

***Whistlestop: My Favorite Stories
from Presidential Campaign History***

John Dickerson
(Twelve Publishers, 2016)
439 pages

I picked up this book during the 2016 election season, and I am very glad I did. I, along with many others, experienced a great amount of stress (or should I say distress) related to the political campaign and the presidential election.

During the campaign, I was struck with how much vitriol was spread – often by the candidates themselves. From the hearing about undiscovered emails, debates about the size of candidate’s hands, undiscovered tax returns, accusations of misogyny and racism, political corruption and financial underhandedness, I thought that a political campaign has never been worse than what we witnessed in 2016.

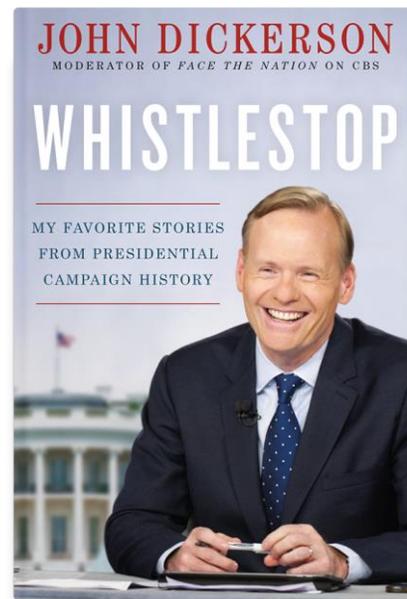
However, I was able to take solace from reading this book. Yes, this political season was nasty and brutal. It was negative. Instead of being about issues, it quickly became about which candidate you disliked less. It was an assault on the quality of the candidate rather than the issues related to the country’s governance. But the stories from our past political history reminds me that this is nothing new.

Dickerson tells numerous stories of the political processes of past elections that would often put this current season to shame. Name calling is not a unique invention of 2016 – it has been around for two centuries. “Throwing mud” is not a new feature of the American political scene – it has been around since this countries conception.

Dickerson tells the stories of numerous election cycles where things were difficult, nasty, corrupt, challenging and downright disgusting. Some of the characters in our political life (in the present and past) remind us about how low people will go to obtain an oval office. From Muskie’s tears in the New Hampshire snow during the 1972 primary, to the “stolen” election of Jackson by John Quincy Adams in 1824 to the ethical charges of adultery and illegitimate children of the election of 1800 and 1884, what we saw in this election cycle is really not surprising – or even the worst our country has seen.

The hope in this book for me was the fact that our country of 240 years has faced difficult elections, slanderous campaigns, mud-slinging candidates and questionable election results all throughout its history and we have survived – and even thrived. I think that this suggests that we will survive this election and this campaign season also.

Regardless of how you felt about this past election, remember this. America is bigger and better than any one candidate or any one campaign season. America is greater than we can envision and has demonstrated great endurance in the past – and will do so again.



If you want your spirit lifted and you want to console yourself that all will be well, then, by all means, read this book! Now!