

February 26, 2015

Ben Domenech in the Federalist writes about how the undying enmity of Wisconsin's left/liberals created the national candidacy of Scott Walker.

... Brandon Finnigan outlines how the Wisconsin left chose to pursue the recall fight, with county-by-county analysis which illustrates how Walker united the right in response:

"The attempt to boot Walker by Wisconsin progressives and labor activists accomplished a rare feat: absolute party unity. But instead of unifying Democrats enough to unseat him, it created a brief moment where libertarian, establishment, Tea Party, and traditional conservative members of the Republican Party united to defend him... The Democrats spent millions of dollars and thousands of hours digging, scooping, ad-cutting, and hammering. They threw the kitchen sink at the guy in 2012, threw their neighbor's sink at him in 2014, and now nobody on the block will let them inside to pee... Had the Democrats not targeted Walker with a recall, that massive fundraiser network, the national profile, the party unity, and his highly developed get-out-the-vote team almost certainly wouldn't exist. He may have still won re-election, but he would be just another Midwestern Republican governor who enacted reforms and faced push-back, not the conservative folk hero of a party longing for a win." ...

Charles Cooke in National Review has an interesting take on the Media's "gotcha" questions for Scott Walker. He mentions Chris Hitchens - and we get reminded how much he is missed.

... To grasp just how farcical this game is, one needs only to run an eye across the list of those who are now feigning high dudgeon. Yesterday, on CBS's Face the Nation, Obama's former adviser David Axelrod pretended to be surprised at Walker's remarks: "I don't know why there is confusion," Axelrod proclaimed, indignantly. Really? At present, Axelrod is running around the country promoting a book in which he confesses bluntly that Obama's well-documented objections to gay marriage were nothing more than opportunistic lies. In 2008, Axelrod recalls in one chapter, "opposition to gay marriage was particularly strong in the black church." In consequence, he adds, Obama "accepted the counsel of more pragmatic folks like me, and modified his position to support civil unions rather than marriage, which he would term a 'sacred union.'" Elsewhere, Obama would tell audiences that, being "a Christian, . . . my religious beliefs say that marriage is something sanctified between a man and a woman"; and that, "as a Christian — for me — for me as a Christian . . . God's in the mix." Axelrod's admission that this was baloney will sell him a lot of books.

Such suspicions are routinely expressed on the left. At various points during Obama's tenure, public figures such as Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins, and Bill Maher have openly suggested that President Obama is either an atheist or an agnostic, and that he is merely pretending to be a Christian to placate the rubes in the middle of the country. "You know who's a liar about [his faith]," Maher suggested last year, "is Obama. He's a drop-dead atheist, absolutely." "Our new president," Christopher Hitchens told France 24 in 2009, "I'm practically sure he is not a believer." Richard Dawkins, meanwhile, has noted correctly that this theory is popular among progressives. "Like many people," he averred in 2014, "I'm sure that Obama is an atheist." These statements lacked the modesty of Scott Walker's effective "dunno." In fact, they were far, far harsher. And yet they were met with relative indifference. Are we to conclude that the bien pensant class considers it to be more honorable for a person to suggest that the president of the United States is lying than to say that he does not know and does not care? ...

More on the media hoard's treatment of Walker from [Ed Morrissey](#).

... Over the past week, media reporters have tried to hold Republicans accountable for any personal attacks by anyone on Barack Obama, going out of their way to demand that GOP candidates defend Obama's honor — especially Scott Walker, who has emerged as a top-tier candidate in the early campaign. This trend reached its nadir when two reporters from the Washington Post, [Dan Balz and Robert Costa](#), demanded that Walker answer whether he thought Obama was a Christian — despite the fact that Walker has never brought up that topic. When Walker scolded them for their irrelevancies, the media instead took it as Walker “othering” Obama.

Here's what Walker said in response to the question:

"I don't know. . . . I've actually never talked about it or I haven't read about that. I've never asked him that. You've asked me to make statements about people that I haven't had a conversation with about that. How [could] I say if I know either of you are a Christian? To me, this is a classic example of why people hate Washington and, increasingly, they dislike the press. The things they care about don't even remotely come close to what you're asking about."

Conservatives have no reason to mourn the Chris Christie collapse. [Jennifer Rubin](#) posts on what happened.

... It is not hard to see how [Christie](#) lost the inside track with donors and establishment Republicans. His reputation as a lively, blunt, competent and inclusive Republican seems like a distant memory. He is now seen as erratic, gaffe-prone and lacking substance. This is the antithesis of what his natural audience (businesspeople, moderates, big donors, discerning independents) looks for. He seems to have morphed into a moderate version of Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Tex.) minus the foreign policy acumen, or perhaps the reincarnation of the 2012 version of then-Texas Gov. Rick Perry. There are lessons here for all the 2016 contenders.

First, you cannot win the presidential nomination on personality. You have to be able to get in front of a room of donors, across from an interviewer or in front of a crowd and sell yourself as a man with a plan — how to win, how to govern, how to appeal to non-Republicans, how to bring the party together. You can dazzle them with wonkery, as Bush is doing, or impress supporters with grit and focus, as Walker does. But you cannot vamp your way through a presidential race. In a long campaign, recycling the same shtick (be it Jersey guy or tea party rabble-rouser) wears thin, especially when there is no interesting agenda being offered.

Second, running for president takes a unique combination of humility and hubris. ...

[Kevin Williamson](#) starts out the humor section for the end of the week with a post on Marie Harf. Who's that, you ask? Does "jobs for jihadis" ring a bell? Trouble is, even though she is a hoot, the juxtaposition of jihadist terror with an airhead like her in our government is terrifying.

Marie Harf, the cretinous propagandist and campaign veteran installed by the Obama administration at the State Department — the misfit who plays [Messy Marvin](#) to Jen Psaki's feckless Pippi Longstocking — has called down upon herself a Malibu mudslide of mockery and derision for suggesting that what's really needed in the war against the Islamic State et al. is better employment opportunities — “jobs for jihadis,” as her critics put it. She later explained that her observations unfortunately were “too nuanced” for the simple minds of the dunderheads who twice

elected her boss president of these United States. That a member of the Obama administration should say something stupid about world affairs is about as newsworthy as Joe Biden's being creepy and handsy with women in public, but Harf's particular breed of wrongness is worth considering inasmuch as it illuminates one of the principal reasons that we are not winning — and will not win — what we insist on calling the “war on terror.” ...

