

TED STEVENS, THE “TOOBZ”, AND THE IDIOCY OF THE INTERNET

Alright, this will be a fairly short post, but I would like to remind people of some things.

Namely, regarding Ted Stevens. As background, Marcy wrote a serious, and important, post on the Trumps

Organization's

curious, and semi-hilarious, use of Microsoft. And, yes, Marcy is right, it was amazingly stupid. From clackers whining that Hillary Clinton had insecure internet. If it was not so stupid, it would be extra laughable.

But I want to cut back to something different. In comments, Rayne Loled at Ted Stevens and, then, a relatively new commenter (like just today as far as I can tell), “CJ” chimed in with:

Bizarrely, it's not an entirely bad metaphor, though that's probably accidental on his part. See, e.g., Andrew Blum's "Tubes: A Journey to the Center of the Internet".



This is bunk. Blum, and his book, tried to make hay off of Stevens, and at his expense, but without giving him much of his due, nor acknowledging how the “tubes” of the internet falsely allowed the demonization of Stevens and cheerleader his prosecution. A prosecution that

turned out to be false and craven. In a review in the New York Times in 2012, Dwight Garner noted:

Reading this, you wish Mr. Stevens, who died in an airplane crash in 2010, were here to savor it. "Inside those tubes (by and large) are glass fibers," the author continues. "Inside those fibers is light. Encoded in that light is, increasingly, us."

That is exactly right, although Blum never really went deeper into the fraud by the Department of Justice that took Ted Stevens down before his untimely demise by plane crash.

So, as a bit of retrospective:

Say what you will about Ted Stevens, and much of that may be fair. But what was done to him at the end was wrong and a travesty. And the DOJ could not even deal with that then. Much less the pervasive and consuming wrong that is at hand today with Bill Barr and the DOJ he now administers.

For anybody that does not remember just how egregious and blatant the government/DOJ action against Ted Stevens was, here is one of my takes from 2008, and yet another in followup, from 2012.

You can joke about Toobz Stevens, and we have here before, but what happened to him was a complete travesty of justice. And there are serious lessons from that to keep in mind today. Without the "toobz" of the internet, I am not sure the reckless and false case against Stevens could have ever made it as far as it did. There is great irony in that, and it is a lesson that ought remain remembered, not just joked about.

That was a different, and in popular lore, more benevolent and honest era. So, what do you think are the odds for far worse from Trump and Barr? Somewhere, Ted Stevens has an idea.

WILBUR ROSS LETS HIS INNER TRUMPIAN GEORGE WALLACE BIGOT FREAK FLAG FLY

There is one thing consistent with the Trump Administration and America's past. Rank bigotry propagated by old white men in power.

STORMY WEATHER AHEAD

As you
may
have
heard,
there
is an
interv
iew on
CBS 60
Minute



s tonight of former Trump paramour Stormy Daniels. In the last 48 hours, there have been a slew of Stormy biographies. From the New York Times, the Washington Post, and CNN. All worth a check if you are interested, but all paint a similar picture.

It is a picture of a modern empowered and self assured woman. She is no slouch, she is bright and ready. It was been all too casual for the press to early on slough her off and characterize her as a "porn star" like that automatically makes some throw away bimbo. Clearly, nothing is further from the case.

The picture that emerges on closer inspection is far different. She is an informed and savvy woman in full. She is a mother and businesswoman, and one who understands and worries about the conflicts between the two. Karen McDougal, in her Thursday interview on CNN came off as genuine and honest, even if somewhat lost in why she is here with all of the public now. Daniels has none of that. And her story is, within the salacious category Trump brings us to consider, far more compelling.

The stories of Daniels and McDougall were literally concurrent, starting with a golf tournament tete a tete at the Tahoe Pro Am. But McDougall presents as a jilted woman once in love, Daniels is flat out a smarter woman who knew then, and knows now, what was up, then and now, and just isn't going to stand for the rank hypocrisy and lying by Trump and his goons like Michael Cohen.

The rushed out bios linked above largely track each other, but to my eye, the New York Times is the best:

Those who know her well have registered the moment differently. Ms. Clifford has subsisted amid the seamier elements of a business often rife with exploitation and unruly fare; more than a few of her film titles are unprintable. But for most of her professional life, Ms. Clifford has been a woman in control of her own narrative in a field where that can be uncommon. With an instinct for self-promotion, she evolved from “kindergarten circuit” stripper to star actress and director, and occasional mainstream success, by her late 20s. Why would a piece of paper and an executive legal team set her back?

...

