

WELCOME BACK TO EMPTYWHEEL!

You've found our new digs!

Thanks to Chris, Dan, Rayne, Brian, and Jason for helping with this transition—particularly Chris and Dan who helped with a lot of last minute surprises.

The site is not yet fully functional—most notably, we're working on comments. Right now, we don't have a registration system like we did at FDL: you need to enter your username and email address and it will need approved. Also, comments from yesterday afternoon and today at the FDL site are not yet in these posts.

~~Also, we don't yet have the RSS feeds working.~~
We have the RSS feed for the posts set up—working on comments.

We should be fully up and running early next week.

EMPTYWHEEL LEAVING FIREDOGLAKE

It is with very mixed feelings that I announce emptywheel will be leaving Firedoglake at the end of this week.

About six years ago, I started blogging on the abuse of power. At first it was the CIA Leak case. Then it was torture. And warrantless wiretapping. And now drones and Gitmo and corruption and the withering rule of law. With things like auto bailouts and healthcare interspersed along the way.

I've been doing this a long time, and never took the time to take a step back to figure out how

best to do this work. And while I've been privileged to have had the opportunity to do so, six years of manic blogging wears on you. Particularly when that blogging has mostly chronicled a long string of bad news about the rule of law and our Constitution.

It's time for me to take that step back, and to change the way I work to make sure I can continue to keep it up over what looks to be a long term slog. A key part of that step back will be stepping away from the manic, reactive rhythm I've established here at Firedoglake.

So sometime on Friday, emptywheel will move to its own server at a different URL (obviously, I'll let everyone know the new details).

At emptywheel's new home, I will continue doing what I'm doing. I'll be covering civil liberties and abuse of power and the way that ties into our crashing economy. I will no doubt continue to write, a lot. I will continue to do the really weedy work I've always done. But I plan to change the way I work—with a focus on also producing longer, more finished articles and possibly another book project. And bmaz will be coming along to contribute as he has for so long. (Yes, there will be Trash Talk!)

Meanwhile, FDL will still have superb civil liberties coverage. Later today, Jane will announce more details, but I can say Kevin Gosztola, who has already been doing great work at MyFDL, and who I consider to be one of the most exciting new voices on this beat, will pick up much of the load.

Look for more details—and a lot of thanks—in a few days.

HAPPY EASTER



Hi folks, Happy Easter! It has been a pretty frustrating week on a lot of the fronts we follow here. There are far too many such weeks. Even the one piece of positive news, the reinstating of the charges against the Blackwater Nisour Square shooters, was based on a somewhat suspect decision by the DC Circuit Court and still very well may lead to another dismissal of the charges in the District Court because, quite frankly, it is probably appropriate that they be dismissed due to the monkeywrenching by the State Department and their demand for *Garrity* statements from the individuals involved in the shooting.



But that was the week that was, now it is Easter Sunday and it is time to relax, eat and have some fun, whether it is a religious holiday for you or just a good chance to chill. Marcy and Mr. Wheel have been enjoying the last few days by moving. You know how much fun moving is! As for myself, after an extremely busy week, the bmaz family went driveabout in Southern Arizona. Thought, just for grins, I would share a little of our trip. One of the places we went to was San Xavier del Bac Mission, which is just due south of Tucson.

A National Historic Landmark, San Xavier Mission was founded as a Catholic mission by Father Eusebio Kino in 1692. Construction of the current church began in 1783 and was completed in 1797.

The oldest intact European structure in Arizona, the church's interior is filled with marvelous original statuary and mural paintings. It is a place where visitors can truly step back in time and enter an authentic 18th Century space.

The church retains its original purpose of ministering to the religious needs of

its parishioners.



The current church dates from the late 1700's, when Southern Arizona was part of New Spain. In 1783, Franciscan missionary Fr. Juan Bautista Velderrain was able to begin construction on the present structure using money borrowed from a Sonoran rancher. He hired an architect, Ignacio Gaona, and a large workforce of O'odham to create the present church.

Following Mexican independence in 1821, San Xavier became part of Mexico. The last resident Franciscan of the 19th Century departed in 1837. With the Gadsden Purchase of 1854, the Mission joined the United States. In 1859 San Xavier became part of the Diocese of Santa Fe. In 1866 Tucson became an incipient diocese and regular services were held at the Mission once again. Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet opened a school at the Mission in 1872. Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity now teach at the school and reside in the convent.

Clicking on any of the images will give a full size view. The upper is obviously the outside of the mission, the middle one a view of the inside of the church portion and the final view more of a closeup of the altar area, which is simply ornate beyond description and beautiful. It is guarded by two huge golden lions on each side, although they are a bit hard to see well in the picture. San Xavier is pretty cool and just about the only place like it still standing this completely in what was referred to in the 1600s and 1700s as New Spain.

