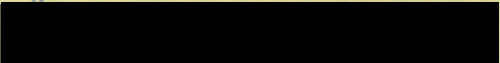


Brian

Sept 28/92

Enjoy your show and your fairness in how you show both sides of the issues. I have enclosed an article for your consideration. Every day in the press and on T.V. we see charges levelled at Mr Clinton by Mr Bush or his surrogates, re his draft status or more specifically attacking his Clintons honesty. I would submit that Mr Bush has left many more questions unanswered about his own military service than Mr Clinton has about his. In the article I have enclosed one can see that Bush himself has changed his position many times and also there were eyewitness accounts which seemed to have been ignored. The question to me is how come Bush does not get attacked over his so-called hero status which he uses at all times in his campaign. In his ads do you want someone who served honorably in the military or do you want a draft dodger? He should get as much attention over this as Clinton is getting over the draft. Also Brian I can hardly find anyone who even knows about this article, so it certainly ~~cannot~~ cannot have been very well aired. Keep up the good work.



Bush and the Manliness Issue: Old War Stories Never Die

NEW ORLEANS — The Republicans seem to be going with manliness this year. This is the simplest way of explaining the selection of young Dan Quayle, who has already been on network TV punching George Bush on the arm in a demonstration of shirt-sleeved virility unmatched since the days of John Lindsay and supermanly JFK himself.

Mr. Bush, conscious of charges that he

Viewpoint

by Alexander Cockburn

is a bit of an old woman at heart, has been worrying about the manly issue for weeks. And now he has chosen a son to run with, thus grabbing the youth edge from Michael Dukakis, who chose a father. This may seem a simplistic way of looking at things, but down here in New Orleans it's not hard to detect a certain sense of desperation. Thus far, the rhetorical heavy-hitters have not come up with much in the way of things to hang around the neck of Mr. Dukakis, at least not something simple and punchy, like "Where was George?"

The best guide to what we can expect in a dirty campaign comes from my friends on the opposite page, who have offered recipes for Republican victory in descending levels of taste. Up at the top is the party platform that the Journal reckons to be among the finest expressions of political philosophy since the Declaration of Independence. Next comes Willie Horton. Can one black killer-rapist on furlough save the GOP? Mr. Bush's advisers evidently think so. Horton has been a big name in New Orleans this week.

At the bottom has come the kook factor. Is Mike Dukakis crazy? And if he isn't crazy was he only stopped from being crazy by a shrink? And if the shrink stopped him from being crazy once, maybe

he'll go crazy again. In lockstep with the Washington Times and Lyndon LaRouche's New Federalist, a Journal editorial stumbled around these questions.

There's been some tut-tutting at the Journal for this editorial. The New Republic said it was all in the worst possible taste. It doesn't seem to me to be particularly unfair to ask whether a candidate for the White House is a screwball, though it's hard to see how generally acceptable accounting practices would work in this case. Is a person disqualified just for going to a shrink? Or would there be a roster of OK shrinks and not-OK shrinks? Kleinians yes, Freudians no?

But this kind of inquiry is a two-way street that brings us back to those two manly fellows, Messrs. Bush and Quayle. With the vice-presidential nominee, the questions will revolve both around manly excess and insufficiency. I confidently expect that The Wall Street Journal editorial team will be taking a long look at Dan Quayle's account of what exactly happened that golfing weekend in Miami made notorious by Playboy model and lobbyist Paula Parkinson. So far as insufficiency of manliness is concerned, questions are naturally arising as to why this "pit bull" (albeit, one born with a silver paw in his mouth) opted for the National Guard during the Vietnam War.

As for Mr. Bush, the question is simple. Is he really a war hero, or the Flashman of the Republican Party, a faintheart who in the hour of peril panicked and left his companions to die? Should a man like that be allowed to inhabit the Oval Office? Mr. Bush has shown signs of fraying easily around the edges, and even before former airman Chester Mierzejewski broke his 44-year silence there were curious inconsistencies in Mr. Bush's story of what happened when he was shot down by the Japanese in September 1944, when in the words of one former gunner on a B-17 in World War II, Jack Craven, who wrote to me

questioning Mr. Bush's accounts, he "lost the airplane and the lives of his two crewmen" and saved his own neck, around which the Navy promptly hung a medal.

What bothered Mr. Craven was that in an account given by Roy Reed in the New York Times magazine for Feb. 10, 1980, many questions were left unanswered. Mr. Reed, who spent five or six days with the vice president, told how Mr. Bush, in his Grumman Avenger, with a gunner behind him and another in the belly of the craft near the tail, was preparing to drop his bomb load on Chichi Jima when his plane was hit. He pointed the burning torpedo bomber out to sea and bailed out. This version stated that "the other two men in the plane died, probably before Lt. Bush touched the water."

How and why did the two "die, probably"? Mr. Craven wanted to know. Four years later a report of a ceremony in Norfolk commemorating Mr. Bush's air strike and rescue contained the information that, in the words of a New York Times story, "The other two airmen were killed, one by an enemy plane and the other when his parachute failed to open." This seemed somewhat different from the "died, probably" scenario of the first account.

Then, in Version Three, in the Aug. 3, 1987, edition of the New Yorker, Mr. Bush is quoted as saying, "I happen to believe that seeing my comrades in my own plane killed in combat . . . sensitizes me to the importance of a strong national security." So what did Lt. Bush see and when did Vice President Bush see it? In Version Four, in his autobiography, Mr. Bush describes the plane being hit, with smoke pouring into the cockpit and flames rippling across the wing; he says he homed in on the target and dropped his four 500-pound bombs; then turned out to sea, leveled off "and told Delaney and White to bail out, turning the plane to starboard to take the slipstream off the door near Delaney's station."

In contrast to all this stands Mr. Mierzejewski's eyewitness account, first published in the New York Post. He was flying 100 feet ahead of Mr. Bush's plane, and as a tail-gunner had a good view of what was going on. He says, as he has been saying down the years to his family, that "Bush's plane was never on fire" and "no smoke came out of his cockpit when he opened his canopy to bail out." In other words, his plane was hit, there was a puff of smoke, also mentioned by Mr. Mierzejewski, and then Mr. Bush jumped.

The Navy intelligence report released by Mr. Bush's campaign seems unreliable. It offers without attribution the observation that "Bush and one other person were seen to bail out." Mr. Mierzejewski says he saw no second parachutist, and fellow mission gunner Mueller agrees with him. Mr. Mierzejewski says his account was not cited in the intelligence report. A month after the incident, Mr. Bush told him, "Ski, I'm sure those two men were dead. I called them on the radio three times." Like Mr. Bush, Mr. Mierzejewski got the Distinguished Flying Cross.

So how manly is Mr. Bush, who has made considerable political use of the shoot-down, particularly since his rescue by a U.S. submarine was filmed? In fact, it's his political equivalent of JFK's PT 109. But Mr. Mierzejewski, the eyewitness, says: "I think he could have saved those lives, if they were alive. I don't know that they were, but at least they had a chance if he had attempted a water landing." In other words, as President Reagan likes to quote from the old war movie, maybe they should have ridden that one down together.

Over to you, Wall Street Journal editorialists.

Mr. Cockburn is a columnist for The Nation.