“She was a very serious businesswoman and a filmmaker and had taken the reins of her career,” said Judd Apatow, who directed her cameos in the R-rated

comedies "Knocked Up" and "The 40-Year-Old Virgin." "She is not someone to be underestimated."

...

She has a daughter, a third husband and an expensive hobby: equestrian shows.

"She blends right in," said Packy McGaughan, a trainer on the competition circuit.

...

"Just as these misguided arbiters of the mainstream view an adult entertainment star as an anathema to the political process," she said, when she eventually decided against a bid, "so too do they view the dishwasher, the cashier or the bus driver."

This woman is real. Please go read at least the NY Times story, if not the others linked. She is everything you think she is, and far, far, more. And she has no fear. Not of her career, and not of Trump. That has to terrify Trump.

Here is the other thing that is different: Stormy Daniels has Michael Avenatti as her lawyer. Never met or talked to Avenatti before, but I have heard of him in cases (and from auto racing things), and from friends, for several years. He is good.

After three years at O'Melveny, he joined Greene Broillet & Wheeler, a Los Angeles boutique litigation firm. While there, Michael spearheaded many high-profile cases, including a \$10 million defamation case against Paris Hilton; a successful idea theft lawsuit involving the reality show The Apprentice and its producer, Mark Burnett, as well as Donald Trump; and a large corporate multi-national embezzlement case involving in excess of \$42,000,000.

In 2007, Michael formed the law firm Eagan Avenatti, LLP (fka Eagan O'Malley & Avenatti, LLP), with offices in

Newport Beach, Los Angeles and San Francisco. Since co-founding the firm, Michael has been responsible for securing a number of large verdicts and settlements as lead counsel, including an April 2017 \$454 Million verdict after a jury trial in Federal Court in Los Angeles in a fraud case against Kimberly-Clark (NYSE: KMB) and Halyard Health (NYSE: HYH) that was featured on 60 Minutes (won every jury question as to every defendant); a \$80.5 million class action settlement against Service Corporation International (NYSE: SCI) in another case featured on 60 Minutes and in the international press (settlement reached in the middle of trial); a \$41 million jury verdict after a nearly five-week trial in New Jersey; a \$39 million settlement in a case involving the alleged theft of trade secrets; and a \$13 million plus verdict after a six week jury trial in Palm Beach, Florida (won every jury question as to every defendant). In 2015, Michael prevailed against the National Football League after a two-week jury trial in Federal District Court in Dallas, Texas after obtaining a court order requiring Jerry Jones to attend trial and be cross-examined.

I had heard of him before, but really first watched Avenatti when he took on the National Football League and Jerry Jones. Because of some sports law friends, some of whom were closer to that story, I paid attention. Avenatti is seriously that good, and he has the extra bonus of knowing how to be a good trial lawyer AND play the PR game, personally, well. There are not many such lawyers, and ones tending to the PR more than the law are routinely panned mercilessly here at this blog. For good reason.

If you don't have a winning strategy with the press, don't talk to the press. Even if you

think you do, think twice and thrice before doing so. Or, by my book, just don't do it. But Avenatti has a really special combination of savvy, and has proven it long before Stormy Daniels.

Nobody knows how it all ends up, and playing the press is a risky game even for those genuinely good at it. But, so far, Avenatti and Stormy have played Trump and the press like a Stradivarius.

And, if as Trump is reportedly contemplating, Trump decides to get personally aggressive, watch out. He may well have met his match with Ms. Daniels and Michael Avenatti. By my guess, they are almost making bank Trump will try that ill advised tact. Let it be. Please, let it be.

SEAN HANNITY CRIES HIMSELF A RIVER

There has been a lot of upheaval at Fox News lately

Gretchen

Carlson went nuclear on Ailes and the misogynistic rapey culture that Fox cultivated over decades, and nothing has been the same there since.

That is a good thing. It may have been a limited, even if loud start, but Carlson initiated ripples in the Murdoch empire that



could not be easily contained, even with the ample crisis suppression talents of hired liar Ted Wells and his firm, Paul Weiss. The once closed barn door was open, and all horses and carts were suddenly out.

The Murdoch cabal, give them an iota of credit, realized the situation....kind of, and cut bait with Ailes in record speed for a bigly man that supposedly was untouchable and was a bff of Trump.

Probably motivated by Rupert's sons, James and Lachlan, but still correct, even if horribly behind the curve of human decency and sexual harassment law. But so much has happened since Gretchen Carlson cooked the supposed golden goose, Roger Ailes, that common lore held responsible for all the Fox News golden eggs.

