



Unbelievable: My Front-Row Seat to the Craziest Campaign in American History

Katy Tur

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Called "disgraceful," "third-rate," and "not nice" by Donald Trump, NBC News correspondent Katy Tur reported on—and took flak from—the most captivating and volatile presidential candidate in American history.

Tur lived out of a suitcase for a year and a half, following Trump around the country, powered by packets of peanut butter and kept clean with dry shampoo. She visited forty states with the candidate, made more than 3,800 live television reports, listened to endless loops of Elton John's "Tiny Dancer"—a Trump rally playlist staple.

From day 1 to day 500, Tur documented Trump's inconsistencies, fact-checked his falsities, and called him out on his lies. In return, Trump repeatedly singled out Tur. He tried to charm her, intimidate her, and shame her. At one point, he got a crowd so riled up against her, Secret Service agents had to walk her to her car.

None of it worked. Facts are stubborn. So was Tur. She was part of the first women-led politics team in the history of network news. The Boys on the Bus became the Girls on the Plane—but the circus remained. Through all the long nights, wild scoops, naked chauvinism, dodgy staffers, and fevered debates, no one had a better view than Tur.

Unbelievable is her darkly comic, fascinatingly bizarre, and often scary story of how America sent a former reality show host to the White House. It's also the story of what it was like for Tur to be there as it happened, inside a no-rules world where reporters were spat on, demeaned, and discredited. Tur was a foreign correspondent who came home to her most foreign story of all.

Unbelievable: My Front-Row Seat to the Craziest Campaign in American History **Details**

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Allison says

Politics aside (if anyone is able to do that these days), I thought these was a really interesting view into political reporting, and how Tur and her peers survived on the endless and exhausting 2016 election campaign. I listened to the audio version, and Tur did an excellent job straddling the line between her news anchor voice and imbuing it with personality and inflection. Were parts of this personally difficult for me to listen to? Yep. But I still enjoyed the hell out of it, in that can't-stop-listening way that engaging books have. Her writing was strong, and even when I knew the outcome of the final chapter, she had me along for the ride the entire time.

Stephanie says

Is there a "not sure I really want to read" category?

Maybe I'll just buy it to support her and then read it in ten years when we have started to heal the damage.

Paul Bryant says

We can tell the truth all day, but it's pointless if no one believes us.

Katy Tur, p199

*

Trump is pointing a finger back to me on the press riser. "There's something happening. They're not reporting it." (p272)

At this point in the book a bell sounded in my head. Bob Dylan 1965:

*Well something is happening here but you don't know what it is
Do you, Mr Jones?*

Dylan was jeering at the straight world's total incomprehension of the counterculture about to inundate it. Their sons and their daughters were beyond their command. Fifty years later, almost exactly, Trump, the 70 year old billionaire, is telling the straight world the same thing. You don't get it, you straights. But something is happening here. And it did. How could this buffoon whose campaign consisted of non-sequiturs, crude insults, implications of violence and unfounded assertions that everything would be tremendous and a message if there ever was one that changed with the Donald's every whim lurch, blunder and collapse his way into the White House?

In 1965 and again in 2015 the straight world in each case had absolutely no idea how they were seen by those outside their world. Trump opened the portal. He showed the straight world that when he said

degrading belittling stuff about women they didn't bat an eyelid.

When he attacked the media they loved it. His fans didn't think the reporters and the free press were one of the essential pillars of democracy, not at all; they'd have jailed every damn reporter right after they jailed Hillary if they could. Except Fox news, the only channel that dares to report the truth, according to the Trumpanistas.

"He talks just like us", supporters say over and over again. He's the rich guy they would be if they were rich. – p80

WHAT JUST HAPPENED?

Everyone's always looking for clarity. Trump never provides it. P184

Everyone here means everyone like Katy Tur, every reporter, everyone in the straight world, sensible types. But Trump supporters threw all of that out. They didn't care about logic, or campaign promises. They were just high on making as much trouble and wearing as many offensive t shirts as possible.

