

WHO'S BUSH?

How much do we really know about our president's life, his background and his character? To understand George W. Bush's administration better, it helps to become better acquainted with the well-smoothed path he has followed to the top.

How is it that a lying and denying alcoholic, with arrests for theft and disturbing the peace and a conviction for drunk driving; one born with a silver spoon in his mouth, with no empathy for the plight of ordinary people; an inarticulate spoiled brat who just didn't get the lessons of a good education; a chronically failed businessman who's never earned anything on his own; and a high school cheerleader who avoided military service in Viet Nam by joining the National Guard and then going AWOL—gets himself elected as President of the United States? Well, you can be darn sure he didn't exactly tell us the truth about his background.

To the Manner Born

George W. Bush (Bush Jr.) was born to privilege, high finance, and intrigue. His great-grandfathers, Samuel Bush and George Herbert Walker, were among the founders of the "military-industrial complex,"* making millions profiteering off of World War I, thanks to their close connections with the Rockefellers, Remingtons and the War Industries Board.

Bush's paternal grandfather, Prescott Bush, Sr., was a wealthy banker involved in financing Hitler's war machine, and a United States Senator instrumental in originally recruiting Richard Nixon into politics. Prescott Bush served in military intelligence during World War I, and later acted as a high-level "confidant, 'asset,' or counselor" to the intelligence community. All of these ancestors were graduates of Yale University and

*Defined by President Eisenhower in 1961 as a "conjunction of an immense Military Establishment and a large arms industry." He warned that "we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications."

members of its secret society, Skull and Bones, whose members have been at the forefront of America's intelligence services.⁵

In 1942, George Herbert Walker Bush (Bush Sr.) may have been inducted into the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) as early as age 18, upon his graduation from Phillips Academy-Andover. Without any college and contrary to military regulations, he was commissioned, trained as a Navy pilot, and assigned to the South Pacific. During a patrol, his aircraft was struck by anti-aircraft fire and the young pilot bailed out. In his panic, he abandoned his two crewmen to their deaths, even though the aircraft was designed to be crash landed on the ocean.⁶

Bush Sr. returned from the war and attended Yale, where he was initiated into Skull and Bones. If he was not already a CIA "asset," it is probable that his athletic coach, Allen "Skip" Waltz, who was the CIA's full-time headhunter at Yale, recruited him at that time. Upon graduation, Bush Sr. was employed by Dresser Industries, which had long-term connections with the intelligence community. He subsequently moved to Texas and incorporated Zapata Petroleum, which through its many subsidiaries likely served as a conduit for money and supplies to CIA operations in the Caribbean, including Guatemala and the Bay of Pigs invasion.⁷

With the support of Presidents Nixon and Ford, Bush Sr. became a Congressman, the Chairman of the Republican National Committee, and the Director of the CIA. Although Ronald Reagan personally disliked Bush Sr., Reagan reluctantly picked him as Vice President to unify the Republican Party.⁸ Following Reagan's second term, Bush Sr. was elected President of the United States and served one term before being defeated for reelection by Bill Clinton in 1992. As president, Bush Sr. was described as "remorselessly deceitful when it served his purpose."⁹

Bush Jr.'s mother, Barbara Pierce, is a descendant of President Franklin Pierce, and her father was president of McCall Publishing Company.¹⁰

George and Barbara Bush were raised in wealthy households attended by servants. Their marriage in 1945 brought together

two aristocratic lineages, and on July 6, 1946, the young prince, George Jr., was born in New Haven, Connecticut.

In 1948, the Bushes moved to Odessa, Texas, where George Sr. went into the oil business. He was frequently away from home, and his wife, Barbara, primarily raised George Jr. It was she who attended his Little League games and disciplined him. When twelve-year-old George Jr. would get in a fight with Jeb, his five-year-old little brother, "Bar would always get in the middle of those fights and bust them up and slap them around," according to Uncle Jonathan Bush. Barbara Bush was "the one who instills fear."¹¹ George Jr. describes her as "a very outspoken person who vents very well—she'll just let it rip if she's got something on her mind."¹² Jeb Bush recalls, "Mom was always the one to hand out the goodies and the discipline. In a sense, it was a matriarchal family."¹³