Continuing our humor section, we have John Podhoretz asking when the media will point out that Joe Biden is a moron. This was the other moron's first big decision as president and what did he do? He offered up a national joke.

It was just another Tuesday for the vice president of the United States, and another week in which the mainstream media turned their genteel eyes away from the highly questionable conduct of the figure of low comedy whom tragedy might make our president.

On Tuesday morning, Joe Biden was photographed placing his hands in a cringe-inducingly inappropriate manner on the shoulders of a much younger woman — the wife of the about-to-be-sworn-in secretary of defense — and keeping them there . . . and keeping them there . . . and keeping them there . . . for 28 full seconds.

When Biden let her go at last, you could see Stephanie Carter relax her shoulders a little after having had them tensed up while he rested his hands upon them. Go watch it on YouTube. Some enterprising director will surely adapt the scene for one of those found-footage horror movies — “Paranormal Activity VI: The Bidening.”

Biden's day of creepiness was far from over. In the afternoon, he spoke at the White House summit to combat violent extremism and made reference to the people of Somalia, who have suffered for decades under the yoke of warlords and Islamists.

Of the Somalis living in his home state of Delaware in the capital of Dover, he said this: “If you come to the train station with me, you'll notice I have great relationships with them because there's an awful lot driving cabs and are friends of mine. For real. I'm not being solicitous. I'm being serious.”

The thing is, he was being serious.

He was actually claiming to possess special knowledge of the woes of Somalis from having taken rides in their taxis. Aside from the offense provided by the some-of-my-best-friends-are-black trope here, does anyone actually believe that Biden has ever let a cab driver, Somali or otherwise, get a word in edgewise? Or anyone else, for that matter? ...

Late night humor from Andy Malcolm.

Meyers: Joe Biden was seen massaging Ashton Carter's wife as he spoke. How's the new Defense Secretary gonna protect us from ISIS if he can't protect his own wife from Joe?

Fallon: Michelle Obama has banned boxed macaroni and cheese from the White House. It's been tough on Joe Biden. He couldn't make his wife any jewelry for Valentine's Day.

The NY Times from 30 years ago was just as dumb as today's. Here's a [Times article from Dec. 1985](#) on laptop computers.

... Was the laptop dream an illusion, then? Or was the problem merely that the right combination of features for such lightweight computers had not yet materialized? The answer probably is a combination of both views. For the most part, the portable computer is a dream machine for the few.

The limitations come from what people actually do with computers, as opposed to what the marketers expect them to do. On the whole, people don't want to lug a computer with them to the beach or on a train to while away hours they would rather spend reading the sports or business section of the newspaper. Somehow, the microcomputer industry has assumed that everyone would love to have a keyboard grafted on as an extension of their fingers. It just is not so. ...

... But the real future of the laptop computer will remain in the specialized niche markets. Because no matter how inexpensive the machines become, and no matter how sophisticated their software, I still can't imagine the average user taking one along when going fishing.

And the cartoons are very good today.

The Federalist

[The Left Regrets Making Scott Walker A Thing](#)

by Ben Domenech

Scott Walker is feeling the heat of being the surprise frontrunner this early in the 2016 cycle, and he is feeling it in the form of [a litany of gotcha questions from the press corp](#): “Walker was also asked by The Washington Post whether the president is a Christian and answered “I don’t know” to that as well. “I’ve never asked him that,” the governor said. “You’ve asked me to make statements about people that I haven’t had a conversation with about that. How [could] I say if I know either of you are a Christian?” These answers and others like them have [led Dana Milbank to pronounce Walker a coward unfit for the presidency](#). This headline becomes more amusing when you imagine how Dana Milbank would react to someone yelling “mouse!” in the newsroom.

There is an important distinction to be made here between the experience Walker went through over the past few years and Wisconsin and the experience he’s likely to have on the national level as it relates to the media. One would assume that a politician in a major state with a significant media presence and an active political opposition would be largely “vetted” after three competitive elections. And largely, they are. But there’s a braggadocio about national media types, insistent that candidates who come up here have never experienced anything like the pressure cooker before – that the national media’s combs are more fine-toothed, their microscopes more intense. This is the show, not Double A.

National journalists cultivate a reputation for digging deeper – it takes national reporters to find out about the real story about that racist graffiti at the ranch and things of that nature, after all – but they display a total lack of shame when it comes to running interference for their political allies, or asking questions along the lines that national opposition researchers peddle about the state-level

candidates. This results in out-of-left-field questions that are sometimes probing, but more often times what your average Midwesterner would consider just plain rude.

It's this type of activity that Scott Walker may not be fully prepared for – not because the opposition he faced in Wisconsin wasn't aggressive or antagonistic, far from it – but because it a battle that he didn't seek out, but one that found him instead. [Brandon Finnigan outlines how the Wisconsin left chose to pursue the recall fight](#), with county-by-county analysis which illustrates how Walker united the right in response:

“The attempt to boot Walker by Wisconsin progressives and labor activists accomplished a rare feat: absolute party unity. But instead of unifying Democrats enough to unseat him, it created a brief moment where libertarian, establishment, Tea Party, and traditional conservative members of the Republican Party united to defend him... The Democrats spent millions of dollars and thousands of hours digging, scooping, ad-cutting, and hammering. They threw the kitchen sink at the guy in 2012, threw their neighbor's sink at him in 2014, and now nobody on the block will let them inside to pee... Had the Democrats not targeted Walker with a recall, that massive fundraiser network, the national profile, the party unity, and his highly developed get-out-the-vote team almost certainly wouldn't exist. He may have still won re-election, but he would be just another Midwestern Republican governor who enacted reforms and faced push-back, not the conservative folk hero of a party longing for a win.”

The Rick Perry 2012 experience is instructive here. So long as a conservative governor is a dark horse candidate, he will receive far less of this storm from the hategoat section of the media. But once he jumps in, a swift rise will be accompanied by a flurry of attempts to crack the new guy. Surviving this storm is often not about vetting at all, because the prior elections have likely put the skeletons out there. It's actually about testing how capable you are at thinking on your feet, avoiding predictable traps, and turning the media's assault back on itself.

