

# *The K.F. Stone Weekly*

(Formerly "Beating the Bushes")



November 03, 2013

## CRIST ALMIGHTY

The Red Sox victory in this year's World Series represents far more than one team



defeating another. In taking the decisive game before a packed house at Boston's beloved Fenway Park, the Red Sox victory finally put to rest a 95-year old scourge known as "The curse of the Bambino." For the uninitiated -- and in brief -- "the curse" goes back to 1918 -- the last time the Red Sox took the pennant while playing at Fenway. That year, the Sox defeated the Chicago Cubs in 6 games, the last being a 2-1 victory before a crowd of 15,238 deliriously happy fans. The hero of that series was the team's best pitcher, the 23-year old Babe Ruth. Shortly after the series ended, Red Sox owner Harry Frazee sold Ruth to the New York Yankees for \$125,000 plus a \$300,000 loan which he used to invest in a new Broadway play. Prior to Frazee's sale of Ruth, the Red Sox had been one of the best teams in all of baseball. Following the sale, the Sox would be also-rans for most of the next 8 decades, while the Yankees . . . well, they became the fabled "Bronx Bombers," playing in "The House that Ruth Built," and fielding a lineup

forever known as "Murderers Row." Hence, the "Curse of the Bambino."

(Note: There is an urban legend that Frazee used the \$300,000 loan to invest in the musical *No No Nanette*. In reality, *No, No, Nanette* didn't make [its debut](#) at Broadway's Globe Theatre until September 16, 1925 -- nearly 6 years *after* Frazee sold Ruth to the

Yankees. What Frazee *did* invest in was a play called *My Lady Friends*, which, in reality, *did* serve as the basis for the oft-reprised musical.)

From the moment Frazee sold Ruth to New York, Red Sox fans began reviling the Yankees with a moldering passion worthy of the Hatfields and the McCoys, the Jets and the Sharks . . . or Florida Republicans (and some Democrats) and former governor Charlie Crist. Make no mistake about it; there are many, many people in the Sunshine state who truly detest Charlie Crist. His original sin? In 2009 he was photographed hugging Barack Obama when the new Democratic president visited the state. I repeat: he was photographed hugging President Barack Obama. To the true believers of the Florida GOP -- those who see any deviation from their ultra-conservative orthodoxy as an act of utter heresy -- Crist's embrace of the nation's 44th president was more than heretical; it was downright treasonous. At the time of his welcoming embrace, Charlie Crist -- then a Republican -- was considered a shoo-in for the senate seat held by George LeMieux. But in the time it takes to say "*Out, out damn spot!*" Crist became as much of a Judas to Florida Republicans as Harry Frazee had been to Red Sox fans 80 years earlier. Soon, Crist changed his party affiliation to Independent, came in second in the 2010 senate race (where he received better than a half-million votes more than third-place finisher, the Democrat Kendrick Meek), and went on to support Barack Obama for reelection in 2012. While attending last year's White House Christmas Party, Crist displayed the form he used to switch his registration again, becoming a Democrat. And tomorrow, November 4, 2013, he will be announcing his candidacy for governor -- and the chance to unseat his successor, the deeply unpopular Rick Scott.



To be certain, Crist's entry into the gubernatorial race will present both political and instinctual problems for Democrats as well. To many Democrats, Charlie Crist is a politician who lacks any principle -- short of being elected. And goodness knows, as a member of the Republican party, he *was* elected to a lot of different posts: Florida State Senate (1992-2000), Commissioner of Education (2001-2003), Attorney General (2003-2007) and finally, Governor (2007-2011). Throughout his nearly two decades in elective office Governor Crist was a hard man to pin a political label on. A strong supporter of gun rights and charter schools, he opposed overturning *Roe v. Wade*, staunchly supported environmental measures meant to save the Everglades, and opposed then-Governor Jeb Bush in the highly-charged [case of Terry Schiavo](#). Since leaving the

governor's mansion, Crist has come out in favor of same-sex marriage, a measure he opposed in years past.