The other completely awesome place we went was Kartchner Caverns. Kartchner Caverns State Park

is about 50 miles southeast of Tucson, is only about ten miles off of Interstate 10 and is easily accessible. It is one of the most beautiful state park facilities you can imagine. Here is a wonderful history of how the cave came to be a jewel in the state park system in Arizona. One of the key players you will read about is Ken Travous, who was along with us on the tour the bmaz family took Saturday; it was really a special occasion.

In November 1974 two young cavers, Gary Tenen and Randy Tufts, were exploring the limestone hills at the base of the Whetstone Mountains. In the bottom of a sinkhole they found a narrow crack leading into the hillside. Warm, moist air flowed out, signaling the existence of a cave. After several hours of crawling, they entered a pristine cavern.

The formations that decorate caves are called "speleothems." Usually formations are composed of layers of calcite called travertine deposited by water. The form a speleothem takes is determined by whether the water drips, flows, seeps, condenses, or pools.

Kartchner Caverns is home to:

one of the world's longest soda straw stalactites: 21 feet 3 inches (Throne Room)

the tallest and most massive column in Arizona, Kubla Khan: 58 feet tall (Throne Room)

the world's most extensive formation of brushite moonmilk (Big Room)

the first reported occurrence of "turnip" shields (Big Room)

the first cave occurrence of "birdsnest" needle quartz formations

many other unusual formations such as shields, totems, helictites, and rimstone dams.

The complex at Kartchner Caverns features a Discovery Center with museum exhibits, a large gift shop, regional displays, a gorgeous theater, and extensive educational information about the caverns and surrounding landscape. There are also campgrounds, hiking trails, lockers, shaded picnic areas, a deli, an amphitheater, and a hummingbird garden. It is simply an incredible experience, and I highly recommend it for anyone visiting the Southern Arizona area. Seriously cool.

So, the members of the bmaz family are back home now, the Wheels are semi-unpacked in their groovy new digs, and all are ready to eat and have happy hour. The best from all of us to all of you, the greatest readers and commenters in the blogosphere. Enjoy!

DONALD TRUMP: THE JAMAICA JERKOFF



.
.
.

Seriously, this asshole with a dead ferret on his head thinks he is going to run for President? Of the United States? Um, no. And why supposedly credible news organizations are giving this crapola one fleeting second of credibility not only beggars comprehension, but proves what pathetic swamp sludge the traditional media in the United States have become.

Oh, not to mention that the Republican party, who apparently takes Trump at face value (which given the ferret on his head and multiple bankruptcies is a value somewhere less than zero), is on the crazy train too.

So, where is The Donald from? What does HIS birth certificate show? Well, it demonstrates that he is from Jamaica. That's right, the loud mouth clown with a ferret toupee is from Jamaica. Sure, it *may look like* it is Jamaica New York as opposed to the country of Jamaica; but, seriously, without seeing the REAL certificate – you know, the one NOBODY HAS EVER SEEN – how is anybody to know??

.
.br/>.

Jamaica. Uh huh. Sure. The Donald has been smokin some large spliff mon.

[The most awesome graphic up top is courtesy of the one, the only, DARKBLACK. If you do not know DB, he is a looong time friend of both Emptywheel and Firedoglake, and does brilliant work and is in to some superb music to boot. Check out the DarkBlack blog]

[PS – Yes, I could have gone with the original Elton John version of Jamaica Jerkoff, but I thought this version by The Pioneers was teh awesome]

**BECOME AN FDL
MEMBER AND KICK OUR
A\$\$ IF WE EVER ACT**

LIKE NPR

When Jane first invited you to become a founding member of Firedoglake, she made an analogy to NPR.

Join Firedoglake's NEW Annual Membership Program



Support our work and help shape the future of Firedoglake with an annual membership contribution.

Last year, Craig Newmark of Craigslist said he thinks that by the year 2020, NPR will be a “dominant force” in media because of their membership model.

“I have a feeling that membership models and philanthropy models will be stronger than advertising-supported organizations, because people are willing to pay for trustworthy news,” he said.

We agree.

That’s not quite right. Sure, like NPR, we aim to build financial stability over time and with it continue to do solid reporting. Like NPR, we hope to create a real community with our readers. And SWAG ... We’ve got SWAG!

But in the last three days, an NPR executive got caught on film speaking the truth. Impolitely speaking the truth, but it was the truth. And rather than stand up for the truth of the statement, the ultimate target of the attack, Vivian Schiller, was forced out.