Too many questions, almost no answers. Trump was the logic-denying kisser of the American flag who was quite brilliant at pushing everybody's buttons. At one of a million rallies Trump looks into the camera :

"Russia," he says, "if you're listening, I hope you're able to find the thirty thousand emails that are missing. I think you will probably be rewarded mightily by our press. Let's see if that happens. That'll be next." A feeling of disbelief fills the room. Here is a presidential nominee appearing to ask a foreign government to illegally pry into the email server of a private citizen. p188

Back in Watergate days, that would get you impeached pretty much. But now? We're already onto the next ridiculous thing.

Since his convention in Cleveland in July, Trump has crashed through the guardrails of traditional politics. He has feuded with the family of a soldier killed in Iraq, invited Russian hackers to meddle in American politics, declined to endorse House speaker Paul Ryan, appeared to joke about gun lovers assassinating Hillary Clinton and called President Obama "the founder of ISIS". P202

He is still picking up whatever grenade Hillary throws at him and tossing it back, no matter how nonsensical. No, you're the bigot! No, you're the one who founded the "birther" movement! No, you're the liar! No, you're the one with the bad temperament! No, you're the one who is bad for women and minorities! P213

It's not that Trump's language is not consistent with the Republican brand; it's not consistent with the brand of a twenty-first century human being. P221

MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN

This slogan gets me thinking. Trump and his gang think America hasn't been great for some time and being patriots they want to improve things. Anti-Trump people think Trump is the problem not the solution. There are different points of view here. In fact as we see there's a vast unbridgeable chasm between these two Americas. And the USA is not alone, there are wars being fought over who should be in control and get to define what this or that country should be.

Trump & his supporters are much more patriotic than anyone else, they want you to know. They love America. No one can argue with that. What it actually means, though, to love America, that is never examined. So I was thinking : what does it mean to love your own country? What is patriotism? I remember back in 2003 my country's government made the decision to join Bush's coalition to invade Iraq. I never supported that. I don't support the continual sales of arms to Saudi Arabia by the British government either. I can't influence these decisions by my vote. What was loyalty in Germany in the 1930s? Was greater patriotism shown by those who tried to kill Hitler? I think most people would agree – real patriotism in Germany in the Nazi period was to try to get rid of the Nazis.

But the “real” patriotism is not so easy to see most of the time. For instance, is there a “deep state” which does stuff like organise the assassination of JFK and whatever else deep states do? (I guess we might blame the “deep state” for not “allowing” Obama to close Guantanamo if we were so inclined.) If there is such a thing, when we are being loyal to our country are we just haplessly acquiescing to anything these hidden deep state movers and manipulators care to do? What exactly are we being loyal to?

THE WORLD IS MY CHINA SHOP

Trump seems to be a bull in the china shop of the world – but if blundering about and breaking stuff gets him to be able to seal a deal with North Korea then that's gotta be a good thing. Building walls and banning Muslims, maybe not such a good thing, except for his supporters – for them he hasn't put a foot wrong yet. I'll be they love those Stormy Daniels revelations.

This fast 'n' furious race through the Trump campaign by Katy Tur was wince-inducing, freaky, stultifying, nervewracking and coughs up so many profound political conundrums. In some ways this wasn't the book I wanted to read about the Trump campaign. It's stuffed with too much detail about the harried reporter on the road & how much sleep she doesn't get & what she grabs for breakfast & what the other hacks have just said & how the one single time she shuts off her phone in two years to go to the yoga class, that's when Hillary does her fainting thing. When Katy slows down and asks some of the painful questions thrown up by Trump she's great, as you can see from the above quotations. I wanted more about that stuff and less about how many airports and hotel rooms and early morning Twitterstorms and all of that stuff. Never mind. It was wild and crazy and very disturbing.

Melki says

She's talking about Trump. Not that he might win. But that he might not concede gracefully

Ah, yes. Remember when *that* was the thing we worried about most of all . . . Trump NOT conceding?

It's possible that no one fretted more about that than NBC News correspondent Katy Tur, whose "brief assignment" covering what was anticipated to be the brief presidential campaign of Donald Trump, turned into 510 days of madness when his candidacy caught fire, and he became the Republican nominee for president.