The Bush family maid, Otha Taylor, said, "They would squabble a lot. You know how kids and parents that are just alike will get? He was definitely like his mother, they were exactly alike, even their humor was alike."¹⁴ When his mother's favorite dog died, George Jr. mocked her distress, yelling out, "Doggone it!"¹⁵ He also inherited her sharp tongue.¹⁶

Once after Barbara Bush allowed Otha Taylor to go home an hour early because she didn't have any work to do, George Sr. reprimanded Barbara, "Where's Otha? She's supposed to stay here until her hour is up, regardless if she has anything to do or not." Otha remembers, "He's a really mean man." According to her, the Bushes believed in "teaching lessons."¹⁷

Bush's younger brother Neil recalls when he was seven years old and his little brother Marvin six, George Jr., age 16, would give them ten seconds to start running down the hall before he began shooting BB pellets at them.¹⁸

Bush's boyhood friend Terry Throckmorton remembers how he and Bush would capture frogs that would gather in the water at a low spot behind Bush's house: "We'd put firecrackers in the frogs and throw them and blow them up."¹⁹

Bush Jr. followed his father's footsteps to Andover and Yale; however, instead of graduating Phi Beta Kappa and being

captain of the baseball team like his daddy, Bush Jr. was a cheerleader with a C average. Sponsored by his father, Bush was initiated into Skull and Bones.

At Yale, Bush was elected president (like his father) of the Delta Kappa Epsilon (DKE) fraternity at a time when new pledges had to undergo physical and psychological abuse. The *Yale Daily News* said that fraternity hazing at Yale was a “degrading, sadistic and obscene process” and that the DKE hazing ended with the burning of a half-inch-long Delta sign on the pledge’s back.

The New York Times reported on the hazing and quoted Bush Jr. as saying the wound was “only a cigarette burn.” Bush was also quoted in the campus newspaper that there “was no scarring mark, physically or mentally. I can’t understand how the authors ... can assume that Yale has to be so haughty not to allow this type of pledging to go on at Yale.”²⁰

In addition to a fully paid education at Andover, Yale, and later at Harvard Business School, Bush has gone through life never having to worry about paying the rent, where the next meal was coming from, or if he could afford medical care for his children.

Do you think Bush has any clue about our lives and the difficulties we face? Do you think he has the ability to empathize with ordinary working people? You’re not stupid! Get the truth.

“I do not have a perfect record as a youth.”

That much is true. Not only was George W. Bush arrested in 1968 for stealing a Christmas wreath and again for disorderly conduct at a football game while he was in college, but in December 1972, after a Christmas drinking spree with his teenage brother, Marvin, the 26 year-old Bush ran over a neighbor’s trash can as he drove home. When his father sought to reprimand him about his drunken driving, Bush challenged him to fight, “I hear you’re looking for me. You want to go mano a mano right here?”²¹

At about the same time, Bush was probably arrested for possession of cocaine in Houston, Texas. It appears that as part of a deal with the judge, Bush Sr. arranged for Bush Jr. to serve a few months of community service at Professionals United for Leadership League, a youth organization chaired by Bush Sr.²²

Bush attended Harvard Business School between 1973 and 1975 and, according to him, spent his time “drinking and carousing and fumbling around.”²³

Then, in the early morning hours of September 4, 1976, a Kennebunkport, Maine police officer saw 30-year-old Bush driving erratically and swerving off the road into a hedge, with his teenage sister, Dorothy, in the car.²⁴ Bush failed a sobriety test, then was handcuffed and taken to the police station. He pled guilty at a court hearing a month later, paid a fine, and his Maine driver's license was suspended. In 1978, even though he had not completed a required driver rehabilitation course, Bush returned to court to get the suspension lifted, and denied having a drinking problem.

Given an ultimatum by his wife, Bush says he swore off drinking alcohol after a drunken 40th birthday celebration on July 6, 1986.²⁵ However, he wasn't fully weaned from the bottle, and in April of 1987, he was out drinking in a Mexican restaurant in Dallas when he spotted Al Hunt, the *Wall Street Journal's* Washington bureau chief, with his wife and four-year-old son. Hunt had contributed to a story that questioned whether Bush Sr. would be elected president, and the drunk and disorderly Bush yelled, “You no good f***ing son of a bitch. I will never f***ing forget what you wrote”²⁶

When Bush ran for governor in 1994, he stated, “What I did as a kid? I don't think it's relevant.”²⁷ Only seven years before, the drunken “kid” was stumbling around out of control. Not relevant? One of his first acts as governor was to get a new driver's license number and to purge his driving record.

