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The Ultimate Loyalist

From Andover to Texas to the CIA, George Bush has been a hard man to dislike, no matter what others were doing around him

By Garry Wills



A leading feature in this year's presidential race has been the competitive dramatization of each candidate's concern about the problem of drugs. Border visits with the Coast Guard (to squint suspiciously at fishing trawlers) were alternated with sessions at schools and clinics (following Nancy Reagan's nicely charted rounds). No more enterprising effort was mounted on this front than the Vice President's appearances at Chaffey High School in Ontario, Calif., just before that state's primary. It took the form of three assaults—a role-playing exercise, a box lunch with students who were addicts or were affected by addiction, and a speech to the student body.

In the first session, George Bush was lectured on the dangers of "enabling behavior," that unwillingness to recognize the signs of addiction by which friends or teachers tacitly condone a pervasive drug culture. Bush, with much prompting from an officious young director of the program, is to enact a teacher's concern for a student who has been nodding off in class. The Vice President, casting his eyes uncertainly to the outer ring of reporters, asks what the other "students" will be doing while he approaches the woman teacher playing the student's role. "They will probably be listening," the director responds. The point is to demonstrate awareness of what is going on, to break the unvoiced conspiracy of acceptance. Bush and the "student" wince toward each other asymptotically, oozing

what the one hopes is concern and the other hopes is deference. "Touch her," says the director, "on the shoulder." Breaking the perimeter of mutual embarrassment, Bush makes the merest contact and murmurs inaudibly something about her family. As a whistle-blower, the Vice President has been miscast.

That became even clearer when he took the central seat in the Leonardo-esque composition of a dozen or so lunchers around a long table. Early on, Bush tried to put himself at ease by telling the students, all brimming with horror stories they are encouraged to tell, "I don't want to talk about what you don't want to." This left the sandwich-room disciples speechless for a moment, each about to be deprived of some carefully prepared item of testimony. But so strong was their sense of mission that soon, despite Bush's signals of anxiety not to hear, they were topping one another with bad things that had happened to them or their siblings as a result of drugs. Bush nodded his head in obvious sympathy and assured them again, "If any of these questions put you on the spot, don't answer it."

In his speech after lunch, Bush told the student body, "I heard this morning about something called 'enabling behavior'—what other people do to make you think it's O.K. to use drugs." Bush later assured me the words were literally true for him—he had not encountered the term enabling behavior till that day at Chaffey High, despite service in the President's task force on drugs.

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A FALSE PERCEPTION OF WEAKNESS

People who are surprised, repeatedly, by what George Bush does not know should keep in mind the keen investigator of the lunch-box last-supper scene at Chaffey. He literally did not want to hear a young teenager tell him about his brother's death from an overdose. Asked in the 1980 campaign what he considered his greatest fault, he answered: "Oh, Lord. Stretch out on the old psychiatrist's couch . . . I guess maybe my weakest attribute is that sometimes I trust people too long." What, the reporter pursued him, does that mean? "I dunno. I guess it means I don't always believe that people are out to get me. And that doesn't make me as suspicious as sometimes I should be . . . But that doesn't mean it's a bad quality at all."

Despite the Bertie Wooster inconsequent twists of a statement like that, there is nothing soft about George Bush. That became apparent late in the 1980 campaign. By that time, Bush was part of the Reagan ticket; the long contest was taking its toll and the goofiness bred of confinement in the campaign plane was turning malicious. One particularly frayed television producer took to making faces at Bush, pleased at the discovery that this disconcerted him. The producer escalated his silly war of little indignities, blocking the aisle at one point, pretending to talk to someone else, while Bush tried to pass him. Without a word, Bush grabbed him by the crotch, steered him aside, and passed on. George Bush is authentically nice enough to put one's teeth on edge; but he does not like to be made fun of, and he especially does not like to lose.