I first noticed Tur when Trump told her to be quiet, then accused her of being on Hillary's side. Tur also did not escape the notice of angry Trump supporters. She received death threats, and had to be escorted from rallies by the Secret Service. Ironical, perhaps, as Tur, like many reporters who put forth an effort to maintain impartiality, does not vote. This hardly mattered to a crowd egged on to violence by a man who has long both courted and denigrated the news media.

Tur's book is a gritty account of what it's like spending so much time on the road, covering a historically charged and heated presidential campaign. Her tale is enjoyable, and quite fun. It's also a surprisingly compelling read considering that we all know the outcome: SPOILER ALERT - he wins!

Perhaps most fascinating is the glimpse Tur provides inside the Trump Victory Party in NYC as the tide slowly turns, and it becomes evident that Trump will become the next president of the United States. Tur mentions one incident that occurred in the wee small hours following the announcement that made me chuckle. Seems there was a man on the ballroom floor repeating "Says who?" - lines that he had uttered previously in an interview with CNN a few months earlier. When told that Trump was down in all the polls, his response had been to repeat that phrase. Now, with his client on the way to the White House, he was happy, and vindicated.

That man?

Trump's business lawyer, Michael Cohen, who's now under criminal investigation.

Ah, sweet, sweet vindication . . .

David Molloy says

Awful

Self centered. The book isn't about Trump's campaign as a whole, it is limited just to Katy's role in covering Trump's campaign, and her personal interactions with Trump, and his Tweets about her, and how little sleep she got covering the campaign,. Katy also ate a lot of bad food. She goes on about how difficult it was for her to deal with the secret service, And how brutal it was having to sometimes do hourly on air updates. In short, she talks about herself as the central character in the book, and complains incessantly while doing it. Learned nothing new about Trump He's a jerk. Agreed!
And Katy, it's not about you. You have a job that thousands of people would kill for. Suck it up buttercup!

Betsy Nelson says

A good reminder of why to resist

Katy's start to finish recalling of the two year American travesty that was the Trump presidential campaign highlights (I literally highlighted as I read) two contemporaneous realities: the frightening power of mob mentalities to bring out the worst in otherwise decent individuals to our nation's peril and the absolutely

essential role of a free press to bear witness to the actual facts traditionally considered to be called truth.

Elliot Ratzman says

Katy Tur was a philosophy major in college, but you don't find out about this in the book. About her love life, drinking habits, food at campaign rallies, and the strange story of her reporter parents...we get this. While it's a charming book centered around the travails of this spunky, ace reporter, this wasn't the behind-the-scenes bombshell I was expecting. I learned very little about the inside workings of the Trump campaign or off-the-record shenanigans. I did learn about the gonzo chaos of reporting, the bootcamp stress of following a petulant, vulgar candidate who made "The Media" a caged-in villain at his rallies (scary!). I fear that this will confirm for Trump voters that reporters like Tur are indeed Whole Foods shopping, merlot-and-yoga consuming, unchurched members of the coastal-cosmopolitan elite who'd rather live in London UK than London, Ohio. I don't know Tur-the-correspondent but I wished Tur-the-philosophy-major had showed up and given this account some more gravitas.

Bill Kerwin says

If you paid attention to the 2016 campaign, you had to notice Katy Tur. She was a veteran—but virtually unknown—NBC correspondent assigned to the Trump campaign in its early days when his presidential run was considered to be little more than a joke. Tur's fame grew as Trump gained momentum, and the Donald's angry yet weirdly flirtatious treatment of her—as she sat in the centrally located "pen" which housed the press at every rally—soon turned her into the embodiment of "fake news" itself and a focus for the attention of Trump's increasingly hostile crowd.

I followed her closely from the first, pleased with her luck in drawing the "Trump" card, impressed by her pluck and tenacity, and at times—when the boos of at a rally grew in intensity—genuinely afraid for her physical safety. This was the 2016 campaign memoir I wanted most to read, and I was in no way disappointed.

Tur is a savvy, perceptive observer, shrewd enough to know her limitations. She doesn't reflect at length on the significance of the campaign, but instead uses an unadorned informal style to tell us the "Hollywood" version of the story: how a plucky thirty-something bachelor girl reporter found fame and fortune covering the dark horse—and eventual winner--of a volatile presidential campaign. Tur never loses sight of this basic story, but she finds opportunities along the way to make scores of shrewd observations.

