





As a kid one of my favorite TV sitcoms was Hogan's Heroes. Set in a German POW camp during World War II a group of really sharp Allied prisoners of war (most of them fliers who were shot down or parachuted to safety) were humorously and cleverly outsmarting their dimwitted and bumbling Nazi jailers. Colonel Robert Hogan proudly wore his air force leather jacket and hat through each episode. It never occurred to me that these Allied POWs were anything less than heroes, if even fictionally.

Other cinematic POW high water marks of the time were the movies The Great Escape and Von Ryan's Express. In both of these films ensemble casts of major Hollywood stars stood up to, undermined and escaped from their enemy captors. It didn't dawn on me then and it still doesn't register now that Steve McQueen, James Garner, Frank Sinatra and others were portraying characters that were not heroic by dint of their having been captured by the Krauts. And McQueen and Sinatra both looked as dapper in their Air Force leather as did Bob Crane as Hogan.

But clearly all of my received wisdom from a lifetime of reality and cinema was wrong. Because Donald Trump has decided that John McCain is no war hero for having spent five and a half years as a tortured guest of the North Vietnamese.

McCain was no hero for having become a naval aviator (Top Gun, anyone?) at a time when many, including the aforementioned Mr. Trump used any and every means at their privileged disposal to avoid military service. He was no hero for being shot down while over Hanoi (Trump says he has more respect for those who aren't captured) and somehow surviving life threatening injuries. He was clearly no hero for enduring sustained physical and psychological brutality because his father was a four-star Admiral serving at that time in the Pacific. He was obviously no hero for having survived what would have surely crippled lesser men, returning home and building a life of accomplishment. What then is heroism to Mr. Trump? Getting shot in the chest or head instead of out of the sky and walking away from that? I suppose that McCain should surrender his medals for having had the temerity to survive being shot out of the sky.

In the Tony-award winning show Fiddler on the Roof, there's a song called "If I Were a Rich Man," where the show's hero, the very poor Tevye the Milkman muses about what his life would be like if he had the riches of Croesus (or Trump) at his disposal. There are a few verses that are very apt when applied to Mr. Trump:

The most important men in town would come to fawn on me!

They would ask me to advise them,

Like a Solomon the Wise.

"If you please, Reb Tevye..."

"Pardon me, Reb Tevye..."

Posing problems that would cross a rabbi's eyes!

And it won't make one bit of difference if I answer right or wrong.

When you're rich, they think you really know!

Trump gets ink and airtime not because he's a greater thinker or leader but because he's a very, very rich man who doesn't mind employing his money in the service of espousing his views and because he always says wild and outlandish things. That he's causing immense damage to the Republican Party must be delighting the magicians and viziers at Hilary Campaign Central.

It should be stated that I'm no big supporter on John McCain the politician. For that matter I'm no fan of John Kerry, our Secretary of State who has had his own military service impugned and maligned. My Dad, 88, served for a little over a year towards the end of World War II in the Naval Air Corps but he was not a pilot and never saw combat.

He built and taught others to build machine guns and he also welded planes back together. Because he, McCain, Kerry and millions more men and women donned the uniform of our country and put themselves in harm's way to defend our freedom, they're all heroes and no one's honorable service should be belittled and denigrated.

The bottom line is that being Commander-in-Chief requires a sober and considered temperament because the President makes life and death decisions for service members and for the country as a whole. His or her finger is on the literal button that could send us all to kingdom come. Does Trump have that sober temperament? GOP voters should tell Trump "you're fired," and expunge this circus sideshow from serious discourse on the future of our nation and of the world.