In 1996, when then Governor Bush was called to jury duty, he left blank the written questionnaire about prior arrests and trials. When he was called to be on the jury in a drunk driving case, his general counsel, Alberto Gonzales, met with the defense

attorney and judge in chambers and asked that Bush be excused before the more difficult *voir dire* (Old French—"to speak the truth") of jurors began.²⁸ In 1998, a reporter directly asked Bush if he had ever been arrested. Bush lied, "After 1968? No."²⁹

During the 2000 presidential campaign, Bush's press spokesperson, Karen Hughes, repeatedly denied that Bush had ever been convicted. In 1999, Bush personally stated during one television interview that there were no "smoking guns" and during another that if there were any damaging information, "you'd have heard about it by now." However, the truth caught up with Bush just four days before the election when a Fox television reporter was able to confirm Bush's drunk driving conviction through the Maine Secretary of State.

When confronted, Bush said he had been driving "too slow" and, after being arrested, had simply paid a fine and gone home. He denied ever going to court in the matter.³⁰ He stated that he did not disclose the conviction in order to be a good role model for his twin daughters—who have been cited multiple times by the police for underage alcohol-related criminal offenses.³¹

Has Bush truly recovered? He denies that he was ever a "clinical" alcoholic, and apparently he has never sought professional help. Whether or not he has really stayed on the wagon, his loud, foul-mouthed and rude behavior has continued, such as his calling a *New York Times* reporter a "major league asshole" over an open microphone during the 2000 campaign.

More bizarre, during a March 2002 briefing of three U.S. Senators by his National Security Advisor, Condoleezza Rice, President Bush stuck his head in the room and yelled, "F**k Saddam. We're taking him out!"

Equally suspicious is the strange "pretzel" incident in which he fell on his face in his White House bedroom while watching a ball game on television. He blamed his passing out on having failed to properly chew a pretzel.

Do you believe Bush has successfully overcome his alcohol addiction? You're not stupid! Get the truth.

Over the Hill

In 1968, 296,406 American boys were drafted into the military service. Most of them were sent to Vietnam, many of them were wounded, maimed, and crippled for life, and 6,332 came home in body bags. George W. Bush was not one of them. Even though Bush lost his draft deferment upon graduation from Yale, even though there was a waiting list of 500 to get into the Texas Air National Guard, and even though he could only answer 25 out of 100 questions on the pilot aptitude test,³² strings were pulled, calls were made, and Bush was allowed to sign up for a six-year hitch in one of the coveted slots.³³ In his application, he was asked if he was willing to volunteer for overseas duty (i.e., Vietnam). He checked the box, "do not volunteer."³⁴

When Bush was asked in 1990 if he had joined the National Guard to avoid service in Vietnam, he said, "I was not prepared to shoot my eardrum out with a shotgun in order to get a deferment. Nor was I willing to go to Canada. So I chose to better myself by learning how to fly airplanes." When the same question was asked during the governor's race in 1994, he said, "Hell no. Do you think I'm going to admit that?" By 1999, he had decided that a better answer was, "At the time I wanted to fight."³⁵

In 1969, 283,586 American boys were drafted into the military service, and 6,249 came home from Vietnam in body bags. George W. Bush was not one of them. He was home learning to fly an old F-102 fighter that was being phased out of military service.³⁶

In 1970, 162,746 American boys were drafted into the military service, and 4,911 came home from Vietnam in body bags. George W. Bush was not one of them. In his ghostwritten autobiography, *A Charge to Keep*, Bush says that he completed flight training in 1970 and "continued flying with my unit for the next several years." Well, let's see if that was true.

In 1971, 94,092 American boys were drafted into the military service, and 2,867 came home from Vietnam in body bags. And, in 1972, 49,514 American boys were drafted into the military

service, and 2,609 came home in body bags. George W. Bush was not one of them. On August 1, 1972, he lost his flight status for failing to submit to an annual physical examination, a few months after the Air Force instituted a rigorous random drug testing policy.³⁷ He was grounded, never to fly again. A month later, Major James R. Bath, one of Bush's "lot of fun" buddies, was also suspended for the same reason.³⁸ (Remember this name.)

