away. *Hey, whatever happened to fun?* Oh yeah, the Cubs finally won a World Series after chasing a repeat performance since 1908. Back when a pound of ground coffee cost about 15 cents.

Speaking of Matthew, we are just now finished digging out from the mayhem. Five large trees down, water damage to our house, a battered crab dock. One of those trees was a laurel oak. Disposing of the root ball involved Matt (seriously) and Jason grinding it up one sunny afternoon. They jockeyed a mustard colored behemoth, a Rayco RG100X, with a 99.2 horse Kubota turbo diesel. As the lads dug into the stump and ball, chips flew furiously while the

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Rayco bucked and roared. Enjoying a ringside seat on our patio some 20 feet from the action, I donned a pair of sunglasses, snugged down my Proud Navy Dad ball cap, and effected my best manly squint to avoid eye injury as ground up chips sprayed furiously in all directions. No, it wasn't like slugging it out in the Marianas, although the analogy did skitter through my chipper mind, along with a comparison to the Clinton/Trump war.

I'm serious about this election having been a gigantic grind, often reminiscent of an in-sink disposal, operating far too long for all but the most feverish political junkies. At the heart of it all was a psychological aberration. As comedian Dean Obeidallah wrote, *["Let's be blunt: Trump has served up the most vile, despicable garbage we have seen from a major party presidential nominee ever."](#)* Ca

rl Cannon,

Washington Bureau Chief of RealClearPolitics, made the broader, more frightening case that

"the GOP is the party of 'dog whistles' to closeted racists, a political organization hostile to gays, immigrants and minorities — a party that doesn't even protect women, let alone embrace ethical and cultural pluralism."

If true, emphasize

if
, we were thereby served up a king sized portion of vile material highly suitable for a major league grinder. Crank up the Rayco.

For an ever loftier take on this grinding business as it is reflected in our most recent political process, we can turn to a vaunted national magazine. Founded in 1857, *The Atlantic* has largely steered clear of weighing in on who it might favor in a presidential contest. The editors came down squarely for Abraham Lincoln in 1860 and then again a century and change later when they supported Lyndon Johnson over the relatively extremist Barry Goldwater. In its current issue, the magazine leveled a battleship's worth of heavy guns at Mr. Trump while endorsing Mrs. Clinton. As they put it, Trump "might be the most ostentatiously unqualified major-party candidate in the 227-year history of the American presidency."

As if speaking to me personally, they observed (as did *Time's* Joe Klein ... gasp!) that Trump "appears not to read." Apparently that would include McDonald's founder Ray Croc's memoir, "Grinding It Out," just reissued. This despite Trump claiming to like fast food because 'at least I know what's in it.' What a shame. He might have benefited from a look behind the scenes at a restaurant chain that is solidly built on the commercial wonders associated with grinding up enough beef each year to bury its customers in a mountain of grease and cholesterol if not marketing hype. You know, the kind of messaging that overlooks little details like the risks associated with obesity, high blood pressure, and heart disease. Sure, you can get fries with that. Want extra salt?

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The Atlantic took no prisoners in its excoriation of Trump: “He is a demagogue, a xenophobe, a sexist, a know-nothing, and a liar. He is spectacularly unfit for office.” I would add that he is a meat grinder with facts. What comes out his mouth often bears little resemblance to what (presumably) enters his brain or otherwise confronts his consciousness. Think me misguided? Hopelessly biased? A sore loser? Try to find one responsible parent who holds out Donald Trump as a role model for their children. Just one.

Who can deny that the agonizing (for Democrats anyway) election night itself was a blistering, bloated grind. As Robbie Mook told Chuck Todd on “Meet The Press” late last month, “We’re just nose to the grindstone, and we’re going to finish this out. But people should not take anything for granted, and we’re going to have to work hard to earn this.” When the dust settled around an upset Trump victory, it became clear that the Democrats’ vaunted ground-it-out ground game was a key factor. Just not a deciding factor this time.

Big
difference.

Perhaps nowhere was this precinct by precinct, block by block, and often house by house stratagem better demonstrated than in Philadelphia. According to Trump’s website, Pennsylvania had about a dozen Republican field offices. Compare this to 55 field offices for Clinton, including seven in Philly. Similarly, her advantage in campaign workers was about 300 to 12. That’s a lot of pizza processing for hungry staff in Hillary’s favor. Or maybe cheesesteaks.

On the upside this year, America once again withstood a broadside assault on its democratic fiber. We proved to the world that we can grind our way through anything. Quite possibly, our economy was strengthened, at least that portion supported by sales increases in Advil, Pepto-Bismol, Alka-Seltzer and Kava Kava. Wine spritzer anyone? No? Ok, how about a couple of double martinis? Just enough to make that last cheeseburger a tad less regrettable.

Or, just maybe, a nice submarine sandwich. You know, a grinder. Even if you really do want to live forever.