

George W. Bush: Deserter or merely AWOL?

Jim Fetzer (READER WEEKLY 5 February 2004, pp. 22-24), expanded

Michael Moore created a sensation when, during a campaign rally for General Wesley Clark, he described George W. Bush, our Commander in Chief, as a "deserter". When he was grilled by Peter Jennings during the Democratic candidates' debate, Clark demurred from defending what Moore had said, explaining he "hadn't looked into it". Moore has been less contrite, explaining what he really meant to say was that "George W. Bush is a deserter, an election thief, a drunk driver, a WMD liar, and a functional illiterate. And he poops in his pants." At least with Michael Moore you always know where you stand!

Peter Jennings said that there wasn't a shred of evidence to support such a charge, but there is no reason to suppose that Peter Jennings has "looked into it" any more than he has "looked into" the death of JFK. As I explained in the READER (6 November 2003, p. 18), that has not inhibited him from endorsing THE WARREN REPORT (1964) and the official government position that Jack was whacked by a lone demented gunman, even though objective scientific evidence has established that the autopsy x-rays had been altered, another brain was substituted for that of JFK, and the home movie taken by Abraham Zapruder was fixed. The government's inquiry was based on fake evidence.

Just to assist Peter Jennings in thinking this matter through (since he appears to need some help), none of these things could have been done by Lee Oswald, who was either incarcerated or already dead. (Nor could any of them have been done by either the Mafia, pro- or anti-Castro Cubans, or the KGB.) We have also discovered that Oswald was framed using manufactured evidence, including a weapon that cannot fire high-velocity bullets (which was linked to him by planting a palm-print), and backyard photographs of his face imposed upon someone else's body, as Lee himself had said.

I do not make this up. The studies that establish these findings may be found in a series of books I have edited, ASSASSINATION SCIENCE (1998), MURDER IN DEALEY PLAZA (2000), and (now) THE GREAT ZAPRUDER FILM HOAX (2003). Jennings might excuse himself for not knowing these things, but if he made an effort, they are not that hard to discover. All he would have had to do was read any of the three, which I sent him weeks before ABC's broadcast, perhaps the most spectacular example of disinformation in the history of television. But if Jennings is unreliable on a matter of this magnitude, surely there is no reason to think he is reliable about lesser ones.

Indeed, it is easy to show that Jennings is wrong about Bush. Lt. George W. Bush's Annual Officer Effectiveness Report for 1 May 1972 through 30 April 1973 contains the following entry: "Lt. Bush has not been observed at this unit for the period of this report." That by itself suggests that, once again, Jennings doesn't know what he is talking about. But there is more. Much more. Robert A. Rogers (USAF, retired), himself a former Air National Guard pilot, has "looked into it" and has now reported what he has found (<http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/articles5577.htm>):

(1) Pilot George W. Bush did not simply "give up flying" with two years left to fly, as has been reported. Instead, Bush was suspended and grounded, very possibly as a direct or indirect result of substance abuse. This matter has been concealed.

(2) The crucial evidence--a Flight Inquiry Board--that would reveal the reasons for Bush's suspension and any punishment he received is missing from the records released to date. And, if there was no formal inquiry, that is even more revealing.

(3) Contrary to Bush's own assertions and some published stories, he did not report in person for the last two years of his service, which was a direct violation of written

orders, an example of a military career that is notable solely for political favoritism.

As Rogers explains, Bush graduated from Yale in 1968, which was the height of the Vietnam War. Some 500,000 Americans were fighting in the war and were dying at the rate of 350 per week. Bush supported the war but was not willing to put his life on the line. Instead of becoming an infantryman, however, he wanted to fly-- not in combat, mind you, but in the Air National Guard as a "weekend warrior", where the prospects of an overseas assignment were slim to none. Asked about an overseas assignment, Bush checked, "do not volunteer", in case there was any doubt.

Lots of other young men shared Bush's lack of enthusiasm for going to Vietnam and competition for the Air National Guard was intense. Even though he scored only 25% on the pilot qualification test administered on 17 January 1968, the lowest possible passing grade, he had a father who was a member of Congress and a grandfather who had been a Senator from Connecticut. Ben Barnes, then Speaker of the Texas House, has admitted under oath that he received a request from a Bush family friend, Sidney Adger of Houston, to help Bush get into the Air National Guard and that he had passed the request along to Brig. General James Rose, head of the Texas Air National Guard.