Her writing is sharp, filled with just the right details, whether she is describing her break-up with her Paris boyfriend Benoit ("I told him I was too old to fight on the street"), her wardrobe ("I bought the same J. Crew sweater in fifteen different colors...along with a rainbow collection of scarves"), or the deterioration of her early sartorial habits under the pressures of the campaign ("We've all started dressing like the Saturdays we rarely get off anymore.") The structure of the book alternates between a chronological account of the Trump campaign as she experienced it and close-up vignettes of election day events and reflections. This structures allow Tur to give her book depth and perspective without ever abandoning her casual, colloquial style.

I'll end with two examples of that style. First, her meeting with Trump before her first sit-down interview:

Certain people have a presence that's bigger than their physical size, an ability to ripple the air. They fill the room with significance, or at least with a perfect imitation of it. Trump has that kind of presence.

And he's orange. There's no other way to describe him. He's the color of orange marmalade, perhaps a shade darker, like marmalade on toast...

He also doesn't say hello, exactly, but sort of sings it. He smiles and squints, and the sound seems to slip out the side of his face.

And her reflection at a campaign event in the Mar-a-lago ballroom:

It's actually kind of impressive...But as I watch all this money walk around, as I survey a room of people nipped, tucked, and sucked to their ideal of perfection, I can't help thinking of Trump's rally crowds. The people in this room are decidedly not the people at his rallies. The rally people arrive in denim, flannel, and thick-soled boots. They wait for hours, eat whole pizzas in the security line, tattoo Trump's face on their forearms.

The people in this ballroom are not the subject of Trump's speeches either. Their industries aren't dead. Their jobs didn't disappear overseas. More likely, these are the people shipping the jobs overseas. These are the people slashing budgets and enhancing their own bottom line while the bottom falls out of everyone else's lives.

What would the people at Trump's rallies say about the people at his victory parties? What would the folks who are fanning Trump's political flames think of all these gilded types trying to warm themselves by Trump's new fire?

Will Byrnes says

Prologue:

Trump Victory Party

New York Hilton Midtown

10:59 P.M. Election Day

I'm about to throw up.

I so wish she had said "I think I'm gonna barf," but we can't have everything. NBC reporter Katherine Bear "Katy" Tur was not alone in feeling that way. In fact, a wave of nausea has been crisscrossing the nation ever since November 8, 2016, a date that will live in infamy, trapped in a seemingly endless back and forth sloshing. Tur had more reason for gastrointestinal distress than most. She had been assigned to the Trump campaign for the duration of the seemingly endless electioneering season. Seeing this guy elected president of the United States would turn *your* stomach too if you had been seeing what he was really like for over 500 days.

Image by Sasha Arutyunova for the NY Times

We want our campaign-book reportage to show us something we have not seen before. Of course, it was not always the case that every microsecond of a campaign was undertaken under klieg lights. So, really, what's left, but the reporter's experience, things that are not told in her thousands (more than 3800 through the campaign) of on-air reports. What can we learn from Tur's book that we did not know before? What can we learn about campaigning that did not make the broadcast? What can we learn about the personalities involved, the candidate, the candidate's team, the candidate's followers that occur off camera?

Tur interviewing you-know-who in July 2015 – image from MSNBC

What stands out most, chillingly, is the atmosphere of intolerance and menace promoted by candidate Swamp Thing, toward foreigners, democrats, minorities, but perhaps most importantly, toward the press. Politicians have often, even usually, taken umbrage at the reporters writing about or broadcasting stories about their less-than-perfect aspects. What is unusual is having a candidate who encourages his people to go after them. What is unusual is having a candidate who lies so relentlessly that he attempts to deny reality entirely, a candidate who, by proclaiming every day that reporters are nothing but merchants of fake news, is attempting to delegitimize the major media of our nation from their role as the fourth estate, that entity charged with holding public feet to the fire of revelation. If there is no one left to tell the truth about him, and fewer and fewer consumers of news who accept what the media reports as truth, Trump can go about his vast array of crimes with no fear of being held accountable. Campaign reporters were held in pens at Trump rallies. Trump went out of his way to point them out to his followers, calling them names, accusing them of lying about him, tacitly encouraging his followers to scream at, intimidate, and threaten them. *"Look back there! 'Little Katy,' she's back there. She's such a liar, what a little liar she is!"* She was often singled out as the focus of his rage against the media. It was not out of character. Tur notes the growing aura of menace at his rallies, as Trump repeatedly encouraged his followers to brutalize protesters. Katy knew she would have to endure.