The omnipresent media makes this a necessary skill to surviving in modern politics, as necessary as hitting a curveball. You can swing and miss, or keep stepping out of the batter's box – but to play at this level, you need to take questions like that out of the park.

National Review

[The Media's Embarrassing Scott Walker Spectacle](#)

The farcical game of the one-sided “gotcha” question

by Charles C. W. Cooke

On Saturday afternoon, two of the *Washington Post's* crack political correspondents [accosted](#) Governor Scott Walker in the lobby of a JW Marriott hotel and asked him whether he believed that President Obama is “a Christian.” As is always the way with silly questions, this inquiry elicited a silly answer. And, as it was foretold, that silly answer provoked a maelstrom inside the bubble.

Had Walker been asked, “To which religion does President Obama claim he adheres?” he might well have responded without making headlines. But he wasn't. Instead, he was prompted to weigh in on a question that he could not possibly answer: namely, whether the president is, in any meaningful sense, what he claims to be. “Told that Obama has frequently spoken publicly about his Christian faith,” Dan Balz and Robert Costa wrote excitedly, “Walker maintained that he was not aware of the president's religion.” And the critics screamed bloody murder.

But, really, how could he be so aware? None among us is able to manufacture windows into other men's souls, and we should certainly not be asked to try — either on the record or off. Easy as it may be for Walker's critics to pretend that his demurral revealed a tolerance for fever-swamp conspiracy theorizing, one can only imagine that the man would have been equally stumped had he been asked to weigh in on the faith of, say, Mitt Romney. As Soren Kierkegaard rather brutally observed, the question of what we mean by a "Christian" is extremely complicated, *especially* in a country in which most people claim to be devout. Presumably, Walker has a particular set of definitions and parameters; and, presumably, his Evangelical worldview requires that they be substantiated only by earnest investigation. If this is how we conduct our public discussions now, one wonders why the *Post* didn't ask him to tweet out the meaning of life.

For a question to be posed in good faith, it must be possible both for the respondent to deliver an honest answer, and for his inquisitor to accept that answer at face value. Evidently, Balz and Costa did not ask in good faith. Rather, they wanted a specific response, and they were determined to crucify their man if he didn't give it to them. That, I'm afraid, is not journalism; it's entertainment. Their goal wasn't "asking questions"; it was enforcing a catechism. The intention here wasn't to ascertain facts; it was to begin a call-and-response. For a brief moment in the lobby, the *Washington Post* was the high priest and Walker was the congregant. The inquisition did not end well. (Walker's press team seemed to recognize this, and [undercut him](#) at the first opportunity.)

Politically speaking, Ross Douthat has a kernel of a point when he [proposes](#) that Walker could have answered the "bad question" more adroitly. Certainly, it would be nice if conservatives were not always so tongue-tied. But, in a case such as this, one really cannot extricate the question from the answer. Because the *Post*'s inquiry could only provoke one correct response — "yes" — and because the questioners knew that Walker was unlikely to repeat the words upon which they had conditioned his salvation, any longer meditation on how he *should* have addressed the ambush seems rather pointless.

To grasp just how farcical this game is, one needs only to run an eye across the list of those who are now feigning high dudgeon. Yesterday, on CBS's *Face the Nation*, Obama's former adviser David Axelrod pretended to be surprised at Walker's remarks: "I don't know why there is confusion," Axelrod [proclaimed](#), indignantly. *Really?* At present, Axelrod is running around the country promoting a book in which he confesses bluntly that Obama's well-documented objections to gay marriage were nothing more than opportunistic lies. In 2008, Axelrod [recalls](#) in one chapter, "opposition to gay marriage was particularly strong in the black church." In consequence, he adds, Obama "accepted the counsel of more pragmatic folks like me, and modified his position to support civil unions rather than marriage, which he would term a 'sacred union.'" Elsewhere, Obama would tell audiences that, being "a Christian, . . . my religious beliefs say that marriage is something sanctified between a man and a woman"; and that, "as a Christian — for me — for me as a Christian . . . God's in the mix." Axelrod's admission that this was baloney will sell him a lot of books.

Such suspicions are routinely expressed on the left. At various points during Obama's tenure, public figures such as Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins, and Bill Maher have openly suggested that President Obama is either an atheist or an agnostic, and that he is merely pretending to be a Christian to placate the rubes in the middle of the country. "You know who's a liar about [his faith]," Maher [suggested](#) last year, "is Obama. He's a drop-dead atheist, absolutely." "Our new president," Christopher Hitchens [told](#) France 24 in 2009, "I'm practically sure he is not a believer." Richard Dawkins, meanwhile, has noted correctly that this theory is popular among progressives. "Like many people," he averred in 2014, "I'm sure that Obama is an atheist." These statements lacked the modesty of Scott Walker's effective "dunno." In fact, they were far, far harsher. And yet they were met with relative indifference. Are we to conclude that the *bien pensant*

class considers it to be more honorable for a person to suggest that the president of the United States is *lying* than to say that he does not know and does not care?

When discussing the thorny question of racial prejudice, it is asserted with ever-increasing frequency that false consciousness rules the roost. On Vox last week, Jenée Desmond-Harris [blamed](#) many of America's ills on "unconscious racism," which, she suggests, is "also known as implicit bias." There is a regnant idea in America, Desmond-Harris contends, that is "so deeply entrenched that many of us aren't aware that we hold it — that white is better than black." This point was echoed by Nicholas Kristof in Saturday's *New York Times*. Directly addressing "white men," Kristof submitted that because all human beings are "prone to the buffeting of unconscious influences," "bias remains widespread in ways that systematically benefit both whites and men." In both cases, the argument is clear: that one's own preconceptions determine what is "normal" and what is "abnormal," and that it is important for everybody to audit themselves in order to recognize their inclinations.

