

Lindsey Graham Ponders a Brad Pitt Candidacy



Back in 2004, I ordered a DVD of that year's Republican National Convention highlights off of a GOP website. Little did I know (though I really should have) that from that day forward, my email address would end up in the hands of practically every Republican candidate running for national office—well, in the hands of their campaign people anyway.

Most of the emails these campaigns send to me these days go straight to my junk mail folder, which I clean out periodically. That's what I was doing this morning when I noticed an email from presidential candidate Lindsey Graham. It's subject was "Brad Pitt".

I nearly deleted it, but the notion of Graham's campaign finding a way to connect the senator to the Hollywood heartthrob was too appetizing to discard. Thus, I gave it a read.

As it turned out, Brad Pitt was used simply a metaphor for describing how this year's GOP presidential debate rules were tailor-made for celebrities, rather than serious candidates vying for the Oval Office.

"Under the current debate rules supported by the RNC, Brad Pitt would have a better shot of being on the debate stage than real candidates for president," states Graham in the email.

Graham may well be right, though it seems kind of silly to reference Brad Pitt when the campaign's really talking about Donald Trump, who is topping some of the latest GOP polls.

As everyone who follows politics knows by now, organizations (like *Fox News*) that are hosting GOP debates have had to make some tough choices over who they'll allow to appear on their stages. The problem comes from the sheer number of candidates that are running (there will likely be around 15 by the time all is said and done) and how much time will be available for each of them to speak and answer questions constructively.

Fox News has limited their prime-time, televised debate (coming up in August) to ten candidates. This is already a pretty hard-to-manage number for this type of forum. They'll be using public opinion polls to select the ten most popular of the bunch. Graham isn't happy about this, primarily because polls show his national popularity ranked near the bottom of the field.

I do understand Graham's frustration. Watching an unserious blowhard like Donald Trump rise to the top of the field on little more than his celebrity and hyperbole has to be tough for a longtime U.S. senator with presidential aspirations.

But while Trump may be a problem for the GOP in this election cycle, he's *not* what will keep Graham and a handful of others from participating in the big debates. The *GOP Bucket List Brigade* will.

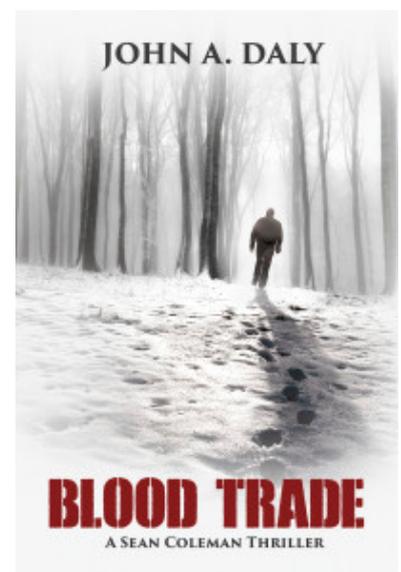
The GOP Bucket List Brigade is a term I came up with for the Republican candidates who are in this race not because they believe they can win, or because they think they're uniquely qualified to lead the country, but rather for the prestige and historical recognition that comes with *being* a presidential candidate.

I don't exclude second-time candidates from this categorization. Beating expectations the first time around has

a way of motivating one to try and recapture some of their former glory.

Sure, such candidates exist in every presidential race, but when you get to the point where you can't fit everyone on one stage, that's a real problem. Serious candidates *will* get left out, while those who are in the race to massage their own egos, gin up publicity for future memoirs or television shows, and cross "run for president" off their bucket lists will make the overall field weaker—weaker at a time when our country is in desperate need of strong leadership.

Trump absolutely is a member of the GOP Bucket List Brigade (albeit a high-profile one), but I've got news for Senator Graham that he probably doesn't want to hear: He is too.



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There's just no appetite in the Republican Party—nor is there one with the rest of the country—for a Lindsey Graham presidency. And it's not because Americans don't know him. Few senators have been in front of national television cameras as often as Graham has over the past ten years or so. People know what he stands for, and although many admire him (count me

among those people), they don't want him in the White House. The polls and lack of excitement behind his candidacy have made that quite clear.

Why run then? I'm guessing Graham was encouraged to by his friends (and former presidential candidates) John McCain and Joe Lieberman (who may truly believe he has what it takes), but if they're not leveling with him on his prospects of winning, they're doing him a real disservice. The same could assuredly be said about a number of other candidates and their advisers.

In our great country, anyone should be able to run for president. That goes without saying. But those who run should have enough humility and respect for the office not to use it as some expensive exercise in self-affirmation. The stakes are too high, especially in the year 2016.

Please... leave the acting to Brad Pitt, and leave the campaigning to viable candidates.