When faced with the choice of defending the truth or capitulating to fear, NPR capitulated.

Now, I’m grateful to the FDL community—from Jane to our readers—for supporting me in the past when I have spoken the truth a bit impolitely.

I'm even more grateful, though, for the courage that you give—and demand—of us. We talk with you directly in threads. We listen. We take your concerns seriously. And we know that if we ever hinted of capitulation in the face of fear, we'd hear about it!

That's part of what membership in FDL is all about: holding us accountable, steeling our spines, giving us energy to take on the tough battles.

By asking you to become a member of FDL, we're hoping to build the financial stability to keep doing what we're doing. But we're also looking to formalize the relationship in which you, our readers, ensure the integrity of what we do.

Become a founding member of FDL—and earn the right to kick our a\$\$ if we ever grow complacent.

SHARKTOPUS LIVE EXTRAVAGANZA!

It's Sharktopus time! Yes, we are taking the Emptywheel blog to new and fantastic heights tonight, all with you, our dear readers, commenters and friends in mind! Watch the world premier of a sure fir Oscar winner, Sharktopus, with us.

SPECIAL TRASH: LUNGS FOR THE LONG RUN

Trash this joint!

TOP KILL DISCUSSION THREAD

✖ Okay, for any Firedogs and Wheelheads following the big Top Kill moonshot (link is to a great Oil Drum explanation) going on, this is an open discussion thread. If you need a link, CNN has a live feed linked on their front page, here is the NPR feed. If folks have better ones, put them in comments.

The US Coast Guard has given final approval for the Top Kill attempt, so away we go I guess.

Here is a synopsis from Amina Khan at the LATimes:

To make up the pressure difference, technicians plan to pump mud into the blowout preventer, a kind of surge protector that sits on top of the wellhead. The device had failed to cut off the flow of oil when the pressure surged too high.

The mud that will be used, drilling mud, is a dense mixture of water and minerals such as bentonite clay. It can be made even denser by adding heavier minerals such as barite and galena.

The heavier the mud, the more it will suppress the flow – but on the flip side, the harder it will be to pump in.

The mud will be pumped from surface vessels with a combined 50,000-horsepower pumping capacity into the internal cavity of the blowout preventer. BP officials said they planned to pump the mud at a rate of up to 40 barrels per minute.

It's unclear how much mud will be needed to stop the flow of oil, BP spokesman

Bryan Ferguson said. It's possible, he said, that the entire cavity of the blowout preventer will have to be filled.

Once the oil flow has been contained, the hole will be covered with cement to permanently close the well.

If it looks like the procedure isn't working, perhaps because too much mud is leaking from the top of the blowout preventer, technicians plan to implement the junk shot – shooting in material to keep the mud from escaping.

The clog would include odd objects such as rope knots, golf balls and shredded tires. These materials are picked for a reason – each odd shape serves a different function, and the more varied the shapes of the collected junk, the more effective the clog will be.

BP officials said they could shoot a clog into the system several times, if necessary.

Okay, to start the ball rolling, here is my first question: The newer CGI depictions of the process give me more hope than the early ones in that it now appears the material is moving through a simpler path in and through the BOP than it first appeared. That is good. But my question is what is the status of these high pressure lines they have attached to pump the mud in through? As I read last night in a couple of different places, they had to actually cut off the old hose and fittings on the two key entry points, the kill line and the choke line, and then "clean up" which I take to essentially be grinding/filing to de-burr whatever flange is remaining and then clamp new feed lines for the mud on. Is that right? And, if so, are clamp fittings going to hold such high pressure? I have a pressure washer that only goes up to 3000 psi, and there is no way in hell you could use a

clamp fitting on it; has to be threaded. So, is this gonna work on the BOP?

Here is the official BP Top Kill animation video.

Here is the official BP graphic description of the Top Kill process:



[Lead graphic – BP: Broken Promises. Logo design by Foye 2010 submitted as part of the Art For Change BP Logo Redesign Contest and used with permission]

CHRISTMAS NUTS & BOLTS

Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, and all the other joyous holiday greetings from both me and Marcy. We have said it before, but not enough; you guys are the finest group of commenters and readers in the world. And we love you and thank you. Seriously. None of it happens, or works, without you. There are names I would list out, and you know who you are already, but won't because I might forget someone unintentionally. Suffice it to say, thank you one and all, you are not just "like family", you *are* family and you are valued and appreciated.

Now, as you might recall our own Surfer Dude, RanDiego, up and got hitched this year. I still owe he and Lady RanDiego a wedding present, so when the call came from the surf and sand for some Trash Talk for the big Bolts visit to Nashville to meet the Titans Christmas night, it was the least that could be done.

