MY LEFT BRAIN

political and social commentary
August 21, 2004
What's the Difference?

Joe Scarborough over at MSNBC, Bush press secretary Scott McClellan, and other conservatives have questioned why John Kerry hasn't condemned ads that call George Bush's record of service in the National Guard into question (actually Kerry did). I don't like to believe I'm a hypocrite, so I thought about the issue and determined why criticisms of Bush's Guard record are not comparable to the attacks on Kerry's service record.

Attacks on Bush's guard record are based on questions that arise because of his guard record. His guard record documents that he did not take his physical and was suspended from flying. It is fair to ask why and to criticize him for not fulfilling his obligation or wasting the taxpayer money invested in training him. It goes beyond fair to produce an ad speculating that Bush failed to take his physical because the National Guard instituted a drug test that year and Bush was using cocaine.

By his own admission, Bush admitted that he went to Alabama without authorization and did not show up for Guard duty in Alabama at the dates he was required to do so. From May to September, he logged no service.

The only man who "remembers" seeing Bush at his Alabama Guard post is a republican who remembers seeing Bush in months when by his own acknowledgment Bush wasn't there. This lacks a certain credibility.

Bush's file has a report by his supervisors which documents that he was not observed at the base in the past twelve months and so they could not evaluate him. This report was filed on a day when Bush claims he was at the base.

A Bush family friend acknowleged under oath using his position to help Bush get into the guard over other young men who were on a waiting list.

Bush himself said alternatives to going to vietnam were shooting out his eardrum, fleeing to Canada, or "learning to fly planes." So he learned to fly

planes.

Bush lied about his service in his biography, claiming that he continued to fly
planes when the record shows that he did not.

There are also records that are supposed to be in that file that are not. Still,
it would be unfair to produce an ad with one man's claims that he witnessed
files being destroyed. These allegations are unproven.

It would also be unfair to say that Bush did not earn his honorable discharge.
Regardless of whether he showed up when he should have or whether we believe he
did not deserve a discharge, if the Guard concluded that he ultimately fulfilled
the hourly requirements and gave him an honorable discharge, we must accept that
discharge as genuine until evidence surfaces to prove otherwise. And I don't
mean a democrat coming forward and claiming this is not true but offering no proof.

Now let's look at Kerry's record. Every one of Kerry's performance evaluations
is positive--top of the line. All the existing reports produced thus far that
were written at that time show that John Kerry earned his medals and that the
claims made in the report were accurate. In one event, Kerry and his crewman
reported that they were under fire. Reports on one boat the following day shows
it suffered bullet holes; Kerry's boat was described as being rendered inoperable by a mine. Two other soldiers were awarded bronze medals that day;
one for acts of courage performed under fire, and the other for suppressing
gunfire directed at the US troops. There is zero evidence that Kerry had
anything to do with producing these reports. His name does not appear on them
and other names/signatures do appear on them.

All the reports filed for Kerry's medals were vetted and signed by Kerry's
superiors. These same superiors praised Kerry years later and as recently as 2003.

Kerry's medical reports document three injuries. Kerry has never claimed that
these were serious injuries. On the contrary. The reports on the injuries
document enemy fire. None of the signatories to these medical reports have

claimed the wounds were illegitimate.

The men who actually served on a boat with Kerry--save one--support his accounting of events and have recountered similar experiences. At least one of them is a long-time republican. None of these men have ever been huge democratic party donors.

There is absolutely nothing in John Kerry's service record that could be constituted as anything other than positive. Yet all these men--many with strong republican ties--have come forward to make claims that disagree with the record created during Kerry's time of service.

They have no evidence. All the evidence that exists contradicts their claims, save one--that Kerry wasn't in Cambodia on Christmas Eve. The record does not show that Kerry was in Cambodia at that time and there are no witnesses who recall this. Yet there's also no evidence to contradict it, because we know that covert runs into Cambodia occurred.

It is fair to produce an ad criticizing Kerry for his anti-war position after the Vietnam war. It is not fair to chop up his statements to give a false impression of what he said. It is fair to question whether Kerry, as a commander, should have stayed with his men after getting a third purple heart instead of electing to be re-stationed. It is not fair to say he is a coward who didn't earn his medals or that he and his men are all liars.

In summary, the criticism of Bush's record is based on the record; the criticism of Kerry's record is contradicted by the record, which is why it's nothing more than slander. The way these "swiftboat liars" crumble under media scrutiny makes me think they would be very poor witnesses on cross-examination. Kerry should sue their asses and force them to spend some of their time and money defending themselves.

Can you imagine the questions? Mr. Hoffman, are you saying that as a Navy officer, you petitioned for medals without assuring that the claims were legitimate and that you filed false performance evaluations? Mr. Eliot, are you saying that as a Navy commander, you lied on Kerry's evaluation?

Mr. Thurlow, was your second in command, Robert Eugene Lambert, lying when he signed a petition for your bronze medal? When you recieved this medal, why didn't you tell the Navy it was inaccurate and return it?

I'm not a lawyer, but any good lawyer could shred these stories without breaking a sweat. If it wouldn't take so much of Kerry's time, I'd suggest he file a lawsuit against these individuals. Would they lie under oath? Would they disavow their own military service and admit that they did not perform their duties properly while in the service, petitioning for medals for cowards and giving fake performance evaluations?

And what could be obtained during discovery? Memos between Rove and John O'Neill? If Kerry loses this election, I hope he files that lawsuit.
Posted by Cat M. at August 21, 2004 11:15 AM | TrackBack