Unlike Governor Rick Scott who has a fairly narrow comfort zone, Charlie Crist is man who truly enjoys hanging out with the masses. He is one of the best retail politicians in the business. Back in the days when he was a member of the Florida Senate, I was invited to give the daily invocation. Upon finishing the opening prayer, I was escorted through the chamber by my good friend Senator Walter "Skip" Campbell, who proceeded to introduce me to many of his colleagues. One of them was Charlie Crist, who engaged me in no more than a minute's worth of small talk. I remember him being both pleasant and approachable, and brandishing a real, non-politician's smile. Amazingly, two days later I received a hand-written note from Senator Crist telling me how glad he was to have made my acquaintance, repeating a few words from my invocation, and ending by letting me know that if there was ever anything he could do for me, just ask. I remember saying to myself "Now there's a politician with a future!"

Although he is nearly 24-hours away from making his official announcement, Charlie Crist is already the front-runner to capture the Democratic nomination. Former Florida Senate Minority Leader Nan Rich has been out campaigning for the nomination for more than a year. Senator Rich is one of the most honorable, ethical and results-oriented political leaders in Florida. But despite having traveled the length and breadth of the state and logging in more than 120,000 miles on her car, she has scant name recognition and little money in the bank. By comparison, Charlie Crist has almost universal name recognition here in Florida and will easily be able to raise the millions upon millions of dollars necessary if he is to defeat Rick Scott a year from today. I can't see too many Republicans voting for Charlie; that would be the equivalent of a Red Sox fan rooting for the Yankees. As for Democrats, the question will undoubtedly be which is stronger: loyalty to the Democratic Party and those who have long toiled in its vineyards -- like Nan Rich -- or the obsession with getting Rick Scott out of office.

The fact that the Red Sox finally captured the flag while playing at Fenway doesn't necessarily lessen Boston's hatred for the Yankees; it does, however, make it a whole lot less important. In the same way, Charlie Crist's entering the gubernatorial race likely won't lessen Republican hatred of him one whit; it could, however, gain him a whole lot of new friends and supporters who want to see Rick Scott sent back to the minors.

And by the way, anybody know what Charlie Crist's first job was upon graduating law school?

He was counsel for Minor League Baseball . . .

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## November 10, 2013

### GENERAL SHERIDAN WAS RIGHT

Back in 1855, a recent West Point grad named Phillip H. Sheridan -- one day to become a famed military commander and General of the Army -- was sent to Ft. Duncan, a frontier post on the Rio Grande near the current town of Eagle Pass, Texas. After spending two years being posted at various forts in the area, "Little Phil" (1831-1888) was asked how he liked the Lone Star State. Responded Sheridan: *"If I owned Texas and Hell, I would rent Texas and live in Hell."* Needless to say, the folks along the Rio Grande thought about as highly of Sheridan as he did of them. When asked many years later what bothered him so much about Texas, Sheridan cited its hellish climate.



One wonders if Presidents Obama and Kennedy have a much different view than General Sheridan. After all, Dallas, Texas is the place where, 50 years ago this month, JFK was assassinated, and Dallas is the place, where just last week, Senator Ted Cruz, presuming to speak for the entire state, told Barack Obama, in essence, to get the Hell out of Dodge . . . er Dallas. Shortly before the president was scheduled to speak in support of the Affordable Care Act,

Cruz issued a press release which said, in part: *"President Obama should take his broken promises tour elsewhere so Texans can continue focusing on the solutions that have allowed our state to become and remain the nation's economic and job creation powerhouse[.]"* Perhaps someone should remind Senator Cruz -- with his months and months of experience as a senator -- that according to [the most recent census data](#), Texas has the highest percentage (26.3) and greatest number (5,820,793) of uninsured citizens of any state in the Union. At the same time, it should be noted that Cruz's animus towards the president -- and the very government which pays his salary -- was greeted with the overwhelming approval of his Tea Party acolytes -- many of whom have signed petitions urging Texas to secede from the Union. For his part, President Obama pointed out that the ACA was very much going forward despite, what he termed "at least one senator from Texas" who tried to kill it by shutting down the government.