Those who maintain, against the false popular assumption, that George Bush is tough point rightly to his war record. John F. Kennedy managed to get his torpedo boat cloven by a slower, clumsier craft, and his father made of it an epic saga (with the help of John Hersey). George Bush had four planes that malfunctioned or were shot out from under him (each one with the name of his fiancée Barbara painted on its fuselage) and went back and back, on 58 missions.

The wrenching exhilarations of that time have been captured on the pages of Samuel Hynes' new book, *Flights of Passage*. Like Bush, Hynes enlisted at 18, trained with faulty equipment, flew searches in the Pacific for downed comrades and married his sweetheart on leave. His book evokes the odd combination of empowerment and impermanence that lit the nights of carousal and darkened the mornings of takeoff. After a certain point in training, every landing was dangerous, performed tail first even on land to acquire the skills for grabbing at a pitching carrier deck—skills Bush used when he had to land tail first in the ocean to give his crew time to scramble out on the wing when a faulty oil line downed his plane right after takeoff.

Bush loves Hynes' book, and sent him fan letters, though they have never met, saying the only difference between his war (Navy Air Corps) and Hynes'

(Marine Air Corps) was clean linen. Navy carriers have decorum as well as dangers. But onshore, Bush lived in the world vividly described by Hynes as full of booze, womanizing and raunchy songs. Bush, describing the book to me, singled out this aspect of it as extraordinarily accurate—"the experience in the bars, and the experience in the singing, and the experience of his [Hynes'] macho guy." But I relayed Hynes' difficulty in imagining George Bush singing round after round of *The Flying Great Wheel*. Bush is amazed that this image should amaze people: "I do sing it—I did sing it. And how I correct public misperceptions I don't know, and I really don't think I've got time to try. But, you know, ask the guys I was with in the Navy. That's the way to do that. Go to the oil fields and talk to them. Don't believe the inside-the-sophisticated-boardroom perception of somebody fitting into a mold." It is hard to fit George Bush into a mold. The riddle is not merely that he is both unnecessarily nice and improbably tough, but that he can rise to genuine nobility of performance and sink to casual ruthlessness.

His parents, Phillips Andover Academy and the war—the three being much the same thing for him—made George Bush what he is. His family was made up of fiercely competitive athletes. Golfing's Walker Cup is named—like George Herbert Walker Bush himself—for the polo-playing grandfather who established that event. George's mother, still alive and energetic (like her four siblings), was a championship tennis player and determined swimmer. His father, Senator Prescott Bush, silent at the family table, was already thinking ahead to the golf course he attended with the same dutifulness he brought to Greenwich, Conn., town meetings. Hart Leavitt, a retired master who taught George and his older brother Prescott at Andover, says he found Senator Bush, a Wall Street banker, too imposing to address with ease. The Bush children were even more intimidated. I asked Bush if he found it hard to differ from his father. "It never occurred to me to differ. I mean, he was up here [lifts right hand as far as he can], and I was this little guy down here." Frank DiClemente, a coach and friend to both "Pressy" and "Poppy" (as George was known then), wanted to exchange anecdotes with the father about Pressy's sports adventures, but "all he wanted to know was, Is he toeing the mark?" The most revealing thing George has ever said about his father occurs in the letter he wrote to Hynes, where he compares his own father with Hynes' for being unable to express love. Bush, 6 ft. 2 in., would never consider his own feats the equal of his father's—who was 6 ft. 4 in., of commanding presence and with a record in wartime, at Yale, and in Washington that seemed to transcend criticism. The utter probity of his father is so obvious to Bush that even when the older man went into partisan politics, it was—according to his son—for nonpartisan reasons. He ran as a Republican, during a time of Democratic dominance, to keep the two-party system alive.

Andover stood grimly in loco parentis during Bush's time there. In fact, it was even less

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yielding than his parents in insistence upon duty. Founded on Andover Hill during the American Revolution, the Phillips Academy had its seal designed by Paul Revere. Its self-importance comes across nicely in an editorial written during Bush's senior year (1942), when the country was at war. "President Roosevelt's speech to the nation last night was not, by any means, directed solely at Andover, but it cannot be denied that many of the things that he said are of utmost importance here on the hill." The key word is "solely." The school, like many Eastern preparatory establishments, lived on the cult of its martyrs from World War I. Memorial Tower, dedicated to those fallen aristocrats, dominates the campus.

