PLEASE DON’T BE SURPRISED

A news conference Donald Trump held May 31 to announce donations to veterans’ groups turned into a 40-minute diatribe against the news media. He may have been testy because he never intended to give away most of that money.

Back on January 28, to justify skipping a GOP presidential debate that day, Trump held a fund raiser for vets. For months afterward, Trump and aides have implied or asserted the $6 million raised had been distributed.

But when Washington Post reporter David Farenthold searched for veterans groups that had received money from Trump, he found none. The checks for most of the donations were written May 24 – three days after Mr. Farenthold’s story was published.

Trump blasted journalists for not just taking his word for it that the donations had been made. “You’re a really nasty guy,” he told Farenthold.

Rather than nasty, this was a sterling example of what journalists are supposed to do. But reporting like this is very rare. Trump’s attacks on the news media are popular with anti-Trump conservatives as well as his supporters because so many “mainstream” journalists have flouted the fundamental tenets of journalism to shill for Democrats and left-wing causes.

The most recent example is a “documentary” on gun violence.

“If there are no background checks for gun purchasers, how do you prevent felons or terrorists from purchasing a gun?” former NBC News anchor Katie Couric asks members of the Virginia Citizens Defense League. There follows nine awkward seconds of silence, as if the gun nuts were dumbfounded by Ms. Couric’s profound question.

The long silence was *edited in*. The “gun nuts” had responded promptly and thoughtfully to Ms. Couric’s question, a recording of the interview made by the VCDL made clear.

“An apology, retraction, reediting, whatever it is that filmmakers do to make amends—all of it needs to happen here,” wrote Erik Wemple of the Washington Post. But most in the “mainstream” media ignored Ms. Couric’s appalling breach of journalism ethics.

It’s ironic Donald Trump is scoring political points by bashing journalists, because no other candidate has benefited so much from news media bias.

Through February, Trump had received the equivalent of $1.898 billion in free media coverage, according to mediaQuant, a firm that tracks media coverage of each candidate and computes a dollar value based on advertising. That was more than half again as much as all the other

Republican candidates combined.

Nearly all the coverage of Trump was uncritical, often fawning.

In the GOP debates he attended, Trump got almost as much air time as all the other candidates on the stage combined. This wasn't because The Donald was elevating the debates. In one, he bragged about the size of his penis. In another, he talked about the menstrual cycle of a female journalist. Rude, crude and ignorant, but a reality tv star and a source of colorful quotes, Trump was good for ratings.

"Donald's place in this election is a good thing," said CBS News President Les Moonves, who said he was glad the campaign was a "circus" full of "bomb throwing."

"It may not be good for America, but it's damn good for CBS," he said.

Ratings were why – especially in the critical summer of 2015 -- Fox News and radio talk show hosts such as Rush Limbaugh and Sean Hannity vigorously promoted Trump; didn't mention his financial support for Hillary Clinton and other Democrats; his left wing positions on many hot button issues; his business failures; the allegations of fraud against him.

Many in the "mainstream" media withheld critical stories about Trump during the primaries. Now that the weakest GOP opponent for Hillary is the nominee presumptive, the floodgates have opened.

"The media have reached a turning point in covering Donald Trump," says Paul Waldman of the Washington Post (6/03). "He may not survive it."

"Mainstream" journalists who think The Donald will pay a price for attacking the news media may be as lacking in self awareness as they are in ethics. In Gallup's annual survey of trust in American institutions, "television news" ranked 12th, barely ahead of big business and Congress.

Ereyesterday (6/05), Greg Orman and Pat Caddell called for "a real independent candidacy that offers a path apart from the establishment Democrat and Republican parties."

> "Eighty percent of Americans believe that an alliance of politicians, media pundits, lobbyists, and interest groups runs the country for their own gain at the expense of the American people.
>
> With the middle class under siege from stagnant wages and rising costs of living, our entitlement programs on an unsustainable path, and systemic corruption infecting our

> politics, a majority of Americans are shaking their heads in disbelief that these are our only choices.
>
> This crisis of legitimacy isn't confined to the presidential election. Grassroots Americans are challenging the competence, legitimacy, and performance of its governing elite. Some three-fourths of the American people believe that the government in Washington no longer operates with the consent of the governed. There is no way that the current status quo establishment, which did not even perceive the gathering storm before it arrived, can reform, revive, and restore the country. "

Jack Wheeler has his doubts: Orman and Caddell claim what they advocate "isn't a whimsical fantasy" – but if you read their plea that's precisely what it is.

Americans were in fact offered the choice of a "real independent candidate" who wanted to end the corrupt alliance they claim to hate and proposed specific constitutional strategies to do it. They turned him down – because they were afraid he really meant it. He'd end the gravy train of government subsidies and programs to which they are addicted.

Orman and Caddell don't understand we'll never get a "real independent candidate" because too many Americans want a contradiction – government goodies with no government control over their lives. The comfort of the contradiction was preferable to Ted Cruz's solution of freedom from both the goodies and controls.

When you embrace a contradiction, you abandon reason and are left only with emotions. So Hillary fans want the gravy train to continue no matter what the cost. So Trump fans want it blown up in a frenzy of nihilistic chaos no matter what the cost.

Neither will be good for America – but it will be good for the Lying Swine. And members of the "politicians, media pundits, lobbyists, and interest groups" cabal will smile and say to each other with a shrug and a wink, "*plus ça change*, *plus c'est la même chose."*

Please don't be surprised.

Jack Kelly is a former Marine and Green Beret, and was the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force during the Reagan Administration. He is the national security writer for the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.