This has the makings of one great game. San Diego is not only on their usual furious December roll, they started early and have been relentless in maintaining it. Philip Rivers is

playing MVP level quarterback, LT is healthy and productive again and the receivers (especially Vincent Jackson) are coming up huge. The defense is playing quite solidly even in an off year for Merriman. In short, the Bolts look tough. But the same can be said for the Titans, who have been nothing less than remarkable after an 0-6 start. They are now 7-7 with only a hard fought loss to Peyton and the Colts blemishing their record in the last eight games. Vince Young is no Peyton Manning or Joe Montana yet, but he has really stepped up as a pocket quarterback and leader. He is flat out getting it done. The rest of the Titans have rediscovered Jeff Fisher football too. On paper, you have to give the nod to the Bolts; but this is in Tennessee, and the Titans still have thoughts of the playoffs and, even if not the playoffs, a winning season. This is a toss up.

Tonight is the Sheraton Hawaii Bowl, which will be shown on ESPN. SMU v. Nevada. Always a fun game to watch, this year it is notable for heralding the first return to a bowl game for SMU (Southern Methodist) since receiving the NCAA "death penalty" 25 years ago. SMU is coached by June Jones, a great guy, consistent winner, creator of wild offenses (along with his mentor mouse Davis) and the guy who coached up the University of Hawaii Rainbows to unusual heights. Lot of interesting angles there. Nevada boasts the top rushing offense in NCAA and have a potent passing attack as well. Normally, you would have to look out for the Wolfpack's tailback Vai Taua, who had a team high 1,345 yards on the ground; but he is unavailable for academic reasons as is one of the backup running backs. That is going to hurt. The average line heavily favors Nevada but I think that may have been before the unavailability of the Nevada running game was announced. I dunno, could with the equalizing factor of the missing parts for Nevada, this could be a real good one, and maybe an upset for the SMU Mustangs.

That is it for now. Marcy and/or I may be in to post tomorrow, maybe not; we will see. So,

consider this an open thread for whatever you have got. We raise a toast to one and all. Cheers!

LATE NIGHT: PUNKIN THE WHITE HOUSE

That's punkin, not pumpkin my fellow gobblers and gobblees. Yes indeedy, the White House has been officially punked. Late breaking from the Washington Post:



A couple of aspiring reality-TV stars from Northern Virginia appear to have crashed the White House's state dinner Tuesday night, penetrating layers of security with no invitation to mingle with the likes of Vice President Biden and White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel.

Tareq and Michaela Salahi – polo-playing socialites known for a bitter family feud over a Fauquier County winery and their possible roles in the forthcoming “The Real Housewives of Washington” – were seen arriving at the White House and later posted on Facebook photos of themselves with VIPs at the elite gathering.

...

While the White House offered no official explanation, it appears to be the first time in modern history that anyone has crashed a White House state dinner. The uninvited guests were in the same room as President Obama, first lady Michelle Obama and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, although it is unknown whether they met the Obamas and the guest of honor.

Here is the best part – they had their picture taken with the one and only *Ron Emanuel*:

But the best was yet to come: Once inside the dinner tent, they got pictures that appeared to show them with ABC's Robin Roberts, Bollywood composer AR Rahman, PepsiCo CEO Indra Nooyi, Obama Chief of Staff Emanuel (**identified as "Ron" in the couple's Facebook photo caption**) and two with a grinning vice president. (Emphasis added)

So, that is a pretty good story; but here is an even better one of some punkin going on at the White House, courtesy of the inestimable Howie Klein.

Howie tells the story of how he arranged for Lou Reed to attend and perform for an official Clinton White House State Dinner for Vaclev Havel, President of the Czech Republic:

One of the "big" news stories yesterday was the State Dinner President Obama gave in honor of Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who, like CNN's Sanji Gupta– a guest– is a doctor. 400 people were invited– probably 200 + 1 each, but I'm not certain– and it was in a heated tent on the lawn. I have a half-baked reason for telling the story of the state dinner I went to in September, 1998

...

I understood exactly what President Clinton wanted– and delivered. Havel and Lou Reed, a Reprise artist and a friend of mine, had such a powerful bond that Havel actually credited him with being part of the inspiration for the Velvet Revolution that freed Czechoslovakia from Soviet domination.

...

Everyone was grooving out (Henry Kissinger, Ted Stevens, Eric Holder, Kurt Vonnegut, Jane Harman, Chuck Hagel

and 2 generals, John Shalikashvili and my new pal, Henry Shelton, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff)— not just Lugar— and I kept wondering if anyone had any clue what the lyrics were. Clinton certainly didn't. He got up onstage and played his sax.

Now that is some punkin the White House!