SPORTS OVER STUDIES

Bush spent five years at Andover, since he lost part of his junior year to a bad flu epidemic. He reached his adult height early, which left him rather gawky when at rest. But he was a graceful first baseman, and he was the agile star center of the soccer team, a team with a proud history at the Phillips Academy. In a pompous book entirely devoted to sports there, it is noted, "Poppy Bush's play throughout the season ranked him as one of Andover's all-time soccer greats." In the 1942 class poll, he ranked among the top four students in six different categories: Best All-Round Fellow, Best Athlete, Most Respected, Most Popular, Handsomest, and Most Faculty Drag. (This last, in recognition of faculty popularity, because Bush was so gladly submissive to the ordeals of sarcasm that a student with poor grades was expected to put up with.)

Bush was one of the student deacons for the Sunday chapel services. More important, he was the president of the "S. of I." (the Society of Inquiry), the most serious religious body on campus, one that dated from abolitionist days and has

merged with the Y.M.C.A. in more recent times. During Bush's tenure, the group sent money to a Christian medical mission in Labrador. So there may be a theological basis for Bush's later assertion that his thoughts turned, after being shot down in war, to "Mother and Dad and the strength I got from them—and God and faith and the separation of church and state." S. of I. theology leaned heavily toward the providential nature of institutions, not least that of Phillips Andover.

George Bush was not nearly as successful in studies as in sports. When I asked him what books had shaped his life, he answered Hynes' *Flights of Passage*—a rather late entry. Asked for earlier influences, he said, "Well, we had a lot of obligatory reading when I was young—*Moby Dick*, *Catcher in the Rye*, *Gentleman's Agreement*. They shaped my [life], in various ways. How? I had to go back and give a book review on each of those when I was 17." Actually, two of those three books were written after he was 17, but the reviews he remembers were written for Hart Leavitt, who taught English composition. The grade Bush earned was 67 (60 was flunking). "He showed no imagination or originality," Leavitt remembers, though praising his manners and pleasantness.

CATCHING THE WESTERN ITCH

Bush, always on the go, was not remembered for much "dicking," the Andover term for those bull sessions that teenagers engage in when they begin to discover ideas. He remembers even fewer books from Yale than from Andover. When I talked to him about current books, he said, "I said, 'Barbara, now I'm going out with Jimmy Baker to the wilderness' [their fishing trip during the Democratic convention], and she said, 'You ought to do something. Don't take any papers—you ought to read.' And I said [shrugging], 'Read? Oh, what am I gonna read?' And so she gave me Tom Wolfe's book, which I [shudder]—too FAT! And I absolutely loved it. I'm almost at the end. I'm on page 500 and something; it is extraordinary." Perhaps it is best that Bush end-

ed this desultory search for remembered book titles by confessing, "But I can't—Garry, I don't read that much."

The most famous master of Bush's time, Arthur ("Doc") Darling, liked to say that fear was the basis of education, and he took pride in the number of students he flunked, as well as in the school's high rate of expulsions. The code of the school was that self-importance as a group depended on constant self-abasement of the individuals within the group. The privileged class, fearing its children will turn out spoiled, inflict such schools on them as effete cures. Surrogate parents are hired who will be less subject to favoritism in making their children "toe the mark." Further to enforce this general lesson, rich kids are often condemned to summer jobs of grueling if brief exposure to manual work. Bush's ordeal was work at a

farm camp run by Coach DiClemente, who still marvels at the way Bush pitched into the most sordid aspects of his assignment—like shoveling horse manure out of the barn, a task that may have prepared him better than he knew for later assignments.

