

# Bull Moose Bush

BY R. EMMETT TYRRELL, JR.

I stopped by the White House the other day, my first visit since the Bush administration—the first Bush administration. Over the past eight years, despite my intimacy with the Clintons and all their contretemps, we were never what you

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would call close. For a certitude we shared acquaintances, troopers, nannies, and a source or two in the White House. The Clintons reciprocated by following my work and asking their Justice Department to do so as well; but we rarely got together, no invitations to press briefings, no invitations to White House Christmas parties, not even a presidential Christmas card.

Now there is a new president, urging a new comity among Washingtonians, and

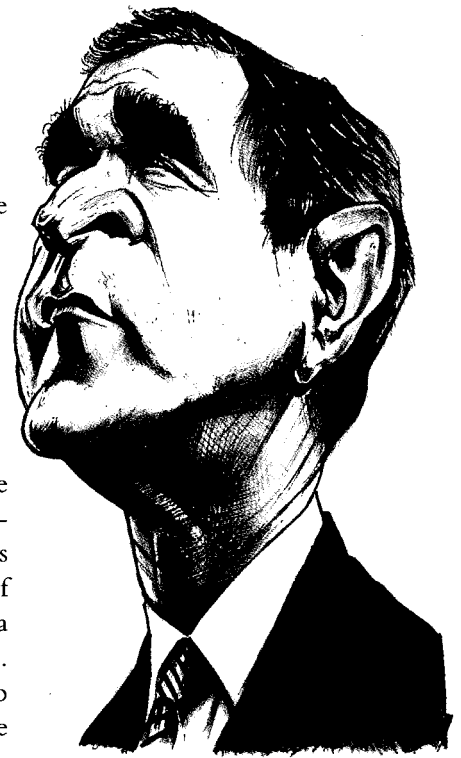
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so with my colleague Richard Vigilante I stepped into the West Wing reception lobby directly under the nose of a tall, well-starched Marine. We were there to interview a member of the administration, but the ravenous curiosity of the investigative journalist within me could not be quelled. While awaiting my meeting I nosed around, spying the reception room's ancient paintings and peering under the freshly upholstered furniture for telltale evidence. What evidence, you ask? Given all the reports of the previous occupants' larcenous departure, I just wanted to see if the new administration has had to resort to the services of Cort Furniture Rental. The Secret Service agent standing nearby was not amused.

Except for the question of missing furniture the White House is resplen-

dent. Moreover, it is alive with the earnest activity of scores of well-groomed aides. After having spent an afternoon there, I thoroughly understand the alarm that is spreading throughout liberal circles. President George W. Bush has filled the place with Republicans, and many are, indeed, conservative Republicans. The least he could do, deferring to the liberals' anxieties, would be to bring into his administration a goodly supply of Rockefeller Republicans and perhaps a few surviving Bull Moosers. Admittedly, there really are no Rockefeller Republicans left and the Bull Moose movement lost steam precipitously during the second Wilson administration, but surely some Bush appointees could lie about their identities, again out of deference to their anxious liberal critics.

Considering the growing media coverage of the Bush administration's problems with environmentalists, abortion-rights activists, and other left-wing special-interest groups, think of the confusion the Bushies would sow in the critics' ranks if, say, a few undersecretaries declared themselves Bull Moosers. How could an environmentalist inveigh against an administration that was actively recruiting aides who claim fealty to the ghost of Theodore Roosevelt? There is nothing new or even uncommon about a public figure lying about his deepest political commitments. Surely the growing chorus of Bush's critics among the environmentalists, the abortion-rights activists, the civil rights leaders, and the vegetable lovers could not complain. They lie about their political



commitments all the time. They may claim first allegiance to their special monomanias, but the unspoken truth of contemporary American politics is that, monomanias aside, these gasbags are essentially Democrats.

It is a journalistic dispensation that impels reporters covering the White House to call Bush's critics by their favored labels. The truth is that most are Democrats, and so for that matter are many of the supposedly innocent reporters. When they report that "Bush has a problem with environmentalists," they are saying that Bush has a problem with Democrats, liberal Democrats.