Bush received permission in May 1972 to do his training in Alabama, where he was working on the political campaign of a family friend, Winston Blount. He was specifically ordered to report to "Lt. Col. William Turnipseed, DCO, to perform equivalent training." At this point, it appears that Bush went AWOL for the next year, as Retired General Turnipseed later stated he was certain that Bush never reported for duty.³⁹ Nor does it appear that he did anything of significance in the campaign. A full-time senior staffer reports that Bush was "worthless" and "not dependable." He was "rarely available" to work on the campaign, but he never requested any time off to attend National Guard meetings. The staffer said "the guard was the last thing on Bush's mind."⁴⁰

After the Alabama election in November, Bush didn't return to his Houston assignment. He didn't come back from "over the hill" until after May 1973, when two of his superior officers noted that they could not perform his annual evaluation because he had "not been observed at this unit" during the preceding 12 months. But, what the heck, the war was winding down anyway, and Bush was no longer needed to defend the Homeland. When later asked about being AWOL, Bush said, "I did the duty necessary. ... Any allegations other than that are simply not true."* 9,087,000 military personnel really did do their "duty" during the Vietnam era, and over 58,000 died.

*On February 14, 2004, faced with a likely race against Democratic Senator John Kerry, a Vietnam War hero, Bush released his military records in which the only evidence that he ever appeared at the Alabama National Guard was a dental examination performed there on

When Bush went off to study at the Harvard Business School, he continued to wear his National Guard flight jacket to classes, creating a perception that he had served in the military. As we will see, perceptions are very important to Bush.⁴¹

Do you think Bush did his duty? You're not stupid! Get the truth.

What an MBA Can Do for You

After the University of Texas turned down Bush's application to attend its law school, he decided to get a graduate business administration degree from Harvard instead. The legal profession's loss turned out to be the business profession's gain, as Bush over and over showed the rest of us how to make lemonade out of lemons. Where anyone else would have crashed and burned, Bush's golden parachute floated him safely through the financial storms that continued to buffet his business career.

In 1978, again following in his daddy's footsteps, Bush decided to go into the oil business in Texas. He started up an oil-drilling operation, Arbusto (Spanish—"bush, shrub") Energy with the help of his uncle, Wall Street banker Jonathan Bush.⁴² Even though the price of Texas crude quickly went into the toilet, and Bush Jr. may have spent more time in barrooms and on the golf course than in the oil patch, he was able to keep his company afloat with continuing investments by family members and international businessmen seeking to maintain favor with Bush Sr., who was fortuitously elected Vice President in 1980.

In 1979, Bush sold five percent of Arbusto to his old buddy, James Bath (remember) for \$50,000. At the time, Bath was operating as the U.S. front man for Salem bin Laden, the brother

January 6, 1973. He explained that he did not bother to report for medical examinations after May 15, 1971 because he felt there was no reason to take one because the Alabama National Guard did not fly the type of jet he was trained on. (Bumiller, Elisabeth and Philip Shenon, "Bush Acts Against Critics on Guard Records and 9/11," *The New York Times*, February 14, 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/02/14/politics/14BUSH.html?th>.)

of Osama bin Laden.* Given the fact that Bath was personally without funds at the time, it is considered highly likely that the money came from bin Laden.⁴³

When Salem bin Laden died in a Texas airplane crash in 1988, a powerful Saudi banker, Khalid bin Mahfouz, took over bin Laden's financial interests in Houston, Texas. Mahfouz's sister is married to Osama bin Laden, and Bath continued as Mahfouz's U.S. front man.⁴⁴ Bath was later investigated by the FBI for funneling Saudi money through Houston business relationships to influence the foreign policies of Presidents Reagan and Bush Sr.⁴⁵

In 1982, with his company worth less than its debt of \$400,000 and with only \$48,000 in the bank, Bush decided that he needed to take his corporation public to raise some money. To improve the balance sheet, an investor friend of James Baker III, later Bush Sr.'s Secretary of State, stepped forward and purchased ten percent of the company for \$1,000,000. The investor later called the purchase a "losing wicket."⁴⁶