This being so, one can only wonder why such rules are not applied to the press corps, the members of which are disproportionately of, by, and for the Left. All too often, the media's starting point is that Democrats are "normal," and that Republicans are not, and that conservatives therefore need to be subjected to obtuse questions that progressives, being sound, can be spared. From the reaction to Walker's words, we might conclude rather confidently that our leading lights are simply incapable of discerning that there is something rotten about the presumption that Walker's [silence](#) and [indifference](#) are "[disqualifying](#)" but that Hillary's [apparently well-documented](#) refusal to answer even the most basic of questions is [politically smart](#). We might understand why Scott Walker's being ambushed in hotel lobbies and invited to opine on the state of the president's soul is deemed to be a vital part of the usual cut and thrust, but that anything that casts President Obama in a bad light is regarded as [worthy of condemnation](#). And we might comprehend why two middle-of-the-road — and often excellent — reporters sincerely believed that the question was a good one to offer up in the first instance.

Hot Air

[The audacity of the media's Obama worship](#)

by Ed Morrissey

By "audacity," I of course mean "utter shamelessness." Over the past week, media reporters have tried to hold Republicans accountable for any personal attacks by anyone on Barack Obama, going out of their way to demand that GOP candidates defend Obama's honor — especially Scott Walker, who has emerged as a top-tier candidate in the early campaign. This trend reached its nadir when two reporters from the Washington Post, [Dan Balz and Robert Costa](#), demanded that Walker answer whether he thought Obama was a Christian — despite the fact that Walker has never brought up that topic. When Walker scolded them for their irrelevancies, the media instead took it as Walker "othering" Obama.

Here's what Walker said in response to the question:

I don't know. . . . I've actually never talked about it or I haven't read about that. I've never asked him that. You've asked me to make statements about people that I haven't had a conversation with about that. How [could] I say if I know either of you are a Christian? To me, this is a classic example of why people hate Washington and, increasingly, they dislike the press. The things they care about don't even remotely come close to what you're asking about."

And here's how the media reacted, as I note in [my column for The Week](#):

NBC's Chuck Todd called it an "[unforced error](#)." US News' Susan Milligan [accused Walker of "othering" Obama](#) and CNBC's Ben White accused Walker of "[questioning the president's faith](#)," even though Walker hadn't ever raised the issue of Obama's faith before the Post demanded an answer on it. In fact, Walker made it clear that the question didn't interest him at all. [The Post's Chris Cillizza argued](#) that Balz and Costa were justified in asking about Obama's faith because Walker refused to engage on the first gotcha attempt about Obama's patriotism. That context made asking about Obama's Christianity "entirely defensible," Cillizza wrote, without ever explaining what one has to do with the other — or with what Obama's interior life has to do with the 2016 election.

The media pendulum thus went from the extreme of shrieking over Giuliani's arrogance in declaring he knew Obama's heart, to bellowing when Walker stated clearly that he not only couldn't do so but didn't really think much about it at all.

Obama certainly didn't have to live by that standard in his 2008 campaign. He called his predecessor George W. Bush "unpatriotic" for running up debt. In 2007, while on the campaign trail, [he accused Christian conservatives of having "hijacked" Christianity](#), in what was very much a blanket accusation of a lack of integrity in public proclamations of faith. Yet the media seemed very disinterested in demanding answers from other Democrats in the 2008 primary on Obama's own remarks — or really, from Obama himself.

This goes beyond double standards, though. Obama's policies may be relevant to the 2016 campaign, and Republicans have no reluctance to discuss those *ad infinitum* with the media. Obama himself is not; he's not running for any office, and after two elections, voters know him well enough to make those questions moot at best. Obama's interior life has *absolutely nothing* to do with 2016 — unless the new metric for the presidency is a measure of Obama worship, a rather odd prerequisite to apply to Republicans.

John Nolte calls this "[pro-Obama McCarthyism](#)" from the national media, in the sense of turning Obama into an ideal that must not be challenged:

To protect Obama and blast Republicans, the media are now engaging in outright McCarthyism.

That's not hyperbole. Hear me out.

The question you must answer, and answer a certain way, is no longer, "Are you now or have you ever been a Communist?"

Instead, the media is now requiring that Republicans take a loyalty test that has only one question: "Do you now or have you ever held a negative personal opinion of President Barack Obama?"

And you had better give the answer the media wants or you will be publicly and politically bludgeoned. Furthermore, you will also be destroyed if you do not publicly repudiate those among your colleagues who do not pass the loyalty test.

Tammy Bruce [put it more succinctly](#):

Actually, there is something unhealthy going on here: an effort to intimidate and bully the American people into silence.

Mr. Fournier, of course, is just the tip of the proverbial iceberg of panic. A simple Google search conjures up an image of the liberal establishment frozen in their own hellish “Scream” portrait as they realize there’s a crack in the rule that “One must not speak ill of the light-bringer.”

Over the weekend, John and I engaged Matt Lewis in a spirited debate over Walker’s response, which Matt skewered as less than ideal. Both John and I argued over this for a good portion of the weekend, and Matt responded in [the Daily Beast](#), to which my column responded in part. Today, Matt objects to my characterization of his argument in the column, and responds that he wants GOP candidates to [both push back against media narratives and become expert at answering them](#):

More to the point, I take issue with his suggestion that I think “Republicans had better work with the media.” It is true that I don’t believe the media are inherently evil or “out to get you.” But I also think — and this is important for candidates to know — that the press are not your friends. Ed’s framing, I think, implies I support what might be thought of as collaboration or appeasement. But what Walker did was (inadvertently) work with the media — in the sense that he played right into their hands. He made this an irresistible story — so irresistible that we’re still talking about it today.

Conversely, what I am suggesting is that conservative candidates should learn how to communicate their message *despite media bias*. In other words, to overcome them. And part of that requires depriving their adversaries of the very types of stories that Walker has now generated. To paraphrase Nixon, Walker gave them a knife, and they twisted it with glee.

What I’m suggesting is that effective candidates shouldn’t give them the knife.

I disagree completely. Walker answered the question honestly and scolded the reporters, and it’s the media that turned that into a “Walker is a secret birther!” meme. And as long as we keep playing this game rather than shaming the reporters which engage in it — and only on one side of the aisle — then we’ll keep getting more of the same over the next two years. Matt and I will be continuing this conversation on my show today, so be sure to tune in for the fireworks.