"I don't know why he did it," she said, shrugging. "But I will say this: I know that had I exhibited any sign that I was intimidated or scared of him, he would have rolled over me."

It seems likely that Trump focusing so much on Tur may have been a manifestation of his epic misogyny.

KT at NH rally on election eve – Getty Image

Tur contends that the rally attendees who screamed "Cunt" at her would never think of doing that anywhere else. She made an effort to talk with Trump supporters. She thinks they are probably decent people who are frustrated at the excesses of political correctness on the one hand and their economic immobility, or even descent on the other. It is not a view I share. What is not really surprising is that there are so many in our country who care so little for facts, and so much for their biases, that they are perfectly fine with Swamp Thing's relentless lies and bigotry. While frustrations are real, unfairness rampant, and maybe getting worse, what has been let loose is not a rally-sparked mob mentality. I expect the mob is real and more permanent than Kur believes. It was on display in full force in Charlottesville. This IS the dark undercurrent in American society, the undercurrent that thought slavery was fine and dandy, the undercurrent that was cool with Jim Crow, the undercurrent that thought the guys in white sheets were doing the right thing, and that certain people should know their place, the undercurrent that thought Tail-Gunner Joe was the cat's meow, and that a woman's place was in the kitchen, the undercurrent that listen to the know-nothing, paranoid

demagoguery spewed by the likes of Alex Jones, Rush Limbaugh, and Fox News as if it is revealed wisdom. Not all Trump supporters are climate deniers, but all climate deniers are Trump supporters. Not all Trump supporters are nativists, but all nativists are Trump supporters. Not all Trump supporters are white supremacists, but all white supremacists are Trump supporters. Not all Trump supporters are fascists, but all fascists are Trump supporters. And it is these darker portions of Trump's supporters who seem to have been heavily represented at Trump rallies. Having so public an approving mouthpiece as Swamp Thing crying havoc gave them a feeling of license to let slip the dogs of hatred, and now they roam in rabid packs.

In the field – image from peanutchuck.com

If you want to know what it might have been like on the campaign trail with Mussolini, Hitler, or any of the many other demagogues who have fouled and others who continue to pollute our planet, Tur give you a pretty good taste. She offers first hand, up close and personal witness to mass hatred, stoked by a master demagogue, as monumentally skilled in the arts of theater as he is amazingly incapable in the business of governing.

image from MarieClaire.com – shot by Rebecca Greenfield

Tur portrays a Bizarro world, in which a rope line of Trump lackeys works to ramp up reporters' stress by accusing them pre-emptively of bias in order to gain the best possible coverage. This appears to be SOP for Trump, always pressuring the ump to try to gain a sympathetic call some time later in the game. She also lets us in on how disorganized the Trumpzies were, constantly being off message when talking with the press. And it would have been tough to remain on message in any case as Swamp Thing had a habit of contradicting himself only constantly. Another continuing point in the book is the numbing endurance of day after day, hell, minute after minute non-stop, sociopathic dishonesty. It has got to be tough to keep on message, though, with having to remember the lies du jour.

We get a very clear sense that Swamp Thing was not really in it to win it. This was the presumption of most of the world at the beginning of his campaign, that he was in the race as a publicity stunt on steroids. That would go a long way toward explaining why he continued trying to make real estate deals in Russia all the way through the campaign. Like Max Bialystock and Leo Bloom in *The Producers*, he figured he could get away with dirty dealings, in this case playing footsie with the primary enemy of the United States, because he did not expect to win. He *intended* to produce a flop.