Since his oil patch buddies were calling his company "are busted," Bush renamed the company Bush Exploration and went public. He wanted to issue \$6 million in stock, but only raised \$1.14 million. Bush Exploration continued to lose money and two years later was again on the verge of bankruptcy.⁴⁷

This time the bailout came from two investors from Cincinnati who owned a company known as Spectrum 7. They merged with Bush Exploration, and Bush ended up with 16.3 percent of Spectrum 7 and a salary of \$75,000 a year. Since thus far, all Bush had done was to drill dry holes and lose money, the question is what did Bush bring to the table? Spectrum 7's president, Paul Rea, reported that Bush's name was a "drawing card" for investors.⁴⁸

By 1986, having lost another \$400,000, more than \$3,000,000 in debt, and with Spectrum 7's shares just about worthless, another bailout was in order. This time the savior was Harken Energy Corporation, which was operated by a Republican fund

* James Bath was "an asset of the CIA, reportedly recruited by George Bush [Sr.] himself" in 1976. (Phillips, Kevin, *American Dynasty*, p. 269.)

raiser. Harken traded one each of its publicly traded shares for every five of Spectrum 7's, and Bush ended up with stock worth about half a million. He became a member of Harken's Board, was given \$600,000 in stock options and a consulting contract paying him \$120,000 a year.

What did Bush bring to the deal? One of Harken's major investors stated that "he was supposed to bring in the Gulf connection. But it didn't come to anything. We were buying political influence. That was it. He was not much of a businessman."⁴⁹ Equally candid was one of Harken's co-founders, Phil Kendrick, who was smart enough to sell his stock three years before Bush Jr. came aboard, and who said, "His name was George Bush. That was worth the money they paid him."⁵⁰

In 1987, Harken sold 17.6 percent of the company to Saudi Sheik Abdullah Taha Bakhsh, whose banker was bin Mahfouz, who, if you recall, also served as the bin Laden's banker.

In 1989, after Bush Sr. was elected President and with an introduction from the new ambassador, Harken was able to obtain exclusive drilling rights for 35 years from Bahrain in the Persian Gulf, and Harken's stock price began to rise. However, Harken was actually losing money, and to hide 1989 losses of \$12.6 million, Harken engaged in a sham sale of a subsidiary to a partnership of Harken insiders, allowing it to claim a profit of \$8 million. Harken's accountant was Arthur Andersen, and this was the same kind of "aggressive accounting" that later sank Enron—and Andersen with it.

Bush chaired a special committee of Harken directors convened to review Harken's \$11 million loan to the insiders that they used to finance the purchase. The next year, after the SEC began to look into the phony sale, Harken had to restate its actual 1989 losses, plus report additional millions in losses for the first quarter of 1990. With this bad news, Harken stock took a nosedive. In the meantime, instead of the usual bailout by his daddy's friends, Bush had already bailed out.⁵¹

Bush had attended a Harken Board of Directors meeting in May 1990 where the crisis was discussed, and he served on the

Board's Fairness Committee concerned with the effect bankruptcy would have on the small shareholders. By late May 1990, a cash crunch was only days away and the repayment of loans was questionable. Bush was an "insider," and he was a member of the Audit Committee. On June 15, 1990, all members of the Board, including Bush, were advised in writing that under the circumstances, it would be illegal for them to sell any stock.⁵²

Undeterred, Bush sold two-thirds of his Harken stock for \$848,560 to an unidentified private purchaser on June 22, 1990, but delayed reporting the sale to the SEC for eight months after the filing deadline. The SEC (headed by a Bush Sr. appointee, and whose General Counsel was Bush Jr.'s former attorney) investigated and, surprise-surprise, failed to find sufficient evidence of insider information. Nevertheless, the SEC letter sent to Bush stated that the investigation "must in no way be construed as indicating that the party has been exonerated or that no action may ultimately result."⁵³