Right Turn

[Lessons from Chris Christie’s collapse](#)

by Jennifer Rubin

[The Wall Street Journal reports](#): “For two years, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie crisscrossed the country to help his fellow Republican governors, raising money and campaigning for their election. And yet the nation’s 31 Republican governors, faced with a wealth of choices in the still-forming presidential field, so far aren’t racing to back Mr. Christie in his anticipated White House campaign.” There are, it seems, many viable alternatives who do not raise the same concerns that Christie does: “Republican governors gathered here said they were eyeing an array of fellow chief executives who may campaign for the White House, among them Scott Walker of Wisconsin and Bobby Jindal of Louisiana, and former Govs. Jeb Bush of Florida and Rick Perry of Texas. Ohio Gov. John Kasich and Indiana Gov. Mike Pence are also thought to be considering campaigns.”

It is not hard to see how [Christie](#) lost the inside track with donors and establishment Republicans. His reputation as a lively, blunt, competent and inclusive Republican seems like a distant memory. He is now seen as erratic, gaffe-prone and lacking substance. This is the antithesis of what his natural audience (businesspeople, moderates, big donors, discerning independents) looks for. He

seems to have morphed into a moderate version of Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Tex.) minus the foreign policy acumen, or perhaps the reincarnation of the 2012 version of then-Texas Gov. Rick Perry. There are lessons here for all the 2016 contenders.

First, you cannot win the presidential nomination on personality. You have to be able to get in front of a room of donors, across from an interviewer or in front of a crowd and sell yourself as a man with a plan — how to win, how to govern, how to appeal to non-Republicans, how to bring the party together. You can dazzle them with wonkery, as Bush is doing, or impress supporters with grit and focus, as Walker does. But you cannot vamp your way through a presidential race. In a long campaign, recycling the same shtick (be it Jersey guy or tea party rabble-rouser) wears thin, especially when there is no interesting agenda being offered.

Second, running for president takes a unique combination of humility and hubris. You have to believe you can do the most demanding job in the world and at the same time know where you need help. That means building a team and delegating, and it means knowing what you don't know. The knowledge deficit might be in foreign policy, or it might be in handling the mainstream media, but if you don't attack weaknesses early, errors will mount, you'll lack the time for self-education and your opponents will pounce.

Third, you cannot get sucked into any single sliver of the electorate. Bush must win over conservatives; Walker must win over those skeptical about his readiness for the national stage, his finesse with the media and his foreign policy sophistication. They have to add to what they have. By contrast, Christie spent the last six months losing the support he had among nervous establishment types without getting new support in the base.

Fourth, you have to exceed expectations. Christie's YouTube fame set the bar very high for entertainment value and for pugnaciousness, and when he now tries to dial it down he comes across flat. Bush will have to meet and exceed expectations when it comes to conservative values and fire-in-the-belly political tone, making sure that the base knows he wants its support and that he can throw a punch against the Democrats. No one has done a better job with the expectations game than Perry, who now exudes executive gravitas and demonstrates depth on foreign policy. Walker, whose has been underestimated for his entire political career, needs to again demonstrate that he has sufficient fire and a big enough worldview to be president.

Bush, Walker, Perry and Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) may all benefit from Christie's declining fortunes. But they run the risk of repeating his errors unless they offer a meaty agenda, balance confidence with self-awareness, avoid playing to one part of the electorate at the expense of others, and meet or exceed expectations.

National Review

We Are Marie Harf

And we will lose the war on terror.

by Kevin D. Williamson

Marie Harf, the cretinous propagandist and campaign veteran installed by the Obama administration at the State Department — the misfit who plays [Messy Marvin](#) to Jen Psaki's feckless Pippi Longstocking — has called down upon herself a Malibu mudslide of mockery and derision for suggesting that what's really needed in the war against the Islamic State et al. is better employment opportunities — “jobs for jihadis,” as her critics put it. She later explained that her

observations unfortunately were “too nuanced” for the simple minds of the dunderheads who twice elected her boss president of these United States. That a member of the Obama administration should say something stupid about world affairs is about as newsworthy as Joe Biden’s being [creepy and handsy with women in public](#), but Harf’s particular breed of wrongness is worth considering inasmuch as it illuminates one of the principal reasons that we are not winning — and will not win — what we insist on calling the “war on terror.”

The secular imagination is, as an instrument for understanding human action at large, a very limited tool, and one that is entirely inadequate for understanding the cultural phenomenon that the West currently finds itself confronting, which is Islam — not extremism, not radicalism, not terrorism, but Islam itself, a religion that both is embedded in a culture and serves as the foundation in which other cultures, ideologies, and social tendencies are embedded. This is not to say, as some of our more energetic culture warriors would have it, that Islam itself is the enemy, and categorically incompatible with liberal values, but only to recognize that Islam carries radical Islam within it, and that the jihadist element making war on all opportune fronts — not only on the West — is not an alien force appended to Islam but an organic part of the whole.

My own personal experience with Islam is mainly confined to my time in India, where Muslims are a minority, one that has experienced real persecution and perpetrated the same. There is Muslim fanaticism in India, as well as Hindu fanaticism. Sometimes the product is comedy: The Hindu temple down the street from my apartment in Delhi would sometimes play loud marching-band music over its truly impressive sound system in an attempt to drown out the muezzin’s call to prayer at the mosque around the corner. Sometimes the product is personal tragedy: Arriving home in the early-morning hours, I discovered the hanging body of a young man who had been lynched; I was later informed that he had crossed the Hindu-Muslim romantic boundary, though I never learned which side of it he was on. And sometimes the result is national tragedy: In the city of Ayodhya, a low-level civil war has been fought for years over the Babri Masjid, a mosque built by the Mughal emperor Babur on a site sacred to Hindus because it is believed to be the birthplace of the god-king Ram and therefore a holy place where liberation from the cycle of death and reincarnation may be obtained. It may have been the site of a Hindu temple, and in 1992 a mob of Hindu fanatics [demolished the mosque](#), going at it with sledgehammers before tearing it brick from brick with their bare hands. In the riots and communal fighting leading up to the demolition and following it, more than 2,000 people died.

This was some 465 years after the mosque was built in 1527.

India has of course suffered from Islamic extremism since the beginning — since before the beginning, in fact, having been partitioned (which occasioned another bloody civil conflict) at the insistence of Muslim League leader Muhammad Ali Jinnah, an utterly secular, Bismarckian practitioner of realpolitik who believed, contra the idealism of Mohandas Gandhi et al., that in a multicultural society, somebody is going to be on top, and it wasn’t going to be Muslims in an India that is 80-odd percent Hindu. The subsequent career of Pakistan and its devolution from U.S. client state to failed state suggests the limits of identity politics.

