

Update

Brian Burghart, former editor of this newspaper, departed in March 2016 to work full time on the website he founded, Fatal Encounters, which collects data on people killed in encounters with police, now a project of the University of Southern California. We reached him in Mexico, where he was working on spreadsheets.

You're the first one I've known who actually left the country after Trump took office.

That wasn't why I did it. I'm down here to work on some stuff that I couldn't do on the cyber internet. So I just grabbed a place with broadband for probably six months. ... We just crossed 26,000 records. ... All last year I was able to travel the United States—Reno to Salem, Massachusetts, to Niagara Falls, down to Birmingham, Alabama, back to Reno, back to the Pacific Coast, down here to Mexico. And I was able to work on the phone network the whole time. But what I'm doing right now is incorporating the National Transportation Safety Board chase data. It requires me to have more than one, often three, of these giant spreadsheets open at the same time and the cell network just can't handle the upload. [I'm] incorporating their chase data into the main data set. ... These are tens of thousands of rows and fifty



columns. ... [Mexico] is just where I landed. I wanted to come down here and study some Spanish. So I take two classes a week, and I wanted to spend some time on the beach, basically. I'm finally living the perfect life, Dennis.

How has Fatal Encounters evolved since you left here?

Well, it hasn't, really. I mean, all it's done is grown. We kind of got a process by which we track the deaths that happen on a weekly basis, and we're constantly kind of looking for more historic deaths earlier toward the 2000s. Anytime a data set opens up that may contain deaths that we missed, we incorporate them. A lot of these chase deaths never were recorded in the media, which is basically our method, is we scour the news media first for these things.

Did you say chase deaths?

Yes, pursuit—when the cops are chasing somebody, and somebody ends up dead.

Interns? Volunteers?

I have volunteers, two of them that are doing sort of specialized research now. One guy is working on, was the person armed? How were they armed? And ... what was the physical movement that they did? And another person [is] searching for photographs, because that's how Fatal Encounters does most of the race data. ... If it's included in the police reports that we get, then we'll include it from that, but our largest category is still "race unknown."

Why did no one do this before?

You couldn't have done it. The internet had to develop to a certain level. Prior to, say, 2007, newspapers and news organizations routinely deleted their older stories. ... But with the advent of cloud computing, memory came basically free.

But before computers existed, people kept track of the police officers who had been killed.

Right. Yes. Well, actually, there are so few it's just—it's a larger news footprint when a police officer is killed. But that's not the reason. The reason that the data was not adequately collected is because there wasn't the will to do it, on a political level.

Is there satisfaction in the work?

You know, not really. There's something or I would just stop doing it. It's still mostly that I think the work just needs to be done, and if nobody else is going to do it, I'm going to do it. □

NOTES FROM THE NEON BABYLON

BY BRUCE VAN DYKE

Acronym days

OK, so the Mueller report was released to the dogface fellow who is currently impersonating an attorney general on March 22. Bowserman then came out with his "tainted love letter" two days later, prompting President Embarrassment to proclaim himself free, stable and exonerated, totally exonerated, "I'm so exonerated it's not funny! God, I love the poorly educated!" Prompting all of us who just can't stand the guy to say, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, piss off, and let us see the full *unredacted* report. We'll take it from there, thank you." So here we are, two bleeping months later, and we *still* haven't seen The Full Uncut Mueller Report.

Pardon my French, but—what the fuck is this bullshit?

In the two months since Agent Orange proclaimed himself as pure as the driven snow, Mueller has been heard to say—absolutely nothing. Hey Bob, I'm sorry, but

the longer you don't speak, the more entrenched Capone's horse shit becomes. Come on, brotha Roberto, it's time for *you* to get your ass out on the talk show circuit and spread the word that Dum Dum is about as "innocent" as O.J.-friggin'-Simpson. (Hey, 900 prosecutors can't be wrong!) We need to hear from you. Now. But what we heard last week from Jerry Nadler, the head of the Judiciary Committee, is that you may testify, but it will be—a closed door session?

What the fuck is this bullshit? Richard Neal, the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, made a completely proper, completely legal request of Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin (the man who puts the *douche* in *fiduciary*) when he asked for Twitler's taxes. Mnuchin refused, and he still walks the streets, untouched, unsullied, unarrested and unpunished.

WTFITBS?

Millions of American women are steamed out of their minds after seeing fatass Retrumplikan men with names like Skeeter Dunlap and Randy Joe Kazbunker pass insanely draconian new abortion laws in various redneck states, leading many to ask, WTFITBS? (Interestingly, the abortion issue is almost as big a slam dunk with us regular folk as national background checks for guns. A new poll from Quinnipiac University asked "*Roe V. Wade*: Keep or Overturn?" A solid 67 percent said leave it alone, with 28 percent overturn.)

And, finally, Bill Nye the Science Guy was sputtering WTFITBS after listening to a retro Retrumplikan congressman wax ignorant about climate change. "The planet's on fucking fire. There are several options to put out the proverbial fire on Earth. Are any of them free? No, of course not, you idiots. Grow the fuck up. You're adults now." □



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