

Fiddler Crab on the Roof

Written by Jack Sparacino

Wednesday, 06 September 2017 04:41 - Last Updated Wednesday, 06 September 2017 05:58



"I'm not trying to play chicken here. You are smart enough to get that.' Fat Gandhi stroked his chin and nodded. Psychos, Myron knew, fall for flattery almost every time." - Home, Harlen Coben (2017, Dutton)

For years I've been trying to champion the old notion of trying on the other fellow's hat, so to speak; walk a mile in his shoes, and see the world through his eyes. It's especially challenging with that most sensitive of subjects, politics. Put on a MAGA hat, Never Trumpers; watch MSNBC (and eschew Fox News) for a while, Ever Trumpers. Come on, give it a try. Surely this gambit is in an Abe Lincoln speech - or the Bible - *somewhere*.

In just that spirit of inclusiveness I'd like to climb out on a limb - scuttle onto a roof, perhaps - and try interviewing myself as a Trump supporter. One of the hard core types, i.e., the majority of his followers who are with him no matter what. Specifically, according to a recent Monmouth University poll, most people (61%) who approve of President Donald Trump claim that they can't think of anything he could do that would make them disapprove of his job as President. These are the polar opposites of the overall majorities (e.g., 64% in Michigan) who recently said in an NBC News/Marist poll that they were "embarrassed" by Trump's conduct in office. [Are they recoiling from his making up calls with the Boy Scouts or Mexico's President? Botching Repeal and Replace? Attacking the Senate Majority Leader, a fellow (on paper) Republican? General crassness? Winning David Duke praise? Pardoning Sheriff Arpaio? Lots of choices. Hmm.]

Let's call her AFT (Always for Trump). I'll stay JRS. Whew, this could be fun. With just a little fiddling around, though not with the facts.

JRS: First of all, thanks so much, Always, for joining us today. It's good to meet you. Nice disguise!

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AFT: Likewise. Are those your real teeth? And were you in the Navy?

JRS: Well, almost and no, one of our sons -█████ Greg -█████ is in the Navy and keeps me supplied with hats. He'███s a corpsman, so if this interview craters he can administer first aid [just kidding?].

So let'███s get started. First, what continues to attract you to the president?

AFT: Well, he's tall, strong and tells it like it is. Plus cool hair. He'███s not afraid to pick a fight or, I mean, fight back super hard when the fake media or some nitwit in congress goes after him unfairly.

JRS: Do you believe that anyone ever goes after him *fairly*? Let'███s take the widespread criticism that Trump simply lies constantly. The *Washington Post*

'███s Fact-Checker identified 836 false or misleading claims in the first six months of his presidency. That's over four a day. Examples - three to five million people voted illegally in the 2016 contest. His inauguration crowd was the largest ever. Obama had Trump Tower bugged during the campaign. And on and on including "███ very fine people" on "███ both sides"███ in Charlottesville. Are those lies and misstatements fair game for criticism?

AFT: Are you done? That'███s all a bunch of liberal/lefty trash talking. Who reads the *Washington Post*

anyway? None of my friends, some of whom were in Virginia for that rally which maybe got a little carried away. Not our fault! I saw the inauguration pictures and he had tons of people there and they were really fired up.

JRS: Fired up, eh? Maybe, but what about the widespread public protests happening simultaneously across the country?

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AFT: Ha. Bored losers. More liberal or Antifa - is that what they're called? - claptrap. Donald Trump is the first president we've ever had that refuses to accept the status quo swamp and just call people out no matter what party they're in. He's got guts and that's what I want in a commander in chief.

JRS: No offense, but a commander in chief with a hair trigger temper who apparently spends most of his time watching TV and Tweeting?

AFT: Wait a second there, fake news, he's the boss, he gets to spend his time defending this country and creating jobs - Jobs! - the best way he knows how. Plus TV is good.

JRS: TV is good?

AFT: Yep. I'll bet you watch TV.

JRS: Sure, sometimes, but I'm not fake news, I'm not even a reporter. Just a columnist. As for fake, are you referring to my partial plate after losing several teeth?

AFT: Aha! I knew you were fake. And what about that so-called news lady on CNN, Brooke Baldwin? There's a fictional lady named Brooke Baldwin in a new story by Harlan Coben called **Home**. The one you mentioned. What about that, Mr. whiz bang University of Chicago?

JRS: Woah, madam. You're serious?

AFT: You bet, Perry Mason. Trying to trick me with all your fake questions.

JRS: Tell you what, let's try to get back on track here. What do you say to people like Eliot

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Cohen, former counselor to Condoleezza Rice at the State Department? And I quote: "□□ He has a feral instinct for self-survival, but he's unteachable. The ban on Muslims coming into the country and building a wall, and having the Mexicans pay for it, that was all you needed to know about this guy on foreign affairs. This is a man who is idiotic and bigoted and ignorant of the law."□□

AFT: Cohen, Schmohen. That's his ridiculous opinion. And what kind of rice was he working on?

JRS: OK, what about four-star General Michael Hayden, former director of the CIA and the NSA, who said, "The President has little understanding of the context"□□ of world events "and even less interest in hearing the people who want to deliver it."□□

AFT: You'□□re cherry picking quotes. Look at all the high ranking generals he picked for his administration. Top people and everyone with any brains knows it.

JRS: Fair point, but they too are clearly concerned about his presidency. Frankly, aren'□□t you? Even a little?

AFT: Nope, not even a little.

JRS: Alright, one more question for today. How would you respond to the *New York Times'* famed Maureen Dowd, who knows Trump well personally? She wrote recently, and I quote again:

"Watching Trump, 71, and Kim, 33, trade taunts is particularly disturbing because they mirror each other in so many unhinged ways. Trump is a democratically elected strongman and Kim is a fratricidal despot, but they both live in bizarro fantasy worlds where lying and cheating is the norm."

[AFT frowns like I just made a rude noise in church.]

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"They both demand allegiance. When Trump feels he isn't getting it or paranoia takes over, he publicly mocks his lieutenants or jettisons them. Kim simply gets out his antiaircraft machine guns and calls up his nerve-agent assassins. He had his uncle killed for, among the reasons, clapping halfheartedly."

Or how about the *Wall Street Journal*? Their conservative editorial page recently wrote: *"Mr. Trump's ego won't allow him to concede error and he broods over criticism until he ends up hurting himself . . . This is how he has achieved a 34% approval rating, as even his allies flee and his presidency shrinks in on itself."*

AFT: Well, it looks like you finally got one maybe half right. Kim is a menace and we need to contain and squash that crazy fat kid. Donald Trump's the man to do it.

JRS: Thanks, AFT, but we're out of time. I appreciate hearing your thoughts.

AFT: Anytime, fake teeth man. You were a gas.

JRS: Well, finally we almost agree. Ciao. And . . . Cut!

Hey, speaking of my being a fiddler crab on the roof . . .

*"If I were a rich man,
Yubby dibby dibby dibby dibby dum. ã ã ã ã ã ã ã ã
All day long I'd biddy biddy bum.
If I were a wealthy man..."*

Yikes! Corpsman! **Greg!!!**