

The K.F. Stone Weekly

(Formerly "Beating the Bushes")



February 23, 2016

PETE GIZINSKI FOR PRESIDENT!

Cognitive neuroscientists inform us that virtually everything we've ever seen, done, heard - perhaps even dreamed or smelled - is retained in our brains' memory banks. The overwhelming majority of these stored memories are, to say the least, trivial and thus buried so deep as to be far from conscious cognition. Precisely *how* we bring long-forgotten, deeply-buried memories to the fore - what random or accidental stimuli cause them to become retrievable items ripe for visitation - is a subject well beyond my pay grade. Suffice it to say that Donald



Trump's recent victory in this past Saturday's South Carolina Republican presidential primary served as the stimulus for a dream that night, which in turn unearthed a long, long forgotten memory: a hoax of a campaign in which a bunch of brainy, nerdy kids decided to run one Pete Gizinski for junior high school president. The beauty of the hoax was that Pete Gizinski didn't exist; he was the product of our imaginations, a creature with about as much reality as the Wizard of Oz . . . or Donald Trump.

The story of the Gizinski campaign goes back to the spring of 1964. Precisely what the Donald's victory in South Carolina had to do with stimulating this long repressed memory should become clear by the end of this essay. First, a bit of background . . .

There was a group of about a dozen kids - most all of us from upper-middle class Jewish homes - who went to school together for the better part of a dozen years. In those days, the Los Angeles School system had a tracking system for junior high which divided classes into "honors," "academically enriched" and then numbers 1 through (I believe) 8 or 9, with 9 being the lowest. The group in which all of us spent our dozen pre-university years was "honors." We were a pretty well-known group in our day; teachers actually looked forward to having us in their classes because we were all in love with learning . . . anything and everything. Period.

As a note, more than a half century later:

- **Steve G.** is a pediatrician with an MD from Harvard Med.
- **Meryl C.** is an attorney, television producer and past Chair and CEO of the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences.
- **Gail W.** created the "Kashi" cereal company in 1984; she and her husband sold it to Kellogg in 2000.
- **Peter S.** is a cardiologist in Anchorage, Alaska.
- **Jim H.** earned a PhD in biochemistry at Uppsala University in Sweden, and is currently Dean of the School of Pharmacy at UConn.
- **Jane S** has spent the past 40 years as an attorney in Beverly Hills.
- **Alan W** is a retired scientist, world traveler and highly active Hollywood extra.
- **Jim F.** is a retired attorney and, for the past decade CEO of the [Leichtag Foundation](#).
- **Sam W.** (נ"ר) spent nearly 40 years as an internist, who earned an MD without benefit of having first earned an undergraduate degree.
- **Gregg P.** is an investment broker.
- **Ed M.** is an English professor.
- **Arlene L.** is founder and president of a design company.
- **Gary K.** is a lawyer/CPA.
- **Robert S.** is a neurologist.
- **Peter H.** is a psychiatrist.
- **Yours truly** . . . well, I try to earn a living.

OK. So that's most of the group. Now, on to Pete Gizinski.

Very simply, one of us - I forget precisely whom - decided that it would be a hoot to create and then run a fictional character for president of our junior high. We named him "Pete Gizinski," and thus was a campaign born. We created posters and leaflet; we baked cookies and campaigned endlessly for him. "Pete" had neither platform nor policies; "his" entire campaign was based on personality - a personality created out of whole cloth in the febrile imaginations of a bunch of 14 and 15-year olds. Our fellow students ate it up, despite the fact that no one knew him; no one ever sat next to him in any class; no one had ever shared an apple or hunk of garlic bread with him. And then, at the last minute when it looked like

he would win in a landslide, we announced that the whole thing had been an outrageous hoax; that good old Pete was an illusion, a character with less reality than the Wizard of Oz. So why did we do it? Who knows? Perhaps because we had time on our hands; perhaps because we were just in the mood for a lark. (As I recall, Jim F., who now heads the Leichtag Foundation, wound up winning that election and becoming a great study body pres.)

Which brings us back to Donald Trump, and the victory which exhumed this long buried memory. Like Pete, Donald Trump's candidacy is mostly hot air: 95% personality, 3% platform and 2% policy. The more he speaks - and rants, raves and strikes poses - the more he reminds me of the Wizard of Oz . . . and, as of this past Sunday morning, the long-forgotten Pete Gizinski.

Like the Gizinski campaign, Donald Trump's is based on nothing. But while we teenage scamps who created Pete admitted our complicity in what turned out to be an utterly harmless prank, Trump has deluded himself - and a not insignificant slice of the angry, largely uninformed conservative electorate - into believing that he is the real deal; the anointed one who can accomplish everything from A to Z once he is elected. He has solemnly promised - when not scowling, swearing, barking racist, misogynistic, bully-boy epithets and telling outright lies - that when he becomes POTUS, this country will go back to "winning;" that the military will be bigger and stronger than ever; that our enemies will quake in their boots and head for the hills; that there will be two [Ayam Cemanis](#) in every pot and a [Lamborghini Veneno](#) in every garage, and that taxes will be lowered for virtually everyone. Of course, nowhere in all his bloviating has he offered even a smidge of detail as to how in the hell he intends to accomplish - let alone pay - for any of this. All he asks is that Americans believe with a full heart that being a billionaire just naturally makes him smarter and more capable than anyone else in the field. Like Pete Gizinski - and the Wizard of Oz - Trump has managed to fool a lot of people. But again, like old Pete and the Wizard of Oz, there is virtually nothing even remotely corporeal, not to mention wizardly - behind the curtain.

Perhaps it's high time for us to resurrect Pete and run him against the Donald. Goodness knows Pete would likely do a much better job . . .

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