Whatever the impetus, Roger Ailes was summarily dismissed when obviously necessary. The Murdochs and Fox News probably thought that might contain the exposure of their decades long belligerent misogyny. But, no, then came the claims against Bill O'Reilly. An odious asshole every bit as despicable as Ailes. And one known as exactly that since the Andrea Makris out of court settlement over O'Reilly's loofah phone fetishes back in 2004.



Instead, Fox not only kept O'Reilly

until they could no longer, they kept Ailes Number Two, Bill Schein and attendant protective underlings in place. Until they no longer could. That started today with Schein's ouster. And Hannity is floating like an overboard deck chair in the seas away from the Titanic, away from the mothership. (Killer graphic by the one and only Darth – click to enlarge!). But the suddenly disposable Sean Hannity deck chair is drifting away from the ignorant and misogynistic

shipwreck he helped perpetuate all these years.

In any normal corporation, especially such a public facing one like Fox News, they would have culled the problems out immediately after the Ailes embarrassment. But not Fox. Oh no. Instead, Fox and Fox News allowed O'Reilly and Sean Hannity to bellow with umbrage about the public admissions of their owners of misogyny and bigotry. Fox, as a company, had not learned their lesson going back to Andrea Makris in 2004, nor insured that their precious bought and paid for "talent" did.

But now the Murdoch sons, James and Lachlan, are protecting the family name by cleaning up their father's idiocy at warp speed in a way that the gel headed sons in the Trump family can only dream of. Today, the Murdochs the younger have ousted Bill Shine. Via Digby, a quote from Andrew Kirell at Daily Beast:

Sean Hannity is looking to leave Fox News, according to sources, following the resignation of Fox News co-president Bill Shine officially on Monday.

Shine was Hannity's long-time ally whom he personally recommended the network hire two decades ago to produce Hannity & Colmes.

So, cry me a river Sean Hannity you stuporous dolt. In recent days, Hannity warned it would be the "total end" of Fox News should Shine leave, and he rallied conservative activists to back him up.

Initially, insiders said, Hannity's army of lawyers had hoped to discuss with Fox ways of protecting his 8-year-old primetime show, amid fears that Lachlan and James Murdoch—fresh off the ousting of Bill O'Reilly—were looking to push the network away from hard-right politics.

Yeah, good riddance. See ya, wouldn't want to be ya, Sean. Go fuck yourself in hell.

[Okay, went with that version of Cry Me a River because it is sooo much better audio and video production wise than the one from Mad Dogs and Englishmen (with Leon Russell, of course) that I really envisioned.]

WHEN “THEY” GO LOW, THE WHCA GROVELS IN THE GUTTER WITH THEM

So, Trump accused the American press of being “enemies of the state”:

“A few days ago I called the fake news the enemy of the people, and they are – they are the enemy of the people,” Trump told the annual Conservative Political Action Conference.

Well, golly, what did *that* mean?? Yes, it is soooo hard, hard, to tell....OH, maybe not!

The White House on Friday barred news outlets – including CNN, the New York Times, Politico and the Los Angeles Times – from attending an off-camera press briefing held by spokesman Sean Spicer, igniting another controversy concerning the relationship between the Trump administration and the media.

Yes, it is so hard to tell, for the press, when all your love is in vain. But it is. From the WaPo:

President Trump will not attend the White House correspondents' dinner this year.

Trump announced his decision on Twitter late Saturday afternoon. The dinner is scheduled for April 29.

Despite many people long advocating that the White House Correspondents Association get out in front of this, they, via their “leader”, Jeff Mason, remained cluelessly behind the Trumpian Eight Ball. The ostrich like action by Mason and the WHCA is almost comical, if not a total clownshow.

Here is the deal Mr. Mason, if you and the WHCA want to get your collective heads out of your asses, there are a LOT of people that would fund your scholarships at a LOT higher level that you do from your craven “Nerd Prom”.

So, does Jeff Mason and the WHCA continue on in the face of total humiliation, or do they do the right thing, cancel their yearly shitshow, and direct the resultant love to their precious scholarships?

I, personally, will be waiting to hear from the recalcitrant Jeff Mason. America wants to love the press. But not if they are unrepentant stenographer fools. So, Jeff Mason, what kind of leader of the WHCA are you? A stenographer, or a fool? Times have changed. If you cannot, you and the organization you purport to lead are dead fish.

What are you going to be, Mr. Jeff Mason? A toad, or a hero that reacts positively to strife? You could have gotten out in front of this blindingly obvious shitshow, but you diddled and twiddled your thumbs. What are you going to do now Jeff?