If you're interested in a signed, personalized copy of my novel 'From a Dead Sleep' you can order one from my website. It also makes a great gift!

Where Is The Carpathia?

When the Titanic sent out its SOS, it was the Carpathia that responded. Those who survived the disaster owed their lives to Captain Arthur Rostron who risked his ship, along with his own life and the lives of his crew, dodging icebergs for four long hours in order to rescue 705 people, too late to save the

other 1,523.

What puts me in mind of the gallant captain and his brave crew is that America is currently in icy and dangerous waters, thanks in good part to the man currently at America's helm. But one shouldn't give a pass to the millions of Americans who are only too happy to sit in the ship's lounge, oblivious to the danger, noshing on the hors d'oeuvres and listening to the band play "Nearer My God to Thee" while the sea water laps at their knees.

Like the Titanic, America seemed unsinkable. Its architects were men like Madison, Jefferson and Washington. The foremen included the likes of Adams, Franklin and Monroe, and the construction crew included the greatest patriots in history, men who pledged their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor, to the task of forming a nation as perfect as mere human beings were capable of creating.

But look at us now. In Ferguson, Missouri, as well as all over the country, you have black people, including ministers, insisting that if a white policeman isn't indicted, convicted and sent to prison for shooting a black thug in what, increasingly, appears to be self-defense, it will constitute a whitewash and we can expect violence to break out wherever more than two blacks happen to be gathered.

It does strike me as ironic, and terribly sad, that the descendants of those who used to be lynched have developed a taste for it, so long as they're the ones holding the rope.

In response to a piece I wrote recently, I heard from a California transplant now living in Florida. In the piece, I pointed out that politics is often a matter of geography, that Tea Party favorites like Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, John Cornyn and Mike Lee, as terrific as they might be, could not be elected to statewide offices in most of the 50 states, let alone win the presidency. I say that not merely as a

Republican, but one of the most consistently conservative people I know.

I am not a lackey of Karl Rove. I am not on the payroll of the RNC. But I do believe, as William F. Buckley did, that Republicans should vote for the most conservative candidate on the ballot who can win. That means you vote for Mitt Romney or Scott Brown or Elizabeth Snowe or whoever else has an (R) after his or her name; what you don't do is sit home on Election Day and sulk, allowing the Democrats to win, while you fantasize that you're teaching the GOP a lesson.

If you see no difference between a candidate who will vote the way you like 50 or 60% or even 80% of the time and one who will vote with Obama 100% of the time, I'm afraid there's no polite way to say this, but you're an idiot.

The trouble with too many people in the Tea Party is that they really can't tell the difference between their friends and their enemies, which explains why they often attack those they dismiss as RINOS far more vehemently than they attack liberals. In fact, they display the same contempt for moderate Republicans that Democrats display towards all Republicans.

In my heart, I am a Tea Partier. But unlike some conservative zealots, I don't believe that when my personal convictions come face-to-face with political reality, it's reality that's supposed to step aside and tip its hat.

My friend Steve Maikoski, an Air Force veteran, recently let me know he takes strong exception to Hollywood making money off war films. Specifically, he had "Fury," which casts Brad Pitt as a tough American WWII tank commander, in mind. I share his distaste for movies made by the anti-military crowd that try to cash in on other people's patriotism. It also bugs me that the enemy, 70 years after the fact, continues to be the damn krauts, but never the damn Muslims, who have been at war with us ever since 1979, when the Ayatollah took the reins in

Iran.

But, then, the same Hollywood hypocrites who hate guns when they're in the hands of law-abiding Americans trying to defend themselves and their families against the barbarians would never think of allowing someone like Matt Damon, Liam Neeson or Mark Wahlberg, to enter a scene unarmed.

A friend of mine has suggested that it's high time that Republicans stopped referring to young people as Millennials and began calling them the Recession Generation, driving home the fact that, thanks to Obama's contempt for capitalism, millions of them are living back home with their parents. And that's their fate in spite of wasting several years and a potful of money getting a college degree that's not worth the parchment it's printed on.

Finally, after watching Governor Cuomo and Mayor De Blasio trying to calm the fears of New Yorkers after a local doctor brought Ebola back from West Africa, I sarcastically reviewed their performances, suggesting that after all the lies that have been told to us by Obama, Dr. Frieden and the medical staff at the Dallas hospital, I very much doubted that Dumb and Dumber could convince a small child that the sun rose in the east.

But then I caught myself. Why the heck wouldn't most New Yorkers believe these two weasels? After all, most New Yorkers voted for them!

Burt's Webcast is every Wednesday at Noon Pacific Time.

Tune in at K4HD.com His Call-in Number is: (818) 570-5443

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