This helps explain their complaint that the Bush administration has become so very *conservative*, more conservative than the Reagan administration, as some of the critics would have it. Liberals and liberal Democrats comprise a very insular society. They for the most part only converse with each other and listen to media that spread their bugaboos. They have yet to notice that conservatism has come to characterize much of the country. Its influence is felt even among moderates in the Democratic Party. Welfare reform is

here. Global markets are popular. Faith-based social work is inviting. And as for environmentalists, no one is opposed to a healthy environment, and almost everyone is in favor of economic growth. The question is how to balance both interests.

Over the last 20 years, the issues have changed. The liberals say the conservatives have lost cohesion owing to the end of the Cold War. But owing to

the growth of conservatism, the liberals have lost touch with reality. The Bush administration is filled with conservatives because the country is increasingly conservative. If it will relieve the liberals' hysteria, I urge more Bushies to claim they are actually Bull Moosers. They are as justified in claiming that title as the environmentalists are in denying that they are at heart Democrats. ♣

a battle cry to get tough with the Bush administration.

Barbra knew not the power of her pen. In no time a major Democratic contributor to the 1996 presidential campaign took up her challenge. The Chinese military, a generous contributor to the Clinton presidential campaign and—who knows—possibly a contributor to the Clinton Presidential Library, Inc., downed our surveillance plane. There goes bipartisanship. In the past, left-wing Democrats and their supporters have burned American flags and held demonstrations against American foreign policy, but none has ever taken up arms against the United States. And where was the beneficiary of Barbra's and Beijing's munificent campaign contributions? The retired president was in India where he was photographed riding an elephant while wearing what looked like his pajamas.

In the meantime, the object of Barbra's and Beijing's and Winston Spencer Kristol's ire was in the Oval Office trying to figure it all out. President George W. Bush is a very nice man. He recently told a gathering of the American Society of Newspaper Editors that we must all be more polite. Yet surely he knows that a great many American public figures, when attracted to politics, engage in play-acting. Those who whoop it up for more vigorous combat against their opponents are not serious. Before taking them too seriously he ought to ask himself: Are we talking about someone who has really demonstrated courage against an opponent? Or are we talking about someone who is demanding that others demonstrate courage against an opponent? The image of the Monday morning quarterback comes to mind, and few Monday morning quarterbacks ever played football. The president played this latest diplomatic contest well. ♣

*Adapted from RET's weekly Washington Times column syndicated by Creators Syndicate.*

## Chinese Fire Drill

**A**h, that international sticky wicket, referred to in early April as America's "national humiliation" by Washington journalist and statesman Winston Spencer Kristol, is over. Not a shot was fired. Winston Spencer Kristol is another of those expansive Americans who cast themselves in a heroic mode whenever there is an opportunity to summon the nation, to muster the troops, to call out the fleet, and to secure for our generation and our time a D-Day.

What composed the *dramatis personae* and plot line of this national humiliation? A hot-rod Chinese combat pilot stalled his fighter in front of an American surveillance plane over international waters. The ensuing collision caused his unfortunate demise along with the forced landing of the damaged American plane on Chinese soil. The Chinese detained the plane's crew, pursuant to some sort of propaganda coup under the delusion that this is the spring of 1951. Similarly deluded, Winston Spencer Kristol envisaged a White House full of appeasers when President Neville Bush failed to call out the Pacific Fleet.

Yet the fleet was not needed. The Chinese adjusted their calendars to contemporary times. Their haughty demand for an apology was met with what I would describe as a pretty sorry

apology for an apology. Washington took no responsibility for the Chinese hot-rod's death and merely expressed regret for his passing. In the realm of personal accountability the statement was somewhat on the order of expressing regret for Hong Kong's inclement weather.

Will this assuage the purple passions of Winston Spencer Kristol and the country's other hawks? I doubt it. My guess is that they have all gone back to their country homes to sip brandies and lament the appeasers in the White House. Admittedly I share their impatience with Beijing. What sort of propaganda coup was it aiming for? Was it hoping to rouse the anti-Americanism of what were once called the nonaligned nations at the U.N.? Yet surely calling the Bush administration's response a national humiliation was a bit over the top. In fact, it gave some of us a good laugh, as I guess I have implied.