Americans — including conservatives — are a lot more like Marie Harf than we are like Narendra Modi, the Hindu-nationalist prime minister of India, or Nawaz Sharif, the Muslim League prime minister of Pakistan. We are certainly more like Marie Harf than we are like the men who leave their homes in Iraq, Russia, Egypt, Bahrain, Tunisia, Yemen, and elsewhere to behead and immolate strangers in foreign lands. When people have been comfortable long enough, they find it impossible to imagine a moral and political universe in which more is at stake than comfort, whether economic or social.

Setting aside such universals as cancer and such acts of God (if that term may be permitted) as being struck by lightning, what is the worst thing that is likely to happen to Marie Harf? Losing her job. Why? Because the most important thing in her life was getting that job. In a secular life — and the lives of Americans and Europeans are by and large secular, even for the sincerely religious among us — the economic opportunity that Harf proffered as a palliative to what ails the Islamic world is, if not the most important thing in life, then near to it. Divorce rates in the United States rise by a fifth after a husband loses his job — and American men are more likely to kill themselves during a bout of long-term unemployment than after a divorce, loss of a loved one, or other unhappy incident.

Employment speaks so deeply to the regnant American notion of self that the inability to hold a job is listed as a notable symptom of any number of psychiatric disorders. F. A. Hayek worried about the company man's displacement of the entrepreneur and the small proprietor, believing that lifelong employment in the beige precincts of bureaucracies, whether corporate or governmental, encouraged dependency, passivity, conformity, and the mental habits associated with these things. What, then, might he have made of Marie Harf, whose function in the vast bureaucracy of the State Department is not to do what she's told but to repeat what she's told until she's so accomplished at it that she doesn't necessarily need to be told in the first place, the party line having been written in her heart?

At the CIA, Harf was "promoted" from Middle East analyst to press liaison, which does not suggest a rich intellectual life. She then went to work for the Obama campaign and, as a reward, was installed in another media-relations job, at the State Department. It may be that she reads Marcus Aurelius in the original Greek in her spare time and has a life of deep spiritual communion, but all perceivable indications are that she is a familiar modern type, a person whose life is defined by the social status and economic station associated with a job, whose education (B.A. in political science, Indiana, M.A. in foreign affairs, Virginia) was organized around securing such a job, and whose life ambition is to move through the *cursus honorum* associated with her class and sense of self-worth, whether that means highly paid sinecures (the Chelsea Clinton model) or seeking elected office as a form of self-validation (the Sandra Fluke model).

If you are Marie Harf, there are very few problems that a good (or better) job cannot solve. And if you are Marie Harf, there are few catastrophes in life greater than the inability to secure a good job. We are not nearly so worried about getting into Paradise as getting into Princeton — assuming that we make the distinction at all.

We may mock her. But we are Marie Harf.

NY Post

The liberal media won't tell people that Joe Biden is a moron

by John Podhoretz



If Biden were a Republican, would the media have laughed off his molestation of Stephanie Carter?

It was just another Tuesday for the vice president of the United States, and another week in which the mainstream media turned their genteel eyes away from the [highly questionable conduct](#) of the figure of low comedy whom tragedy might make our president.

On Tuesday morning, Joe Biden was [photographed placing his hands in a cringe-inducingly inappropriate manner](#) on the shoulders of a much younger woman — the wife of the about-to-be-sworn-in secretary of defense — and keeping them there . . . and keeping them there . . . and keeping them there . . . for 28 full seconds.

When Biden let her go at last, you could see Stephanie Carter relax her shoulders a little after having had them tensed up while he rested his hands upon them. Go watch it on YouTube. Some enterprising director will surely adapt the scene for one of those found-footage horror movies — “Paranormal Activity VI: The Bidening.”

Biden’s day of creepiness was far from over. In the afternoon, he spoke at the White House summit to combat violent extremism and made reference to the people of Somalia, who have suffered for decades under the yoke of warlords and Islamists.

Of the Somalis living in his home state of Delaware in the capital of Dover, he said this: “If you come to the train station with me, you’ll notice I have great relationships with them because there’s an awful lot driving cabs and are friends of mine. For real. I’m not being solicitous. I’m being serious.”

The thing is, he was being serious.

He was actually claiming to possess special knowledge of the woes of Somalis from having taken rides in their taxis. Aside from the offense provided by the some-of-my-best-friends-are-black trope here, does anyone actually believe that Biden has ever let a cab driver, Somali or otherwise, get a word in edgewise? Or anyone else, for that matter?

So a little groping in the morning and a little racial stereotyping in the afternoon; sadly for Biden, he had no evening events planned, or he might have hit the trifecta.

Yes, this is just Biden being Biden — which is to say, he's a socially inappropriate logorrheic.

Just a month ago, he was caught on video trying to plant a kiss on the desperately uncomfortable 13-year-old daughter of Delaware Sen. Chris Coons, who looked like she wanted the earth to open up and swallow her whole. Coons later said he was being nice and telling her a story about his own daughter Ashley, but the video makes it clear he was practically nuzzling her



ear.

As for racial stereotyping, there was the legendary moment back in 2006 when he told an Indian-American that “you cannot go to a 7-Eleven or a Dunkin’ Donuts unless you have a slight Indian accent. I’m not joking.”

As for logorrhea, I’ve told the story in these pages before of a small lunch I attended with Biden in 1986 when he was still just a junior senator from Delaware. Someone asked him an opening question, and he completed his answer . . . 45 minutes later.

On Election Night 2012, President Obama called Biden “America’s happy warrior.” That’s not what he says in private. In her book on the Obamas, Jodi Kantor reveals that Obama passed a note saying “Shoot. Me. Now.” to an underling during a Biden speech on the floor of the Senate in 2005.

During the 2012 campaign, according to the Mark Halperin-John Heilemann book “Double Down,” an exasperated Obama wondered aloud: “How many times is Biden going to say something stupid.”