From glory in war to glory at Yale was another easy step for Bush. He attended the school when God and Man (but not Woman) were regnant in the eyes of everyone but Bush's overlapping Bulldog, William Buckley. Like other veterans, they had undergraduating to catch up on. They were grown men for whom even the silly games of Skull and Bones were serious; in the club's sanctum in a windowless building on High Street, Bush went through the rituals of revealing the intimate secrets of his life and sexual history in a series of secret-society-style encounter sessions known as LH (life history) and CB (connubial bliss).

After graduating from Yale, Bush succumbed to an itch of the Eastern privileged that Nelson Aldrich has recently described in his book *Old Money*—the Teddy Roosevelt yearning to go West and do something physical. Bush presented the matter to himself less as an opportunity than an ordeal—he thought first of farming, and only then of physical work in oil fields. It was a way of continuing the effete cure on a grander scale; the ironic thing in Bush's case is that the cure would just confirm, in some people's eyes, the ailment. Luckily, Bush had enough money to indulge his urge, under the pretext that it was done in order to make money. How little that motive was actually at work appears from the easy way he gave up the enterprise when it promised to bring in serious returns. In his autobiography, which plays down Andover and the East, the move to Texas is described in terms of the physical work he undertook when the natives were too shrewd to get caught doing it.

THE SPIRIT OF THE SUMMER JOB

Like many outsiders after the war, he went first to Odessa and then to Midland, in the raw western part of Texas where the Permian oil pool was being divided up by eager investors. So many Ivy Leaguers were moving onto the dusty fields that new streets were being laid out with names like Princeton Avenue. Bush brought his air of civic duty to places that did not have exactly the ethos of Greenwich town meetings. He was clearly interested in politics from the outset, and Playwright Larry L. King, then working for the local Congressman J.T. Rutherford, kept an eye on Bush as a Republican threat. "You know, just to load up and be ready." That Bush would consider running from Midland, soon to become a center of John Birch activism, might seem strange, given his father's patrician Republican background, but Bush, who never convincingly took on Texas mannerisms, accepted the values of Midland County as unquestioningly as he had those of Andover. When he had acquired

the minimum fortune for a Texas businessman (under a million) and moved to Houston, he ran for the Senate in Barry Goldwater's year, 1964, berating the villains of Midland and Odessa, as well as of Houston—Walter Reuther, the U.N. and Martin Luther King.

This was a period when Eastern Establishment Republicans were figures of hate and ridicule to "real" Republicans who backed Goldwater, the year Charles Percy and George Romney were lumped with Nelson Rockefeller as traitors to the party. Yet here, in Houston, was a Republican looking more like a Saltonstall than a Lyndon Johnson, but who was as hard as Barry against the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Once again, Bush was extending the spirit of the tough summer job. Rich kids are supposed to go out and join the workers in the field, but they are also supposed to come home by Labor Day. Bush was staying on, going native.

In undertaking this unrequited love affair with Texas, Bush tried too hard, too embarrassingly, to be what he was not, and found it impossible to maintain his own dignity or gain his neighbors' respect. He was putting himself in line for a long series of humiliations. His yearning to be a Texan has a kind of noble mystery to it and such a pathetic persistence that Texans like Journalist Molly Ivins turn him down wistfully, wishing they did not have to. "I think created Texans are just as good as birth Texans," she says. "Most of those who died at the Alamo had come from somewhere else. But Bush has to know that there are three things a Texan does not do. We do not use 'summer' as a verb. We do not wear blue ties with little green whales on them. And we do not call trouble 'doodoo.' We're not setting the standards high. But there they are."