The loss of life and the attendant hostility between Beijing and Washington were not funny, but whenever a public figure begins playing out personal fantasies, the stage is set for comedy. Certainly Barbra Streisand set the stage for comedy about the time the Chinese began acting up. Thinking herself a tough-minded political strategist, she sent out a letter to Democrats that amounted to

# Annie, Get Your Gun

BY TAKI

One of the first things Christopher Buckley did when hired by *Esquire* 25 years ago was commission an article on the etiquette of pheasant shooting. I had a desk next to his, and as soon as the piece arrived, I sent a copy

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to my older brother—who never spoke to me again. I sent him the damn thing because he'd just been shooting on some English moor and had peppered another hunter right in the you-know-where. (It was a very superficial wound.) Although hitting humans rather than birds is generally frowned upon by the shooting fraternity, it is a rare shoot that can brag that no human blood was spilled during a season. I never understood my brother's oversensitivity, but then perhaps he never understood why I wrote up the accident in an English newspaper.

I also seem to get into trouble with American folk that shoot living things. For example: When I told a Californian lady that my brother had just pricked Lord Hambro, she almost slapped me. But pricking someone only means a close miss. Ditto about a "running cock"—not a dripping phallus, but a male pheasant scurrying along the ground. Asking someone whether he has a "good bag" does not warrant a punch in the nose.

Mind you, Americans are improving with the language of the moor, but nevertheless shooting in America is still a far cry from England. Only last winter an American friend of mine, who shall remain nameless, shot low and hit no less than five joggers. This happened somewhere in the Hamptons, where the police are mostly of Polish extraction and hate crime and criminals. No sooner had the joggers been hit, then they they called the fuzz on their mobile and

reported they were under fire. The cops did not disappoint. Armed with heavy artillery they charged to the scene behind a couple of armored personnel



carriers. Ironically, it was St. Valentine's Day.

At another shoot, again in the Hamptons, an Italian-American socialite shot across the line of guns, decimating a group of newly rich dot-com executives out trying to impress their girlfriends. While they lay writhing in their brand

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new tweeds and cursing the "dirty dago," the predictable happened. The police were summoned by one of the hysterical girlfriends. When the host explained to the police that the offender was not only a gentleman but also the finest shot in Italy, they were not impressed. "The way he shoots," said one officer, "he must be the only one left."

The proper form after an accidental shooting is to lay down the gun immediately and leave the field. Some people have been known to abuse the ritual. Lord Carnavron, now shooting in that great moor up above, once had a horse running in the fourth race at Epsom but was stuck as host in his own shoot. The crafty Carnavron, a great shot, did not hesitate. He grazed a beater's jacket, put his gun down, and left the field before anyone had a chance to tell him there was no harm done.

"Mighty sporting of Porchie," said a fellow gun.

Little did he know. Lord Mountgarret was not at all a good sport when he spotted a hot-air balloon overflying his moor in Yorkshire. He shot at it repeatedly, and when the dirigible landed five hysterical American ladies emerged threatening to bring frontier justice to Yorkshire. Mountgarret had to appear in front of a magistrate and the irate American ladies. Local gossip had it that he was dead drunk when he shot at them. His defense was that he suffered from bad eyesight and he had mistaken the balloon for a very fat pheasant. The magistrate let him off with a stern warning amid great laughter in court.

Despite the numerous gaffes and accidents, Americans must be given

credit for trying. Ever since Chris Buckley's commission of the do's and don'ts of shooting, there are no more 30-foot-long Cadillac limousines or Filipino houseboys doubling as beaters or pickers-up. Range Rovers and second sons of English aristocrats do just fine. The greatest accomplishment of this new-English manner school is the acquisition of the accoutrement that always gave one away in the past. The gun. Suddenly there are no more embarrassingly new shiny ones around. Even a novice—like the rock star who held his gun like a guitar—owns a pair of old Purdeys. Needless to say, there are still many things the new-English do wrong to give themselves away. Such as asking visitors to admire their dogs, or putting ice in their drinks, or having large, clean bathrooms with showers in them. I guess nobody is perfect. ↘