

Donald Trump's Roy Cohn connection



Roy Cohn (Photo: Wikimedia Commons)

By Berl Falbaum, Special to Digital First Media

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One of the questions that may very well puzzle Americans is where did President Donald Trump “learn” his bare-knuckled approach to politics, free of any concerns about conscience, truth, ethics or integrity.

There have been references periodically in the campaign and since his election, of a “mentor” to Trump.

But now we have the answer from the man himself. After Trump sent White House Counsel Don McGahn to convince Attorney General Jeff Sessions not to recuse himself from the Russian investigation, and McGahn failed, the president, according to the New York Times, apparently, in a plea to the heavens, asked in what might be described as a Freudian slip: “Where is my Roy Cohn?”

First, the answer to Trump’s question is that Cohn is dead; he died more than 31 years ago. So Cohn wasn’t around to answer the president’s pleas for help.

The next question Americans might ask: Who is Roy Cohn?

Cohn was a ruthless, unscrupulous counsel to Senator Joseph McCarthy, the infamous leader of investigations into Communist activity during the “Red Scare” in the 1950s.

McCarthy, with Cohn as his key aide, ruined many lives in pursuit of Communists, using innuendo, rumors and trumped (pun intended) up charges in pursuing Communists in the U.S. government and in Hollywood.

During his career in the law, Cohn’s clients included famous business executives, builders like Trump, politicians and mobsters.

Cohn crossed Trump’s path when the lawyer represented Trump in his early business career. Cohn not only taught his student hardball business practices but introduced him to Manhattan’s power elite.

Trump turned out to be a good student, and also one to give credit when credit was due. Recognizing Cohn’s “talents,” he told various publications:

“When you need someone to get vicious toward an opponent, you get Roy...[H]e’s been vicious to others in his protection of me. He’s a genius. He’s a lousy lawyer, but he’s a genius.”

On another occasion, Trump, describing Cohn, said, “Roy was brutal, but he was very loyal. He brutalized for you.”

The relationship blossomed, and Cohn said publicly that Trump called him 15 to 20 times a day.

Cohn had no scruples and, ultimately, a New York State court ordered Cohn disbarred, calling his conduct “unethical,” “unprofessional” and “particularly reprehensible.”

Indeed, Trump testified on behalf of Cohn as a character witness. If there ever was an oxymoron it is Trump testifying to someone’s good character. That had to be the kiss of death.

Cohn probably would have been served better by telling his friend, “I’ll forego your testimony. Thanks but no thanks.”

According to a Vanity Fair article, Trump applied the Cohn strategy in the case against the phony Trump University, a case Trump — the man who says he doesn’t negotiate on lawsuits — paid \$25 million to settle after his election.

It (the university) was, the magazine wrote quoting Steve Brill, a lawyer and journalist, a scam “a scam against the very people who [eventually] voted for Trump—the middle and lower middle class . . .

“The first thing Trump does is sue one of the plaintiffs. She wins and the judge awards her \$800,000 in legal fees, and Trump appeals, and in that decision he’s compared to Bernie

Madoff [the investor swindler of ponzi fame). . .This strategy was pure Cohn: ‘Attack your accuser.’ ”

Brill also told Vanity Fair that in the campaign Trump frequently used language that was pure Cohn.

“I began to hear,” Brill said, “phrases like, ‘If you want to know the truth,’ and ‘that I can tell you . . .’ and ‘to be absolutely frank’ — a sign that the Big Lie was coming.”

Peter Fraser, one of Cohn’s friends, is quoted in a New York Times piece as stating: “I hear Roy in the things he (Trump) says quite clearly. That bravado, and if you say it aggressively and loudly enough, it’s the truth — that’s the way Roy used to operate to a degree, and Donald was certainly his apprentice.”

Cohn was a homosexual and when he contracted AIDS, Trump ended the friendship. Cohn’s response? “Donald pisses ice water.”

On the eve of his election, Vanity Fair wrote, Trump remembered his tutor, observing, “Wouldn’t Roy love to see this moment? Boy, do we miss him.” Yes, indeed, Cohn would be proud; Trump does not have an iota of integrity.

We can be confident that the Attorney General Sessions was pleased he was dealing with McGahn and not Cohn. Cohn certainly would not have gone “gentle into that good night” when Sessions turned down the White House request.

Trump laments that Cohn is no longer around. He need not worry because he learned Cohn’s lessons and is doing exceptionally on his own.

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