Why did Bush choose a cultural displacement he could never make convincing? Abasement training at Andover cannot have gone that deep. He spoke of

forming a vital Republican Party in the Democratic state of Texas, as if he were his father disinterestedly keeping the two-party system alive. But Prescott Bush brought high standards to the Senate—opposing Joseph McCarthy, championing civil rights bills—and later criticized the war in Viet Nam. George Bush entered public life opposing the 1964 Civil Rights Act. He went native without much principle, perhaps because he had not given

it much thought. Belonging mattered more than weighing the issues at stake. He was not going to "dick" much about ideas. There were games to be won (he tried to set up a soccer league in Texas) and clubs to be organized. Few suspect George Bush of meanness. The fault must have been intellectual. At any rate, something fatal was lost and would never be retrieved when Prescott Bush's son ran a Barry Goldwater race in 1964. He admitted to an Episcopal priest that he had gone too far to the right in his urge to win.

No man had a better eye for the usable Eastern Establishment Republican than Richard Nixon. He loved to manipulate those he suspected of despising him. He took early notice of George Bush's organizational work in the 1950s, encouraged his Goldwater phase and campaigned for him in 1964. Bush in his early oil travels lived briefly in Nixon's hometown of Whittier, Calif. But the tie with Nixon was deeper than that. The ex-Vice President of the early 1960s, while cultivating Goldwaterites, was also acquiring a covey of "walking gentlemen" to escort him back onto the public scene— young talents like Robert Finch and William Ruckelshaus. Bush was one of this circle—and one who would fall for Nixon's own locker-room bravado as a political style. It did not work well for Nixon, but he managed to persuade some people, including Bush, that they could do it better (Bush actually does it worse).

When Bush reached Congress two years later, he showed signs of reverting to type. He was concerned about family planning. In 1968, after trying to amend the civil rights bill on open housing, he voted for it, much to the disgust of his constituents. But Nixon won the nomination later that year and reasserted his mastery over Bush, holding out for a while a hope of the vice presidency (the first of Bush's lunges at an office others try to evade). When Prescott Bush advised his son against running for the Senate in 1970, Nixon urged him on, financ-

ing his race with an illegal campaign fund and promising him a Government job if he lost.

The job Bush asked for and got was to go to the U.N., where he was to represent Taiwan's hapless effort to remain a member while Kissinger and Nixon were making that impossible by their secret dealings with the People's Republic of China. Bush was not informed of their policy, which made his impassioned U.N. speeches part of a charade. I asked if he felt betrayed. "No, I didn't feel betrayed. I would like to have known what was going on . . . but not betrayed—that's too strong a word."

After his Senate loss to Lloyd Bentsen in 1970, Bush saw all the upward paths to elective office blocked in Texas, and decided to risk his future with Nixon and diplomacy. Secret notes in the Nixon archives show that Bush admitted, after serving in the U.N., that he could hardly go back and run for office in the state where he had begun his career by denouncing the U.N. Less clear was that taking favors from Richard Nixon was a way of getting in line for trouble. Barbara Bush seems to have sensed this when she warned her husband not to let Nixon saddle him with the chairmanship of the Republican National Committee. This was during the shake-up following Nixon's re-election in 1972, when Watergate was a faint underground rumble. Nixon, in the flush of victory, was going to do wonders, mainly by firing or demoting almost everyone in sight—but not George Bush. "He'd do anything for the cause," Nixon privately told John Ehrlichman. The qualification for service in the second term was spelled out with ruthless clarity: "Not brains, loyalty."

NICE MAN, NASTY SITUATIONS

Bush went to meet the President with a request for a preferred office—Deputy Secretary of State. He suggested himself as one who "can tiptoe between Henry Kissinger and William Rogers." But Nixon wanted to keep that role to himself. He tested Bush by asking for the names of loyalists and disloyalists in the U.N. and related agencies. Bush, according to notes that Journalist Nicholas Lemann has unearthed from the Nixon archives, complied. Then Nixon gave Bush the job he least desired, the one Barbara had warned him against, sweetening his offer with the

promise of a Cabinet post after the 1974 elections. Bush told his disappointed wife. "Boy, you just can't turn down a President." The notes tell a grimmer story. He left the sessions with Nixon, saying, "Let me think about it. I'll do what you tell me. Not all that enthralled with R.N.C. but I'll do it."