IBD

Late Night Humor

by Andrew Malcolm

Conan: If agency funding runs out, TSA workers may have to work without pay. The TSA head says, "That's OK, we do it to see what your junk looks like."

Conan: Restaurant chain "Saladworks" files for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Analysts attribute the failure to it being "a salad restaurant located in America."

Fallon: Michelle Obama has banned boxed macaroni and cheese from the White House. It's been tough on Joe Biden. He couldn't make his wife any jewelry for Valentine's Day.

Conan: After a bunch of security breaches, President Obama has appointed a new head of the Secret Service. The Secret Service director was so excited, he jumped for joy over the White House fence.

Conan: The new James Bond movie has the oldest ever Bond girl. Which explains why he spends a lot of the movie repeating, "*I SAID BOND, JAMES BOND.*"

Conan: A blind Minnesota man got a bionic implant to see his wife for the first time in 10 years. Then, after she went to bed, he went on the Internet and looked at porn.

Conan: Nicolas Cage will star in an Edward Snowden movie. Cage said he's perfect for the role, since he knows what it's like to go into hiding after doing something people don't like.

Fallon: A lovely story here. A man in New Jersey has written one love letter every day to his wife since 1975. Every day. He signs each letter with the phrase, "I love you, my darling" with the symbol for infinity. And this is the sweet part: His wife responds to every single letter with a text message that says "k."

Conan: USDA approves the first genetically modified apples that don't turn brown. The no-browning apples are being called "groundbreaking," "revolutionary" and "slightly racist."

Meyers: Joe Biden was seen massaging Ashton Carter's wife as he spoke. How's the new Defense Secretary gonna protect us from ISIS if he can't protect his own wife from Joe?

Conan: Starbucks has just launched a home delivery service. It's perfect for anyone too lazy to walk one block in any direction.



Fallon: Recently, the admissions office at Carnegie Mellon University accidentally sent out 800 acceptance letters to rejected applicants. Meanwhile, the DeVry Institute accidentally rejected its first applicant ever.

Conan: Little Caesar's just introduced a giant deep-dish pizza with a crust wrapped in three feet of bacon. Two hours later, Pizza Hut surrendered.

Meyers: Photoshop is turning 25 this week. Well actually, it's turning 38. But it looks 25.

Fallon: President Obama is giving fourth graders and their families a free national park pass for a year. It marks the first time even kids were saying, "Gee, thanks, Obama."

Conan: A U.N. report says the world can be saved from destruction through veganism. So that's not happening.

Meyers: The Academy Awards were last weekend and Oscar fever swept the nation. No, I'm sorry, I read that wrong. That's measles. Measles swept the nation.

Conan: During her Oscar acceptance speech, Patricia Arquette called for equal pay for women. Then, Oprah stood up and said, "She's right, I can't live like this."

Fallon: Kim Kardashian tweeted that she stayed home from the Oscars to finish a piano lesson. Which raises the question, "Where does her piano instructor sit?"

Conan: One day this week each Krispy Kreme franchise is giving away a free donut to its first 1,000 customers. Unfortunately, it's not going too well since the first customer is still stuck in the door.

Conan: A lot of political moments at the Oscars. Winners drew attention to racial injustice, equal pay for women and immigration reform. Unfortunately, they were each played off with the song, "Everything Is Awesome."

Fallon: Pope Francis and a few cardinals are on a retreat from the Vatican. They will spend the week meditating and praying. At least that's what they told their wives.

NY Times

THE EXECUTIVE COMPUTER (December 8, 1985)

by Erik Sandberg-Diment

WHATEVER happened to the laptop computer? Two years ago, on my flight to Las Vegas for Comdex, the annual microcomputer trade show, every second or third passenger pulled out a portable, ostensibly to work, but more likely to demonstrate an ability to keep up with the latest fad. Last year, only a couple of these computers could be seen on the fold-down trays. This year, every one of them had been replaced by the more traditional mixed drink or beer.

Was the laptop dream an illusion, then? Or was the problem merely that the right combination of features for such lightweight computers had not yet materialized? The answer probably is a

combination of both views. For the most part, the portable computer is a dream machine for the few.

The limitations come from what people actually do with computers, as opposed to what the marketers expect them to do. On the whole, people don't want to lug a computer with them to the beach or on a train to while away hours they would rather spend reading the sports or business section of the newspaper. Somehow, the microcomputer industry has assumed that everyone would love to have a keyboard grafted on as an extension of their fingers. It just is not so.

The proponents of portables stoutly maintain that the stumbling block to a computer in every attache case is price. Right now, a laptop computer costs considerably more than the equivalent desktop version.

Yes, there are a lot of people who would like to be able to work on a computer at home. But would they really want to carry one back from the office with them? It would be much simpler to take home a few floppy disks tucked into an attache case. For the majority of consumers, a second computer for the home office is usually an inexpensive clone of the one at work. Not only is such an alternative more convenient, but it is more cost effective as well. In fact, one ends up with better technology.

Consumers have passed judgment. Convergent Technology allowed its laptop to sink into oblivion in June of this year. I.B.M. never legitimized the market with its much rumored "Clamshell," probably because the company realized that laptops are a small niche market, not a mass market. Hewlett-Packard, Panasonic, Data General and, of course, Tandy, which started it all, are still producing their laptops, albeit with the almost unreadable liquid crystal display, or L.C.D. Sales, however, are a fraction of the optimistic projections made only a year ago by industry soothsayers.

One key to greater consumer acceptance is better display. It is available in the Gridcase laptop (from the Grid Systems Corporation, Mountain View, Calif., 415-961-4800), which offers a gas-plasma display quite different from - and in some ways better than - the standard cathode-ray tube display. The display does much to make the Gridcase the only battery-powered laptop currently worth considering. But it costs \$4,350, without the recommended maintenance contract and the requisite software, which together easily bring the total price up to \$6,000 to \$7,000, or even more.

Software is the real weak spot for laptops. If the machines were merely too expensive, especially in view of their limited display, they would still sell if they served an unbeatable function. But for that to be the case, special software would be needed. The word processing and spreadsheet packages commonly available for them are intended to accomplish tasks to which laptop computers are simply not well suited.

Where these machines could shine is in such specialized field applications as those required by the military, the Internal Revenue Service, accountants and sales representatives. The largest of these markets is probably sales, and special software to meet the needs of sales representatives is beginning to dribble into the marketplace.