Image from The New York Daily News

The tweeting was a whole other thing. Never before had there been a candidate whose favorite means of communication was the tweet. He was, and remains, compulsive about his tweeting, often tweeting dramatic pronouncements, accusations, and lies at all hours of the day. This impacted campaign reporters, who used to be able to get a break from campaign events. Not anymore.

Tur gives you a real sense of what it means to be a campaign reporter, the late nights, early mornings, constant interruptions, competition from other news pros, demands from the bosses, more demands from the bosses, even more demands from the bosses, the challenge of getting to a plane in the middle of a snow hazard to get to a campaign stop half a country away, with single-digit minutes so spare, the need to find clothing and coiffure presentable on air when you are a mess, the need to function at peak efficiency and

presentation when you have had next to no sleep for what feels like a lifetime. She also talks about the toll this assignment had on her personal life. Illuminating stuff for those of us on the other side of the TV screen.

December 2015 – image from Peanutchuck.com

And then there are the personal dealings with Swamp Thing and his minions. She reports on the schizoid way Trump treated her, publicly saying she was a great reporter one day and the next calling her out to his brownshirts at a rally, by name, as unfair, third rate, and worse, to the point that NBC had to provide her with a security detail. It is a good thing that she has, as she calls it, *the hide of a rhinoceros*. But she also tells of her one-on-one interactions with him, offering passing charm one minute, but angling, always, always angling for favorable coverage. You really get a sense of how creepy a guy he is in person.

Tur stays mostly away from Trump's staff, focusing her recollections on those she had with the candidate himself. Although she does report on a senior, married, Trump campaign staffer who asked her where he could meet single 30-something women. Sadly, no name is revealed. She is too much of a pro to come right out and say that Donald Trump is a world-class asshole, maybe one of the biggest assholes who has ever lived, an amoral monster who puts not only all the people around him but the very planet at risk in service of his tiny mind and incredibly inflated ego, but we get the picture. She is a master of showing without telling. It comes across pretty clearly here that Swamp Thing is not exactly presidential material.

image from Marie Claire – shot by Anthony Terrell

The book alternates between election night at Trump's victory party and Tur's tale of covering the campaign, from being assigned in May 2015. In addition to telling of her reporting experiences, she offers autobiographical details that include some pretty lively material. Mom and Dad were news people, had the first private helicopter covering breaking news in Los Angeles, making a living and a name for themselves breaking new reportorial ground. If you are thinking OJ, yep, they were right on that. The Rodney King riots? Yep again. That was them shooting the beating of Reginald Denny. It is fascinating material. And certainly argues that having a nose for news may have a genetic element.

If you are looking for a kiss and tell, dirt-driven spill-all, with juicy scandals aplenty and dark secrets revealed, you will have to try another network. *Unbelievable* does not offer the sort of anarchic LOL reportage of Hunter Thompson's *Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail '72*. It is not one of those reportorial coups d'état that will revolutionize how we perceive campaigns, like Theodore White's *The Making of the President*. But it certainly does offer us insight into what it means to be a reporter in this new 24/7/365 age of campaign coverage. It gives us a you-are-there feel for what may be the most important campaign of the twenty-first century, an eyewitness account of a particularly dark turn taken in American politics, a sea change in what is considered decent in public discourse and behavior, and a close, alarming look at the man now twitching in the oval office. Hopefully we can learn from what has been going on, and what Tur has seen, and find ways to stem the rise of know-nothing absolutism. But the coming years should be good ones for bucket makers because there are millions of us who, faced with the horrors of a Donald Trump presidency, will find ourselves keeping one near at hand for those all too frequent moments when we announce to the world, "I think I'm gonna barf."

Election night.

...don't misunderstand me. The Hilton is nice. It's been host to many grand events. But it

can't hold the kind of ten-thousand-person rallies that Trump has built his campaign around...There isn't even free booze. The bar is charging seven dollars for sodas, eleven dollars for beers, and thirteen dollars for mixed drinks. Trump's advisers claim that Trump is just superstitious. He doesn't want to jinx himself with a big show event. Cynics—or, as Trump calls them, “haters”—say he's just cheap. About that cash bar: *Red State* calls it an “abomination.” *GQ* rates it pure Trump. “Let history show that up until the moment his fate became official, Donald Trump remained true to himself, a serial grafter and shameless carnival barker who let nothing come between him and the opportunity to get his grubby hands on a few more dollars.”