What he was taking on, without realizing it, was defense of the party during the worst days of Watergate. Bush was the ultimate loyalist, out around the country raising morale, defending the President, blaming everything on Democrats and the press. He assured all doubters that the President had told him there was no cover-up. I asked him if he felt betrayed when he found out that was not true: "I felt thoroughly disillusioned, to have been told that there was nothing to this, there were no more, you know, smoking guns or whatever these horrible things were. And, uh, I felt very much—betrayal is a word I don't particularly use, but this wasn't right, and I've so stated many times."

As a reward for his service under fire, Bush hoped that President Ford would give him the job dangled as part of Nixon's original wooing process, the vice presidency. But that went to Nelson Rockefeller, and Bush—ironically, given his denunciation of the People's Republic when he was at the U.N.—became America's envoy to China.

By now Bush was a one-man cleanup squad for the Republicans, the nicest man to send into the nastiest situations, and the CIA, after the Church committee's investigation, was as battered and demoralized an area as the R.N.C. had recently been. Bush, kept in the dark in earlier jobs, was sent to be the restorer of light and order at the CIA, which he largely became. Heavy firings under James Schlesinger and candid revelations to Congress under William Colby had made the agency defensive, and Bush has always been a good restorer of team morale. He spoke more often to Congress and said less than his immediate predecessors. He hired

from within the agency and assuaged the fears professional intelligence men have of career politicians. His one offense to the honor of the agency was opening its files extensively to critics outside the Government, and that was done in response to President Ford's effort to placate the growing revolt of right-wingers. They believed the CIA estimates of Soviet strength were understated. Bush appointed a committee of outsiders ("Team B") to use the same evidence CIA professionals had at their disposal and come up with their own estimate of Soviet strength.

Four of the nine members of Team B, including its chairman Richard Pipes, would become members of the Committee on the Present Danger, a hard-line anti-détente group. Everyone knew the board was stacked—Ray Cline, a CIA loyalist, called it a kangaroo court. But its alarmist estimates helped set the stage for the vast defense expenditures that began under Carter and peaked during the buying frenzy at the Reagan Pentagon.

Bush does not even mention Team B in his autobiography. I asked why. "I didn't think of it. Glad to talk about it. I think it was a very worthwhile exercise. Many people misunderstand what the exercise was. It was about challenging the objectivity of the Government—how objective is it, or how subjective is it. Get two teams—one of internal people, one of external people—give each the same information, and do they reach the same conclusion? No. That's why I answer my question as I did—how do you measure intentions? It is very difficult, different, when you are dealing solely with numbers. And it was a very good, sensible exercise, of which I am proud." But wasn't this a group whose views were predictable? "Sure. But I proved a point there. I proved that the objectivity of intelligence should be challenged. It had nothing to do with whether we were going to change direction." To everyone but Bush, changing direction was the point of the exercise.

At the CIA, with its Skull and Bones tradition of gentlemanly skulduggery, of men who observe a code but are not above grabbing a few crotches if people get in the way, Bush seemed back in his original element, where people play hard and rough but keep to certain rules among themselves. It is interesting that most Watergate and Church committee revelations seemed to bother Bush less than the idea of taping a fellow gentleman's conversation. "I mean that's against my moral grain, to be taping somebody. I can remember standing down here in this building [the White House] when I heard about the White House tapes, and felt—betrayed means that somebody owes me something and thus—and I think it's broader than that." CIA covert actions do not arouse the same misgivings in this occasionally, dutifully ruthless man.

By 1980 Bush was ready to make a desperate try for the White House. He had

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primarily an appointive résumé to run on, but it was an equivocal recommendation. He seemed less the fellow who had held all these jobs than the man who would consent to do them. Once a walking gentleman has cast his lot with Richard Nixon over the years, even Andover straightforwardness can begin to look like invincible patsydom. It was in the 1980 campaign that Bush's later manner was established in people's minds—that mish-mash of cultures partly assimilated, that belongingness more yearned for than achieved, that having had too little effect in too many places—so that different styles stumble over one another and interrupt his words when he tries to speak. He had developed a highly idiosyncratic style, surpassed only by Al Haig's. He was now the man who could say at Auschwitz, "Boy, they were big on crematoriums, weren't they?"

