

The Art of the Spit Take is Needed Now More Than Ever

☒ I admit it. I'm jealous of my daughter. She's only six years old and she has already mastered a talent that I've never been able to acquire.

I'm talking about something I used to practice from time to time, well into my teenage years before finally accepting that some people's bodies just aren't designed to be able to do certain things.

No, I'm not talking about that fart noise that kids sometimes make with their armpits, although I was never able to do that either. I'm not talking about the ability to roll one's tongue, cross one's eyes, or place one's fingers in their mouth to let out a loud, piercing whistle.

I'm talking about the classic Hollywood *spit take*. You know, that reaction you see in the movies when a character is drinking a beverage, when an unexpected, outlandish comment or event takes them by surprise and causes them to spray their drink out of their mouth.

I've always wanted to be able to do that. And it's particularly bothersome to me these days that I can't, because I so often feel the impulsive urge to perform that very stunt when I'm watching the nightly news.

This week in particular has been a bit rough.

Of course, we started off with a man who has a nearly unprecedented knack for setting himself up for high-profile disgrace and humiliation: Anthony Weiner. But Weiner's an easy target, so I won't waste the time.

Let's move on to another example: Fox News contributor, Sally

Kohn.

The other day when I was watching *Special Report*, Kohn made her debut on the *all-star panel*, and boy did she make a memorable first impression. The topic of discussion was the national deficit, and when it was Kohn's turn to speak, she came up with this gem:

"The president has shown himself to be, whether I agree with it or not, an aggressive spending cutter."

The statement was so incredibly perverse that I was half expecting the always eloquent and even-tempered Charles Krauthammer (who was seated next to her) to drop an f-bomb and storm off the set in response. I certainly wouldn't have blamed him.

An aggressive spending cutter? Was this some form of left-wing humor that is above my head? You know, I've always rejected the notion that liberalism is a mental disorder, but I suddenly found myself wondering if I might have been wrong all this time.

Our president has presided over trillion dollar deficits every year he's been in office. He contributed more to our nation's debt in his first three years in office than his predecessor did in eight years. He's contributed more to our nation's debt than our country's first 42 presidents combined. By the time he leaves office, it's believed that our national debt will stand at around a mind-numbing \$20 trillion. All miniscule spending cuts (and they *are* miniscule) that have taken place under the president's watch were the ones forced upon him by the Republican majority in the House of Representatives – cuts that President Obama strongly vilified them for.

Moments later, Kohn delivered another zinger, suggesting that the bankruptcy of Detroit wasn't caused by decades of a Democratic-controlled city living far beyond its financial means. Nope. According to Kohn, the problems were all brought

on by excessive austerity measures, and that the philosophy of the Republican party was somehow to blame.

Even for a cable news industry overflowing with shameless partisans, this was a bit much to take.

Another example of a spit-worthy soundbite this week was the report that former professional wrestler and Minnesota governor, Jesse Ventura, is moving forward on a lawsuit against the wife of deceased military hero, Chris Kyle, for defamation of character.

The lawsuit was initially filed against Chris Kyle himself, but because the highly decorated Navy SEAL was unfortunately killed earlier this year, a federal magistrate recently decided that the widow, Taya Kyle, would be replaced as the defendant. Why? Because she is the executor of her husband's estate.

The basis for the lawsuit is Ventura's insistence that an alleged 2006 encounter, that Chris Kyle wrote about in his book *American Sniper*, never happened. Kyle claimed that he punched Ventura to the floor of a bar after Ventura made several derogatory comments about the Iraq War, the U.S. government, and the role of the U.S. military. Ventura claims that Kyle defamed him.

Now, it's easy to pass judgement on someone who would sue a grieving widow for something her husband said... And I'll do just that: Ventura's a jerk.

But a serious, broader question has to be asked: Is it even *possible* to defame Jesse Ventura's character? The notion seems completely absurd to me.

I mean, we're talking about an outspoken proponent of the *Truther* movement, who routinely pushes the narrative that 9/11 was an "inside job" that was carried about by the U.S. government. We're talking about a man who rejects the notion

that the World Trade Center collapsed as result of being struck by two passenger jets, and instead suggests that explosives were planted inside the buildings. We're talking about a man who insists that we invaded Afghanistan not to dismantle Al Qaeda, but to take over the country's heroine industry.

We're also talking about a man who, after first being confronted with Kyle's account of the bar room incident, suggested that maybe someone (the implication being the government) had orchestrated a scenario in which a "body double" of Ventura had been placed at the bar, and *that's* who Kyle had actually punched.

No... I'm not joking.



So when you add some context to the story, and take into account the way Ventura chooses to regularly present *himself*, what exactly is the *reputation* he's concerned with protecting?

To me, this would be like Michael Vick suing a journalist for reporting that he doesn't like cats. In the realm of personal history, Vick would obviously have far deeper public perception concerns.

I personally believe that Kyle was telling the truth, and it sounds as if he had the eye-witness accounts to back him up. But even if I'm wrong, how does such an action warrant holding Kyle's widow (who's now raising their children alone) monetarily accountable? And what does *that* say about Jesse Ventura's character?

It's hard for me to get a handle on this stuff, but maybe if I can convince my daughter to teach me how to perfect the *spit take*, I'll have a better mechanism for dealing with these things in the future.