In spite of his mediocre performance on the aptitude test, Bush leapfrogged over 500 other candidates to secure a position in the Air National Guard. Even more strikingly, after he had completed only six weeks of basic airman training, he was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the Texas Air National Guard. "This was by means of a 'special appointment' by the commanding officer of his squadron, with the approval of a panel of three senior officers", Rogers writes. "It was so unusual that Tom Hail, the Texas Air National Guard historian, told the LOS ANGELES TIMES that he 'never heard of that' except for flight surgeons." Physicians, however, possess special skills. Bush did not.

As a former Marine Corps officer who used to supervise recruit training at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego, I can assure you that a recruit with six weeks training knows little about the military apart from how to make his cot, wear his uniform, and spit-shine his boots. As Rogers observes, a commission as a 2nd Lieutenant ordinarily requires eight semesters of college ROTC courses (usually distributed over four years and supplemented by regular drills and other training), eighteen months of military service, or the successful completion of the Air Force Academy officer training school.

Bush had "none of the above". But I can readily imagine his mother Barbara saying to his Dad, "Gosh, George, I'm worried about Dubya. Does he really have to associate with those airmen? Couldn't you get him a position more in keeping with his rank?" However it came about, Bush was immediately assigned to flight school and given a "fast track" into the 111th Fighter Interceptor Squadron. He was trained to fly the supersonic F-102 Delta Dart jet fighter. Bush completed some 300 hours of flight time with the F-102, which qualified him to fly the F-102 without an instructor.

Although (or perhaps because) he lacked the 500 hours of experience required to fly combat, Bush volunteered for a three-month tour in Vietnam, for which he was immediately turned down. He flew as a "weekend warrior" out of Ellington, which was situated near Houston. Then, on 3 November 1970, Bush was promoted to First Lieutenant, which was approximately 18 months after receiving his commission on 27 May 1968. Promotion to First Lieutenant normally occurs 18 months after being commissioned. The duration of his military career, however, was more remarkable.

Newly released records show that Bush was credited with 46 days of flight duty from June 1970 to May 1971. Sometime after May of 1971, however, he stopped fulfilling his sworn obligation to the Texas Air National Guard and to his country. By

May of 1972, for example, he had only 22 flight duty days, 14 short of the minimum 36 he owed from May 1971-May 1972. By the start of the fourth year of his six year pilot service obligation, he stopped flying altogether, with his last flight in an F-102 logged in April of 1972. On 15 May 1972, Bush was gone. He had "cleared this base", according to one of his squadron supervising officers, Lt. Col. William D. Harris, Jr.

On 24 May 1972, Bush requested a transfer to an inactive reserve unit in Alabama for the avowed purpose of working on the campaign of a Republican candidate for the Senate. But his request was denied on 31 May 1972, when he should have made a return to Houston and resumed his flight schedule. Instead, Rogers found, "he stayed in Alabama until late in the fall. And something critical happened on August 1, 1972 --George W. Bush was summarily suspended from flying duties." The question is, Why?

There are reasons to believe that it was related to substance abuse, which should come as no surprise, since Bush has admitted he was an alcoholic. But that would be ironic, since the Texas Air National Guard used to use him as a "poster boy", even putting out a 1970 public-relations announcement that read, "George Walker Bush is one member of the younger generation who doesn't get his kicks from pot or hashish or speed As far as kicks are concerned, Lt. Bush gets his from the roaring afterburner of the F-102."

Since the government spent the equivalent of a million dollars to train Bush, his abrupt cessation of fulfillment of his military contract has raised serious concern. Although the BOSTON GLOBE wrote that he "simply gave up flying" to work on the Senate campaign, he still had two years of service obligation to fulfill. Military officers are not allowed to simply walk away from or "give up" with regard to their contracts with the government. Something else must have been involved, which newly-released documents bear upon.

In a memo dated 29 September 1972 to the Secretaries of the Army and the Air Force, Major General Francis Greenleaf, Chief of the National Guard Bureau in Washington, D.C., affirmed that 1st Lt. George W. Bush had been suspended from flying duties, confirming the verbal order of the Texas' 147th Group's Commanding Officer that Bush had been suspended and grounded for "failure to accomplish [his] annual medical examination", an order that was issued on 1 August 1972. This implies either Bush took the physical and failed to pass or else failed to take the physical at all. The question again is, Why?

During the Presidential campaign, Bush officials dismissed concerns by claiming that, since he was not flying, he was not required to take the exam. But Bush was qualified to fly until he failed to accomplish his physical, which means that excuse won't wash. They also suggested that he had simply been unable to travel home to Houston to take the physical, but physicians were readily available at Maxwell Air Force Base, which was situated in Montgomery, Alabama, where Bush was residing at the time, and it would have been easy for him to have arranged for a physical to satisfy the Guard.