But other traits, more admirable, showed up in 1980 as well—persistence, competitiveness, an unwillingness to quit. William Sloane Coffin, once Yale's chaplain, was an Andover classmate of Bush's and fellow Bones member at Yale, though they took separate paths afterward. (Coffin is now the head of SANE/FREEZE, an antinuclear organization.) When Bush visited Yale during Coffin's chaplainship, he sent word he would like to play some squash with his old classmate. "Bring him on," Coffin crowed. They played a few games, Coffin winning and Bush getting more determined to win. Coffin was ready to call it a day, but Bush kept asking for one more game. Recalls Coffin: "Word got around the gym that Left and Right were meeting on the center court, and we had quite an audience by the end, but George wouldn't give up." Jim Baker found he had the same problem getting Bush to give up in 1980, to withdraw from the presidential race in time to position himself as a vice-presidential candidate. Bush does not yield easily, something he proved in his scrappy comeback after finishing behind both Robert Dole and Pat Robertson in this year's Iowa caucuses.

THE CONSUMMATE VICE PRESIDENT

In the Vice President's office, Bush's basic decency resurfaced. He brought dignity to the ceremonial parts of the office and handled himself with great composure during the assassination attempt on Reagan. When Ray Cline and others tried to advise him on assembling a staff of his own, Bush

rightly said policy should be made in other offices; he was to be the President's confidant, not his competitor. But he did cultivate good relations with right-wing groups, which considered him suspect for his opposition to Reagan in the 1980 primaries. Thus when Bush spoke to the *contra* contributors cultivated by Carl ("Spitz") Channell, Channell planned to tap the same people for donations to Bush's future campaign needs. This was just one of many ties Bush's office had with right-wingers concerned about Nicaragua's "freedom fighters."

Although he met with *Contra* Supplier Felix Rodriguez, and his own security adviser Donald Gregg knew details of the *contra* supply operation by August 1986 that he did not consider "vice-presidential," Bush denies all knowledge of that activity. I asked him if he felt betrayed, as many Americans did, that U.S. arms were sold to the Ayatollah. "I don't think you ought to use the word betrayed, but that shouldn't have happened—not the selling of the arms, but the divergence of funds to some of the *contras*." Describing his own discovery that funds had been diverted, Bush said, "The minute I heard that, I— *Whoops! Strong!*"

The Vice President has avoided lengthy questioning over his relations with the *contras*. He has made public his agreement with the President that arms should have been sold to Iranian moderates, though he had some problems with the participation of a foreign government in a covert operation and with the chances of the cover being blown. For the rest, he is the terrorism and crisis-control specialist who knew little about what was going on among White House friends and staff members. It would have taken "clairvoyant hindsight," he claims, for him to have stopped the *contra* diversion.

When I asked Barbara Bush how the vice presidency had changed her husband, she said it had mellowed him. He takes things less personally. Yet there now seems something violated beneath

his affability. He has been so many things to so many people, he embodies so many cultural divisions, that his crooked smile, though still winning, seems to fork across his face like a jagged crevice or fault line. He boasts of having lived in seven states and calls himself a Texan, though most people think of him as Eastern.

Bush assured me he was more at peace with himself and with his critics—before bringing up his critics and angrily dismissing them. He is used to being liked, and

with good reason. What, after all, is wrong with a man who has done community service from the time he organized for the missions as president of S. of I.? What is there to criticize in the model family man and loyal servitor to his party, the devoted friend to many estimable people, the inheritor of a popular President's completed second term? It is hard to dislike George Bush, no matter what others were doing around him. Perhaps the worst charge that can be brought against him is what they call, at Chaffey High, enabling behavior. ■