It has been a half century since the folks of Dallas told the President of the United States that he was not welcome in their city or their state. In 1963, it was the militant anti-communists largely funded by Texas oil millionaires (the billionaires would come later) who saw the moderately progressive JFK as an evil agent of Socialism, a president bent on turning America over to the Vatican. In 2013, it is hard to understand such hatred of Catholics. Remember though, John F. Kennedy was the first -- and so far only -- Catholic to occupy the White House. If nothing else, Senator Cruz's "disinvitation" to President Obama betrays enormous insensitivity, coming as it does less than three weeks before the 50th anniversary of one of the most horrifying events in all American history.

In 2013, the folks of Dallas -- and a lot of other places in this country -- see yet another moderately progressive president as an evil agent of Socialism, a Manchurian robot programmed by the likes of the late Harvard Professor Derek Bell, Malcolm X, the Reverend Jeremiah Wright, Saul Alinsky, Bill Ayers and Frances Fox Piven. In 1963, people who despised John F. Kennedy -- at least in part -- because he was a Catholic, had enough self awareness -- or ingenuousness -- to admit that they were, indeed, anti-Catholic. In 2013, anyone who suggests that the animus towards Barack Obama has anything to do with racism is roundly -- and loudly -- told "the man's color has nothing to do with it . . . I could care less if he's black, brown, yellow or chartreuse." And to prove their point, they wax rhapsodically on the sterling merits of Black Conservatives (their term, not mine) such as Allan West, Herman Cain, [E.W. Jackson](#) (who just lost big-time for Lt. Governor of Virginia) and South Carolina Senator [Tim Scott](#). People like West, Cain and Scott. whose political views are indistinguishable from Tea Party folks like Michelle Bachmann, Ted Cruz or Florida Representative [Ted Yoho](#) (Love that name!) are mentioned by right-wing conservatives who desperately want validation that they aren't racist and that their views are acceptable to African-Americans as is.

Whenever I hear conservatives go on and on about how Barack Obama's being Black has absolutely nothing to do with their fierce opposition to his every position,



pronouncement or breath, Queen Gertrude's quip "*Me thinks thou protest a bit to much*" comes to mind. On what do I base this?

Well, let's take a look at just two issues: abortion and voter i.d. In state after state (Texas, North Dakota, Kansas, Idaho, Alabama, Florida, etc.) Republican-dominated legislatures have enacted draconian measures meant to make abortions incredibly difficult -- if not downright impossible -- to perform. Publicly, those pushing and passing legislation requiring abortion providers to have admitting privileges in a hospital within 30 miles of their facility, or requiring every room in an abortion center to have a minimum of, say 1,000 square feet, or requiring prolonged waiting periods and invasive procedures prior to having an abortion, claim that they are doing this "only out of a concern to protect the health of the mother." All those who believe this raise their hand . . .

Emergency room physicians have long testified that in any given year they may see a maximum of three women who have taken ill as a result of a physician-performed abortion. And, they testify, they could care less if the woman's physician has privileges at their hospital. Their sole concern is the woman. Another phrase from Hamlet comes to mind: *hoist on [their] own petard*.

Then, there are all those states passing all those voter i.d. laws; laws such as the one in Texas, which requires only certain forms of i.d. (driver's license yes; concealed weapon's permit yes; student i.d. no). Then too, if one form of i.d. has a middle name but your voter registration card has only a middle initial . . . better luck next time. Why even former House Speaker Jim Wright was at first denied the right to vote the other day because his driver's license was expired and they wouldn't accept his Texas Christian University faculty card. The 90-year old Wright -- whose face is about as well-known in Texas as that of Cowboy quarterback Tony Romo -- had to return home in the hopes of locating his 90-year old birth certificate. All those states enacting voter i.d. laws claim it's merely to keep devious fraudsters from rigging elections. Guess again. According to [an exhaustive investigation by the New America Foundation](#), Texas has looked into a total of **104 potential cases of voter fraud since 2000**. And even if all 104 cases proved to be real acts of fraud (it did not), measure that against more than 30 million votes cast during the period. Not such an overwhelming problem, is it? Florida and North Carolina, two other states which have enacted similar measures, have investigated, respectively, 39 and 22 cases of potential voter fraud in the past 13 years. This is nothing more than a solution in search of a problem. And yet, governors signing these measures tell us, with straight faces, that they are meant to stem the tide of massive voter fraud. Funny isn't it, that those most affected are students, seniors, minorities and the poor -- folks who have a greater likelihood of voting for Democrats rather than Republicans.

