



The Bunkhouse Chronicle

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Columnist

Good citizenship in the Age of Lying Liars

My detective brain tells me that President Donald Trump is lying, though it's unclear to me exactly what he's lying about. It also seems clear that fired FBI Director James Comey, too smug by a country mile, is lying also — either actively or by omission, and who knows which.

But that's not unusual in any caper involving a cast of variously costumed crooks, particularly one with so much at stake, and it remains the purpose of independent investigations to sort it all out.

And the investigation bit, important as it is, hinges on the integrity of the allegedly independent investigators — which there is at least some evidence to

suggest is tarnished, or at least questionable.

There are a lot of investigations swirling about our nation's capitol — they have become a kind of perpetual motion machine — and it's increasingly difficult to figure out who in Washington tells the truth. About anything. Ever.

If you believe, and some do, that your political party only tells the truth, or has some lock on sanctity and good will, I've got a pet baboon I'd love to sell you.

At any rate, I'm convinced Trump is lying. I don't think he's lying about collusion with Russians to swing an election — that's just too big of a lie to have left no solid evidence in its wake — something so big we would surely have evidence of, leaked or otherwise, by now.

But it does seem likely that he was burning the candle at both ends up in the Trump Tower, trying to strike a shady hotel deal with the Russian Bratva in the midst of a presidential campaign that no one on earth thought he was going to win, including himself.

If that analysis is at all accurate, and it may not be, that bad idea is probably catching up to Trump Inc., as the sleazy people he surrounds himself with

— the Flynns, Manafort and Cohens of the world — now line up for their individual sessions in the American judicial dunk tank.

In most investigations, what the principles don't say is often as important as what they do say, and while Trump Tweets and reTweets his "No Collusion!" mantra with extraordinary confidence he is also dead silent about the sleazy business he was conducting with even sleazier Neo-Czarist Russians.

And then, of course, there is the whole Stormy Saga, which shares the slimebagery of Bill Clinton's claim that he didn't "have sexual relations with that woman." Maybe it's exactly like that, only one lying jerk gets a pass and the other lying jerk doesn't, for reasons that remain a mystery.

I can admit to one prejudice: I just assume an athletic level of lying and philandering is commonplace among politicians at the federal level. I love it when I'm wrong.

Regardless, Robert Mueller has been relentless in leveraging Trump's sad cohort of Deep State caterpillars, though as of yet we've seen no slam-dunk evidence — at least any that has been made public — that Trump cut a deal with agents of the

Russian government to win an election.

Sadly, most of us regular, average-citizen-type people just don't know what the truth is, and we have a difficult and important task to navigate the information available to us. We have to make judgment calls based on limited, often contradictory, and heavily shaped public information, informed by our own experience or political proclivities. And we have a responsibility to keep those opinions based on evidence rather than emotion, something altogether forgotten during the hashtag-pique of the Kavanaugh confirmation hearings.

That's true if we want to teach our kids anything about fairness, discretion, and good judgment, at any rate.

And there is another hard slider in the mix, because one thing Trump isn't lying about is the Fake News phenomenon. For that, at least, we have solid evidence, a lot of it, and both of the major political party mouthpieces — CNN and FOX — have had some excruciatingly bad at-bats as they've gone about the puerile business of swinging for their political side.

Another thing Trump isn't lying about is the systematic Chinese theft of American wealth and intellectual property by way of

egregious trade practices and deals that harness the power of an entire nation to rip off American companies, workers, and ultimately consumers. We still live in a cutthroat world of nation-states where the projection of power matters, and if we intend to hold onto our own fine experiment in self-governance, to say nothing of our standard of living, maybe we should be willing to punch back at Borg Machines like Xi's increasingly predatory China.

Even if it hurts, which it undoubtedly will.

We do our shared future a long-term disservice by focusing on cry-closets and Crayola parties in a world that will only get more, rather than less, dangerous, difficult, and relentlessly competitive.

But for you and me, the hardest part may be holding onto faith that our institutions are strong enough to withstand the continual battering they receive as we send wave after wave of self-serving liars up to Congress and into the Oval Office. Emerson, who remains one of our best thinkers, warned us a long time ago that: "Every violation of truth is not only a sort of suicide in the liar, but a stab at the health of human society."

Boy howdy.



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