One firm that has established itself in this area is Sales Technologies, of Atlanta (404-239-0799). Founded in 1983 by two former Procter & Gamble employees and an M.I.T. computer whiz, the company produces a series of sales-oriented software programs for laptop computers. These include an order-entry system, an expense tracker, electronic mail, data communications and a territory management program, which permits a traveling sales representative to update customer files and the home office's computer data base. To outfit one sales representative with this software and a Gridcase computer on which to run it - would cost \$5,000 to \$7,000, depending on

the package. (The two companies are not affiliated, although Grid does package Sales Technologies software with its computers.) For a concern with a sales force of 500 people, the type of company for which such packages are geared, the expense would not be slight. The benefits presumably would come from increased sales by a more efficient sales force.

Fred Burke, a spokesman for Sales Technologies, cites the case of a large apparel maker. The company routinely was unable to fill 13 percent of its orders because many of the products were out of stock by the time orders came in from the road. Once they were equipped with laptop computers, sales representatives were linked to the main office and were able to convert many "lost" orders into sales.

By being able to determine immediately that, say, a particular green shirt was sold out, they could push the green-striped ones instead. The recouped business paid for the apparel company's laptop system in less than six months.

Sales representatives, service managers, field auditors of all varieties have not been adequately served by the computer industry in pushing laptop computers. As the technology of these machines, particularly of their displays, improves, and as their price declines, a lot of briefcase computers will probably be sold. And as the software that is capable of turning them into true satellite offices becomes refined, they will probably even be used - in fact, profitably so.

But the real future of the laptop computer will remain in the specialized niche markets. Because no matter how inexpensive the machines become, and no matter how sophisticated their software, I still can't imagine the average user taking one along when going fishing.





HANDS OFF

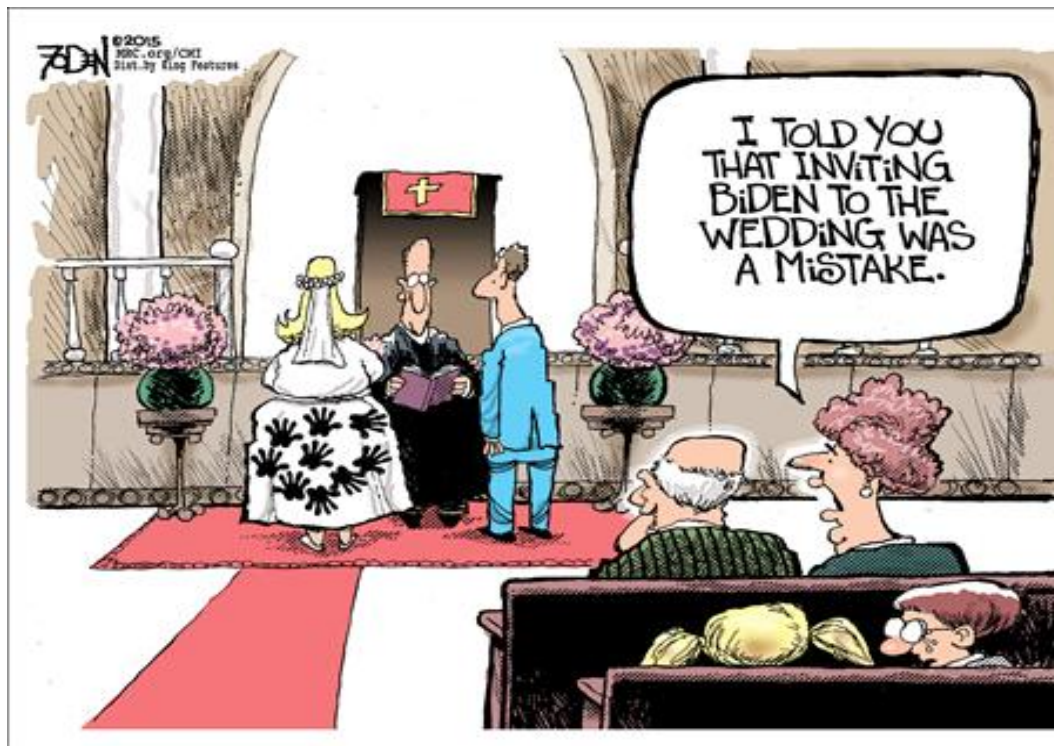


DON'T GROPE

CAGECARTOONS.COM
GARY M. GARY M. GARY M.

©
Mr. Gary

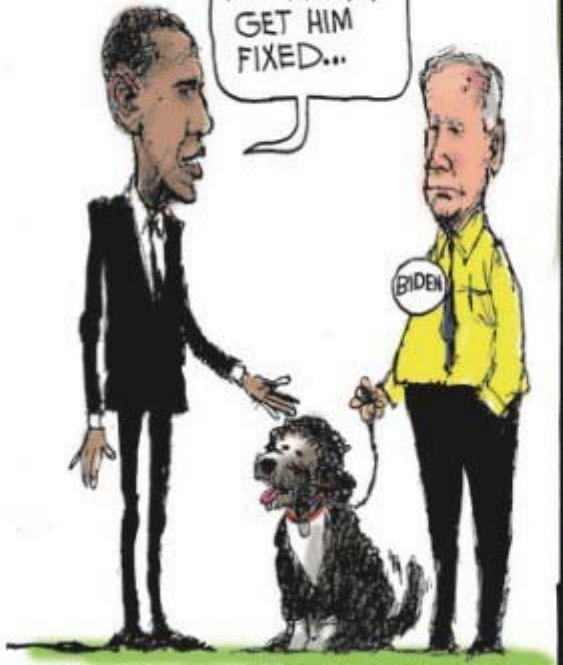






Mike Luckovich
ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION
© 2007

HE'S ACTING
TOO FRISKY.
GET HIM
FIXED...



HUMANE SOCIETY

HE HAS NO IDEA
WHAT'S COMING...



PAUL REZ
INVESTORS BUSINESS DAILY
© 2007 © CREATORS.COM

THAT'S WAY
TOO
CREEPY!!



HE'S MUCH,
MUCH TOO
CLOSE!!!

www.investors.com/cartoons