Most people with half a brain understand that those claiming to be concerned with women's health and the sanctity of the ballot box are full of hot air. And yet they get away with it.

Much the same can be said for the folks who swear on a stack of Bibles that their hatred for Barack Obama has nothing -- absolutely nothing -- to do with his being African American. We're on to you Texas, Florida, North Carolina, Virginia, North Dakota etc.

And by the way, General Sheridan is on to you as well.

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November 16, 2013

## **THE ENEMY OF MY ENEMY IS NOT ALWAYS MY FRIEND**

Honestly, this essay will *not* be an attack on former President George W. Bush -- although he does figure prominently in what follows. Then too, it will *not* be a diatribe against conservative Christians, Messianists or other garden variety Apocolyptos -- despite the fact that they *do* play a featured role. Rather, this piece will speak of sectarian certitude, blinkered naiveté and outright *chutzpah*.

Ready, set, go . . .



This past Thursday, former President George W. Bush gave the keynote address at a fundraiser for the [Messianic Jewish Bible Institute](#) (MJBI) which is an organization whose chief aim is to "restore Israel" and promote the Second Coming by converting Jews to Christianity. (It should be noted that last year's keynote address was given by

Glenn Beck.) Researching the event for an article in [Mother Jones](#), journalist Sarah Posner revealed that tickets for the former president's speech ranged from \$100 to \$100,000, with the opportunity for high-paying attendees to attend a VIP reception (plus photos!) with Bush, as well as receive a signed copy of his book and passes to the brand new George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum.



All of our former presidents, members of what is undoubtedly the most elite "club" on earth, have a couple of things in common:

- They all write (or have ghost-written) memoirs, for which they receive 7-figure advances.
- They all raise private and public funds for the creation of a "library/museum" which serves as their archival shrine ([Jimmy Carter's](#) is in Atlanta; [George H.W. Bush's](#) in College Park, Texas; [Bill Clinton's](#) in Little Rock; and [George W. Bush's](#) on the campus of Southern Methodist University in Dallas.)
- They all adopt causes that tend to mirror the public service causes that drove them to run for office in the first place.

Jimmy Carter is well-known for building homes for the poor and working to ensure fair elections around the globe. Bill Clinton and George H.W. Bush have on occasion teamed together to raise emergency aid in the wake of natural disasters such as the Haitian earthquake and Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. George W. Bush has, for the most part, kept a fairly low profile, publishing a memoir and giving speeches to select groups -- like the MJB. I.

A majority of the American Jewish community find Bush's very public involvement with MJB. I. troubling, to say the least. And *not* because it is George W. Bush who is making the appearance. Rather, the problem is with MJB. I. and other such groups who adorn evangelical Christianity with Jewish symbols, practices and phraseology in the hope of giving their religion a *yiddishe ta'am* -- a "Jewish flavor." As Rob Eshman, editor-in-chief of the Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles wrote in [a recent article](#), "*Its [MJB. I.'s] sole purpose is very public -- to convince Jews to accept Jesus as the Messiah. When Jews accept Jesus as the Messiah, these people believe, Jesus will return to earth and the End Times and Rapture will follow.*" Without such mass conversion or acceptance, the [End Times](#) and ensuing Rapture will be seriously delayed, and recalcitrant Jews -- along with Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, humanists, atheists and others -- will be consigned to the fires of Hell. According to *their* belief structure, evangelicals and born-again Christians (like George W. Bush) are actually doing all non-believers a huge favor; by convincing them of the divinity of Jesus, they are saving their souls. Moreover, if you ask them, they will tell you that they are doing it out of love. I will take them at their word. However . . .