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Review – September 14, 2017

(view spoiler)

Ok, there. I've done it. Don't judge me. I have a problem and I accept that. (hide spoiler)]

=====EXTRA STUFF

Tur's Twitter feed

Trump's response to the release of *Unbelievable* was boilerplate.

Fascinating to watch people writing books and major articles about me and yet they know nothing about me & have zero access. #FAKE NEWS!

Typical

September 9, 2017 - A thoughtful, if frightening, opinion piece by Tur - The Trump Fever Never Breaks

Articles worth checking out

-----Boston Globe - 7 Books on Presidential Campaigns – by Katharine Whittemore

-----GQ - Hack: Confessions of a Presidential Campaign Reporter - by Michael Hastings

-----Rollingstone - Matt Taibbi's New Book: 'Insane Clown President' - an excerpt

-----NY Times - Old Page Turners for a New Presidential Campaign – by John Williams

-----Politico - The Book that Changed Campaigns Forever – by Scott Porch

Excerpts

-----MSNBC

-----MarieClaire - My Crazy Year With Trump

Interviews

-----Wonderful interview with Rachel Maddow

-----Brian Williams talks with Tur on November 2, 2016 about Trump taunting her by name at a rally

Madeline Albright's book, *Fascism*, is definitely worth a look

November 9, 2017 - *Unbelievable* is among the nominees for Amazon's book of the year - History

PS - In the book, Tur tells of a Trump rally at the Mohegan Sun arena in Wilkes Barre, PA. It was the usual rabid event. Following which, Tur and her crew went to the mall across the road, stopping at a *Panera* for a quick bite. The vibe from the rally followed them into the restaurant. They felt so uncomfortable there that they left in a hurry. One might even say they fled, concerned about physical harm. That location was one of the casualties when an EF2 tornado touched down here on June 14, 2018.

Diane says

Last week I was driving to work when a woman in an SUV ran a red light and plowed into the side of my car. (I suffered minor injuries, but my car was totaled.)

While I was recuperating from the crash, I read James Comey's book, "A Higher Loyalty." And then, because apparently I hadn't suffered enough trauma that week, I read Katy Tur's book, which recounts her experiences as a reporter following Donald Trump on the presidential campaign trail from 2015 to 2016. Tur attended dozens of Trump rallies, suffered harassment from him, and repeatedly felt threatened by Trump supporters.

Reading the Comey and Tur books back to back was like getting hit by a car all over again -- feelings of shock, nausea, and pain, followed by depression and anxiety. The Trump-related books and the crash also stirred up similar existential questions, such as WHAT IS OUR PURPOSE IN LIFE? and HOW THE FUCK DID THIS HAPPEN?

Reading Katy Tur's book won't fully answer the How Did This Happen question (I don't think any one book or author can ever do that) but I've now read about a half-dozen books about America's 2016 election, and Tur's was the first one written by someone who spent a significant amount of time in the Trump rallies and talking with Trump supporters. For that reason, I thought it was worth a read. Tur's personal story is also interesting, how she went from being a reporter in London to getting caught up in the Trump tornado, and all the stress involved in covering that campaign for broadcast news.

Recommended for fans of political or journalism memoirs.

Meaningful Passage

I've learned that Trump insists that he has "the world's greatest memory," but his vision of the future got him this far. I've learned that Trump has his own version of reality, which is a polite way of saying he can't always be trusted. He also brings his own sense of political decorum. I've heard him insult a war hero, brag about grabbing women by the pussy, denigrate the judicial system, demonize immigrants, fight with the pope, doubt the democratic process, advocate torture and war crimes, tout the size of his junk *in a presidential debate*, trash the media, and indirectly endanger my life.

I've learned that none of this matters to an Electoral College majority of American voters.