After the matter became public, Bush first stated in 1994 that he was "absolutely certain" that he had complied with the law in reporting the insider sale. Then his campaign for governor claimed that he had filed the required report and that the SEC had lost it. Bush personally claimed, "I was exonerated." Later (as President), his press secretary claimed that Harken's lawyers had mixed up the reporting, even though Harken's lawyers had informed Bush in writing that reporting was his responsibility. Regarding the phony sale of the Harken subsidiary that allowed him to dump his stock without a loss, Bush himself stated, "All I can tell you is - is in the corporate world, sometimes things aren't exactly black and white when it comes to accounting procedures."⁵⁴

Harken's small shareholders saw their stocks precipitously drop from \$4 a share (ultimately to forty-one cents); however, Bush was able to sneak away with enough money to pay off a half-million-dollar loan he had taken out the year before to purchase a two-percent interest in the Texas Rangers, Dallas's baseball franchise. Although Bush was named as one of two managing partners, he was restricted from having anything to do with the actual management of the franchise.

After the city of Arlington, Texas raised local taxes and condemned private property to build a new \$190 million stadium, the partnership sold the franchise for \$250 million.⁵⁵ Because of financial bonuses in the agreement for the two “managing” partners, Bush ended up with almost \$15 million (more than the real managing partner), even though he had done little or nothing to earn it except appear at the games and cheer the players.

Thus it came to be that George W. Bush, who had never held down a real job and whose only marketable asset was his family name and his father’s influence, became convinced he had succeeded on his own and that he was ready for bigger and better things. During the 1994 campaign for governor, he stated that his success was due to “hard work, skillful investments, the ability to read an environment that was ever-changing at times and react quickly.” He insisted that he had never profited from his family connections.

Perhaps Bush’s success really was the result of his Harvard Business School training, but do you believe it? Do you think Bush has any idea how hard ordinary people have to work just to make ends meet? You’re not stupid! Get the truth.

Let Them Eat Cake!

When he ran for president in 1999, Bush held himself out as a “compassionate conservative.” His campaign website reported that he had led the nation in adopting a strong Patients’ Bill of Rights, and he claimed that he had signed legislation to improve health care for children in Texas.⁵⁶ But was he telling the truth?

In 1995, the Texas legislature passed an HMO reform act to improve patient protections. Bush vetoed the measure. Two years later, the legislature passed a similar measure that included a provision to allow patients to sue their HMO for medical malpractice. Bush again threatened to veto the measure unless the legislature “gutted” its protections. However, when it appeared the legislature would be able to override his veto, Bush allowed the measure to become law *without* his signature. Not only did *he not* lead the nation in health care reform, *he* did everything in his power to *defeat* health care reform in Texas.⁵⁷

During the election, Bush promised, "If I'm president... people will be able to take their HMO insurance company to court. That's what I've done in Texas and that's the kind of leadership style I'll bring to Washington." However, when insurance companies later sued Texas to void the Texas law and block state lawsuits against HMO's for denying rights, the Bush presidential administration joined with the insurance companies and urged the Supreme Court to find that such state claims "are subject to complete" preemption by federal law and must be dismissed. Bush's lawyers claimed that allowing "patients to sue their HMO will increase the cost of healthcare and add an extra burden on employers."⁵⁸

Bush also bragged that "*we*" had passed legislation creating the Children's Health Insurance Program. At the time, Texas had the highest number of uninsured children per capita in the United States. The legislature wanted to make the program available to all uninsured children whose families earned up to twice the poverty level, or \$33,000. Bush fought to lower the standard to \$25,000 a year. Under his plan, almost half, or 220,000, of these 500,000 uninsured children would not have qualified for the coverage. After a five-year battle, during which 500,000 children went without adequate health care, the legislature finally prevailed, and Bush ungraciously told one of the measure's proponents, "Congratulations. You crammed it down our throats."⁵⁹ The truth is that *he* was not a part of the *we* who fought for children's medical care in Texas.

When television commentator Dan Rather questioned Bush about the abysmal level of medical coverage in Texas, he parried, "I think you can find all kinds of statistics to make all kinds of cases. ... I don't know the statistics."⁶⁰ While Bush didn't directly deny that the statistics were wrong, and while he did not outright admit that he didn't know what he was talking about, he certainly did not show any compassion for the health of poor Texas children.

Do you believe Bush truly cares about the health and well being of you and your family? You're not stupid! Get the truth.

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60. Ibid., p. 18.