Thanks but no thanks. When it comes to the Apocalypse, I'm with Mark Twain, who once quipped, *When the End of the World Comes, I Want To Be in Cincinnati. It Is Always Ten Years Behind the Times.*

Time and again throughout history, we find groups, sects and individuals who have done their damndest to get Jews to believe that Jesus is divine -- through force and fear, cajolery and subterfuge. Regardless of the approach, the spice or the intonation, the results have always been the same; for once a Jew accepts Jesus as messiah, that person ceases to be a Jew. To a Jew, trying to get others to convert to our religion is as unthinkable as calling a cheeseburger kosher. Or, as grandpa used to say, "Just because a goat has a beard, that doesn't make him a rabbi." Unlike many Christians, for whom converting others is a pillar of belief, we believe that Judaism is the best religion in the world . . . for Jews.

Ah, but there are many in the Jewish community who are willing to give the MJB and other such groups a pass because they are ardently, passionately pro-Israel. It is true; the largest pro-Israel, pro-Zionist groups in the United States are no longer Jewish -- they are Christian. Those who are willing to look beyond MJB's theological mission and accept them because of their support for Israel, have essentially accepted the premise behind the words *Amicus meus, inimicus inimici mei*: namely, "The enemy of my enemy is my friend." For some, there is an ignorance of -- or naiveté about -- the eschatology that motivates the conservative Christians' extraordinary love of what they frequently refer to as "The Holy Land." And for others, they simply find Christian -- and Conservative -- support for Israel to be far more credible than anything coming from the left . . .

Michael Luciano, the very astute "Breaking News Policy Editor" at [PolicyMic.com](http://PolicyMic.com) has explained to his largely "Generation Next" audience: *For all of the support that the Christian Right has lent to Israel over the years, for them, Jews are a means to an apocalyptic end wherein Jesus returns and those who have accepted him are raptured into heaven, while the Christ-rejecters will be [left behind](#) to suffer their fate. This unpleasant eschatology is the driving force behind the rabidly pro-Israel stance of the American Christian Right, which loves Israel from a biblical perspective, but sees Jews as having a one-way ticket to hell.*

While I am certainly happier having all these Christians being friends and allies - - rather than enemies -- of Israel, I for one cannot look beyond their underlying motive. I am sorry; I just cannot pay that due bill -- my soul. I belong to a people and a religion that have always placed deed well above creed; it's not so much what you believe, it's what you do. However, two things we have long held as beliefs in our otherwise diaphanous set of beliefs are these: that Jesus was a Jewish man -- nothing more, nothing less -- and that should the *meshiach* -- the Messiah -- ever arrive, it will be for the first -- and not the second -- time.

Just as Judaism is the best religion in the world for Jews, so too is Christianity a truly magnificent religion . . . for Christians.

*Amicus meus, inimicus inimici mei?*

טרעפן ווידער

Which is Yiddish for "Guess again."

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## November 25, 2013

### KA-BOOM!

OK, so the Democrats have exercised the so-called "Nuclear Option," thereby adding an even greater measure of venom to an already toxic political situation. The historic step assures next to nothing save streamlining the process by which Democrats will be able to approve President Obama's judicial and federal nominees. So far as what form or shape Republican retaliation will take in the immediate and long-term future, stay tuned. Suffice it to say, the caterwauling of press, pundits and politicians has been maximally shrill and minimally edifying. Predictably, Democrats are blaming those



they derisively refer to as their "friends across the aisle," for forcing them to take this radical step; while Republicans are accusing the Party of Obama of planting the seeds for the end of Democracy as we know it. Everyone, it would seem, has an unerring crystal ball which shows scenes of utter destruction and devastation -- all caused by the other guy.

When it comes to hypocrisy, hyperbole and flip-flopping, both parties are equally guilty, guilty guilty. Need proof? Check out the following statements and see if you can determine who the speakers are/were First, three speaking out in favor of the nuclear option:

1. *To correct this abuse, the majority in the Senate is prepared to restore the Senate's traditions and precedents to ensure that regardless of party, any president's judicial nominees, after full and fair debate, receive a simple up-or-down vote on the Senate floor. It is time to move away from advise and obstruct and get back to advise and consent.*

2. *The Senate is a living thing, and to survive it must change, as it has over the history of this great country. To the average American, adapting the rules to make the Senate work again is just common sense. This is not about Democrats versus Republicans. This is about making Washington work – regardless of who is in the White House or who controls the Senate.*
3. *I support the step a majority of senators today took to change the way that Washington is doing business – more specifically, the way the Senate does business. What a majority of senators determined ... is that they would restore the longstanding tradition of considering judicial and public service nominations on a more routine basis.*