They've decided that this menacing, indecent, post-truth landscape is where they want to live for the next four years. Look, I get it. You can't tell a joke without worrying you'll lose your job. Your twenty-something can't find work. Your town is boarded up. Patriotism gets called racism. Your food is full of chemicals. Your body is full of pills. You call tech support and reach someone in India. Bills are spiking but your paycheck is not. And you can't send your kid to school with peanut butter. On top of it all, no one seems to care. You feel like you're screaming at the top of your lungs in a room full of people wearing earplugs.

I get it.

What I don't get are the little old ladies in powder-pink MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN hats calling me a liar. I don't get the men in HILLARY SUCKS -- BUT NOT LIKE MONICA T-shirts. I don't get why protesting a broken political system also means you need to protest the very notion of objective truth.

Maxwell says

For people who followed the 2016 election closely—which was probably most of the U.S. and probably the world—much of the material in this book will not be new. However, the perspective from which it is told brought to light things I'd never even considered while following the presidential campaigns. That journalistic perspective, the life of an on-the-ground reporter, was really fascinating and my favorite part of reading this. The rest of it was a bit infuriating because the reality of the 2016 election was quite infuriating. Reliving that wasn't super fun but it was interesting to reflect on the major events of the election from the perspective of 1 year post-inauguration. All in all a very engaging read and one that will be even more interesting to look back on decades from now. **3.5 stars**

Chris says

There is a man at my job who voted for the Trump, henceforth known as Cheeto Dust or Orange. After Cheeto Dust's victory, said man put up and keeps putting up pictures of the Orange on the boards in the break room. Normally, this wouldn't bother me that much - free speech. But this man also takes down any picture that is anti-Orange. This anger me. It should be equal or not at all.

Needless, the women in the break room (and quite a few men) are mad about this. We haven't filed a formal grievance yet because the man in question isn't all bad, and we all are rooting for his grandkid.

So, what does this book have to do with that story?

Everything and nothing.

Katy Tur was covering Orange when Cheeto Dust decided to make her a focal point of something. Who knows what, Tur doesn't know. But the book is a strong reminder that people voted for a man who views women as things and unimportant. It is a book about when the man who has it in for you, is the one who you must report on.

It is a very crazy thing. Quite frankly. The book is a quick read, and Tur is actually quite sympathetic Trump voters - less so to Orange himself, but she comes across as fair.

Ij says

I listened to an audio version, that was narrated by the author.

Katy's book is very funny. She took advantage of a great opportunity to cover a presidential candidate, who many thought had no chance to win. Not a great assignment.

I am glad I chose the audio version. Great listen.

Malia says

Even though I zipped through this book, I didn't tremendously warm to Katy Tur as a person. She is tough, even a little ruthless and doesn't mind pushing aside personal relationships to pursue her career goals. That being said, if she were a man, I think she would have received a clap on the back for her bare-faced ambition, so I don't want to be critical of her on that front. She does offer a fascinating behind-the-scenes look at covering Donald Trump during the 2016 election. As someone who is still stunned almost on a daily basis that he actually won, I wasn't sure I could stomach reading about the build-up to his victory. Though I am glad I did read it, I come away from this book with no much greater sense of clarity. Tur's jokey style irritated me at times, because this is not a joke for me or millions of others, but maybe she herself does not quite comprehend what happened last year despite having spent so much time following Trump's every move and tweet. I suppose Trump's opponents underestimate the dissatisfaction in many parts of the country and I can understand frustration with the system, but I will never be able to understand why people struggling could believe a man with no experience and countless failed businesses as out of touch with the every-man as they come, could be their savior. I wish I were wrong and could be positively surprised, but it's been a year and so far I see only growing divisiveness and my yearning for Obama to return to the White House has not dissipated in the least.

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Chelsea says

In an election where our electorate was not just divided between political parties, but between fact and fiction, journalists like Katy Tur fought against a candidate who ran against the media reporting the campaign as they saw it. Pulling back the curtain of MSNBC's Road Warriors to show the real people in front of (and behind, hi Anthony Terrell!) the cameras, in front of the candidates and their supporters. An insightful look at the culture that elected President Trump and how, from the inside, the 2016 election's end wasn't that surprising.