A Bush spokesman admitted that Bush knew the suspension would take place if he failed to accomplish his physical, but wrote it off as "just a question of following the bureaucratic procedure at the time". Some of us consider military regulations to be more than "bureaucratic procedures". But in Bush's case, it also represented the end of his career as a pilot, which I would guess may have been the greatest achievement of his personal life. It meant that, ultimately, he had failed to accomplish his mission.

Why? THE LONDON TIMES and THE NEW YORK POST on 18 June 2000 published what appears to be the key to understanding. In April 1972--the same month that Bush "gave up" flying--random testing for the use of alcohol and drugs was introduced into the military services, a practice whose prospective implementation the Pentagon had

announced 31 December 1969. If Bush had reported for his scheduled medical exam in August 1972, he could have been subjected to a random test for substance abuse.

Bush has insisted that he has not used drugs or alcohol to excess since 1974, but that is consistent with abusing one or more of them in the summer of 1972. Rogers tells us that interviews with friends reveal he was doing a lot of drinking and partying at this period of time. This creates a context for inferring that the reason Bush "gave up" one of his greatest attainments in life may have been to avoid the risk of exposure for the excessive use of alcohol or drugs. It may even have required a Flight Inquiry Board.

The normal procedure in the failure to accomplish a medical exam would have been a Flight Inquiry Board, whose members would have determined the punishment that would have been appropriate under the circumstances. No such records are available in the public domain to demonstrate that Bush was reduced to non-flying status. But that would have been an appropriate outcome. And if no such board was convened, it would reflect the kind of privileged treatment this man experienced his whole career.

With a war raging in Iraq and decorated officers competing for the nomination of the opposition party to run against him for the nation's highest office, it would be fitting for Bush to release his military records in order for this matter to be fully vetted by the public and the press. Having a Commander-in-Chief with tarnished credentials is undesirable under peacetime conditions and a disgrace in time of war. But there are reasons to believe that Bush lacks the qualifications to be President on other grounds.

Katherine von Wormer, an expert on the syndrome, has observed that Paul O'Neill's depiction of meetings of the President's cabinet as "a blind man in a room full of the deaf" appears to be consistent with a "dry drunk", one who has given up drinking but whose thinking is not really sober (<http://counterpunch.org/wormer01222004.html>).

Bush displays several characteristics that--in her judgment and that of others--fit this profile, including grandiosity, rigidity, an intolerance for ambiguity, and a tendency to obsess about things, which I suspect almost every American at least dimly perceives.

She goes on to remark that Bush, as a dutiful son, has displayed a preoccupation with his father, who, along with his wealthy friends and political connections, set him up in business and later launched his political career. Yet, she notes, "His father, for all his success, experienced failure on three occasions. He was widely criticized for not finishing the job in Iraq--for not moving the troops in to 'take out' Saddam following the Gulf War victory--and he failed to get his bill to fund a NASA flight to Mars, and finally he lost his bid for re-election." Perhaps that helps explain the mess we're in.

Bush's military career is coming under increasing attention from John Kerry, Howard Dean, and even the Chairman of the Democratic Party, who have all made it clear that this is going to be an issue in this campaign. And well it should. While the charge of desertion raised by Michael Moore may initially sound like a stretch, the difference between going "AWOL" and being a "deserter" is a matter of time: you are AWOL if you are absent from duty for 30 days or less, a deserter if you are absent more than 30 days with no intent to return to duty. Which is it? The evidence is rather clear.

Does this mean that the Texas Air National Guard made a false claim when it said, "George Walker Bush is one member of the younger generation who doesn't get his kicks from pot or hashish or speed"? Perhaps literally not if, as I believe, he got his from drinking alcohol and snorting cocaine. Giving up "the roaring afterburner of the F-102" could not have come lightly or without considerable thought. But probably not with any sense of anticipation it would ever matter to the security of the nation.

I have presented this condensed summary of Robert Rogers revelations not only as a public service because you are entitled to know but also because it may be quite a while before Peter Jennings, for example, has a chance to look into it or the man himself admits it. On 3 October 2000, in the first Presidential debate, Bush opined, "I think that people need to be held responsible for the actions they take in life. I think that's part of the need for cultural change. We need to say that each of us needs to be responsible for what we do." Or fail to do. A point on which we agree.

Jim Fetzer, a professor of philosophy at UMD, believes that the Bush administration is the most corrupt in the history of the country and that the only rational response in the forthcoming election--our only hope of salvation--is voting straight Democratic.