Next, three speaking out against the option:

1. *Let me say we are not interested in having a gun put to our head any longer. If you think this is in the best interests of the Senate and the American people to make advise and consent, in effect, mean nothing – obviously you can break the rules to change the rules to achieve that. But some of us have been around here long enough to know that the shoe is sometimes on the other foot.*
2. *What they are attempting to do in this instance is really too bad. It will change this body forever. We will be an extension of the House of Representatives, where a simple majority there can determine everything.*
3. *What (the American people) don't expect is for one party, be it Republican or Democrat, to change the rules in the middle of the game so they can make all the decisions while the other party is told to sit down and keep quiet.*

Stumped? The three speaking in favor of the nuclear option are:

1. Then-Senate Majority Whip Mitch McConnell, May 19, 2005.
2. Current Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, November 21, 2013
3. President Barack Obama, November 21, 2013

And as for the three speaking against the option, *mirabile dictu*, they are the same gentlemen:

1. Current Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, November 21, 2013
2. Then-Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, May 23, 2005
3. Then-Senator Barack Obama, April 13, 2005.

In other words, when one is in the minority, the mere threat of employing the "Nuclear Option" is horrifyingly unpatriotic, the worst thing since the birth of Benedict Arnold. However, when one finally becomes the majority, talking up that option is more than acceptable -- it is the right thing to do. Of course up until last week, it was never more than a threat; this week, it is a reality and terms like "naked power grab," "bullying," and "an act of utter treason" are being bandied about *ad nauseam*. I even heard conservative radio talker Michael Savage warn his listeners "You just watch: Obama is

going to unilaterally repeal the 22nd Amendment (which limits presidents to two terms) and declare himself president for life . . . Obama is a 'Junior Doc Duvalier' but will soon become a 'Papa Doc' with one unconstitutional move at a time with virtually no opposition." (To be honest, this is nothing new for Dr. Savage . . . he began spouting this "Obama-as-Duvalier" bilge nearly two years ago.)

Make no mistake about it: reducing the number of votes required for the senate to pass a resolution of cloture from 60 to 51 *is* both dramatic and historic. Those who aver that Harry Reid and his Democratic colleagues "simply had no choice" -- that it was the Tea Party Republicans' repeated filibustering of presidential appointments and nearly every other piece of legislation that finally forced them to take this step -- they are correct . . . up to a point.

Much attention has been paid to the new face of the Republican Party; to Tea Party favorites like Senators Ted Cruz (TX), Rand Paul (KY), Mike Lee (UT) and Marco Rubio (FL) -- people who have done much to reshape their party by pushing it further and further out of the mainstream. What has not received nearly as much attention is the evolving face of the Democratic Party; to a new generation of senators such as Mark Udall and Michael Bennett (CO), Chris Murphey (CT), Brian Shatz and Maisie Hirono (HI) Elizabeth Warren (MA) and Jeff Merkley (OR) who played just as pivotal a role in forcing Harry Reid's hand as did the actions of the opposing party's young Turks. Unlike the Democratic party's old guard -- *viz.* Senators Schumer, Feinstein, Wyden, Leahy and Murray to name but a few -- these newer members have never been part of the minority. Since day one they have, in the words of Los Angeles *Times* reporter [Michael Memoli](#), been ". . . nudging the old guard to adopt more aggressive tactics in pursuit of legislative goals and brushing aside Republican threats of retaliation and obstruction."

To a great extent, Democrats are going through as many political, tactical and personnel changes as are the Republicans. And just as the Tea Party Republicans, armed with a strong commitment to their ideals and goals have done everything in their power to stifle the president's agenda, these new -- and as yet unlabeled -- Democrats see their goal as doing everything in their power to implement it. If these young Democrats are to gain as much shaping power within their caucus, their party and this nation as the Tea Party already has, they will need both a name and a handful of audacious spokespeople -- men and women who are ready, willing and able to make a clear and audible case for the politics of compassion and inclusiveness even while standing up to the politics of fear, greed and innuendo.