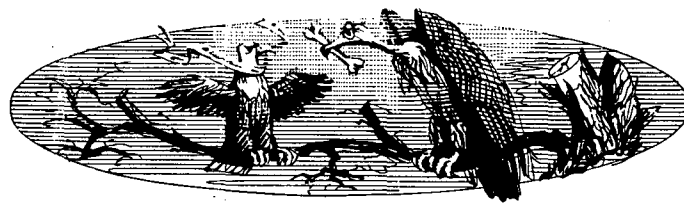


THE NATION'S PULSE



THE MAKING OF A VICE PRESIDENT

by Kevin J. McNamara

George Bush's recent brush with mortality showed yet again that everyone has an opinion about the man who sits an irregular heartbeat away from the presidency. Unfortunately for Dan Quayle, the prevailing opinion is not a kindly one. Yet most people believe Quayle is not qualified for the position he holds because that is what newspapers and television have been telling them ever since his nomination to the vice presidency in August 1988.

Ideological considerations aside, the negative coverage probably originated with reporters' having been caught off-guard when Bush made his choice in New Orleans. Far from their Washington sources, they had to start from scratch in their assessments of Quayle, focusing not on his record in government and politics but on his personality and private life, specifically: (1) his age—41—and alleged lack of experience; (2) his brush eight years earlier with lobbyist and *Playboy* model Paula Parkinson, and (3) his Vietnam War-era enlistment in the Indiana National Guard. To a lesser extent, they examined his undergraduate academic performance and his family's wealth.

Any mention of Quayle's public record was buried under an avalanche of personal trivia. After one month and a hundred stories devoted to Quayle, for instance, the *Washington Post* ran an article with a headline that indicated the newspaper had perhaps failed to convey much of substance about Quayle: "Still a New Quantity to Many Voters, Quayle Works to Help Fill in the Blanks." The rival *Washington Times* admitted the press was in the dark, headlining one story "Surprised Television Newsmen Query: 'Who is Dan Quayle?'" At the height of the 1988 campaign, Ted Koppel of "Nightline" asked ABC News correspondent Jackie Judd whether she had ever reported on the substance of Quayle's views, "rather than the image of Dan Quayle."

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"Give me a minute to think about that," she said, and hesitated. "I have to tell you I think not."

The sorry portrait of Quayle that emerged from this kind of coverage—and the sheer volume of it—left an indelible imprint on public opinion.

Yet the news media once described Quayle very differently. Until his nomination to the vice presidency, Washington correspondents praised Quayle with the kind of superlatives that inevitably brought him to the attention of people like, well, George Bush. If Quayle was not a household name as a senator, neither was he obscure. According to *The Ultimate Insiders: U.S. Senators in the National Media*, by Stephen Hess, Quayle received virtually the same level of press coverage as Sen. Lloyd Bentsen, against whose "stature" his own would be unfavorably compared.

Moreover, journalists' assessments of Quayle during this period were consistently laudatory. A few examples:

- Early in his first term as the junior senator from Indiana (1981-87), the *Chicago Tribune* put Quayle among an elite group of six "rising stars" in the United States Congress.
- In 1984, veteran *New York Times* reporter Hedrick Smith said in a front-page article that Quayle "has emerged as a leader of the 16 Republicans elected in 1980."
- In 1985, *Congressional Quarterly* said Quayle "has built a reputation as a pragmatic, thoughtful senator with an interest in finding ways to make the Senate work more efficiently." In addition, *CQ* said, he had created "a smoothly running constituent service operation."
- In 1985, the *New York Times* reported on a study listing Quayle among "the twelve most underrated members of Congress." The twelve senators were chosen, the *Times* said, because "they are unpretentious, rarely partisan legislative professionals who are candid, well-informed, and not prone to self-promotion."

- In 1986, *National Journal* credited Quayle with a "deft performance" in office. "Contrary to the predictions made in 1981, Quayle has been a Senate success story," the *Journal* continued. "He may not yet be in the top rank of senators in power or skill, but he has clearly made himself a force to be reckoned with. Some who have watched him believe that his potential is unbounded." The article listed only three senators as "potential Senate leaders." Quayle was one of them.

- In 1988, *Politics in America* said: "Quayle today is seen as a diligent senator willing to work on complicated defense issues and interested in reforming Senate procedures to make the chamber function more efficiently."

- In 1988, *The Almanac of American Politics* said: "In the Senate, Quayle has been one of the most active and successful members of the Republican class of 1980. . . . Dan Quayle brings to the Senate sunny good looks, a cheerful temperament, and an inclination that many observers found surprising to dig into issues, do his homework, and come up with workmanlike legislative solutions to problems of government." The write-up concluded that "Quayle is not a political accident, but a fortunate young man with good political instincts."

- National newspapers continued to report on Quayle's work in the Senate right up until Bush introduced him in New Orleans. The *Wall Street Journal* followed Quayle's successful effort to clarify the INF treaty well into 1988, featuring prominent articles about—and also by—Quayle. Eleven days before Bush announced his vice presidential choice, Quayle's photograph appeared in the *New York Times*, with mention of his role as leader of Republican opposition to a pending defense bill.

What had Quayle done to deserve such coverage? For one thing, there was his legislative record, a brief summary of which would include the following: he played a key role in securing Senate approval of the sale of AWACS

surveillance aircraft to Saudi Arabia; introduced a comprehensive tax-reform plan in 1982, before Bill Bradley unveiled similar legislation; authored and won approval of a bill that he and others would later view as his finest legislative accomplishment—the Job Training Partnership Act of 1982; headed a panel to study Senate procedural problems in 1984 and developed reforms which, though ultimately rejected, were said by the *Almanac of American Politics* to "address genuine problems sensibly"; secured enactment of two key defense procurement reforms; won Senate approval of a measure that required American and Soviet negotiators to close a loophole in the INF treaty; and was chosen to lead Republican opposition in the Senate to major trade and defense legislation.

Moreover, there was his political record, which included two House races and two Senate campaigns—all victorious. Quayle was recruited in 1976, according to *The Making of a Senator: Dan Quayle*, by Richard F. Fenno, Jr., only after "all the obvious, experienced candidates had declined to run" against a "very popular" eight-term congressman, Ed Roush. Quayle was 29, had no electoral experience, trailed in the polls 61-27, and "almost no one believed he could win." He won.

In 1980, he challenged Birch Bayh, an 18-year Senate veteran and one-time presidential contender whose polls showed him forty points ahead of Quayle. "Very few people thought [Quayle] could win," Fenno writes. He won again. When re-elected in 1986, Quayle received a higher percentage of votes than any previous candidate for the U.S. Senate from Indiana.

This was the Quayle that George Bush selected as his running mate, and in introducing him in New Orleans, Bush stressed the praise that had been heaped on Quayle in the media: "Senator Quayle is one of the rising stars in the Republican Party. In fact, the *National Journal* called him a Senate success story."

The rest, as they say, is history. □

BEN STEIN'S DIARY



THE WONDER YEARS RECEDE

by Benjamin J. Stein

Friday

I can't sleep anymore, so I got up at seven and took Trixie for a walk. At this hour, West Hollywood is quiet and even delightful. One of the legion of doormen at the Shoreham Rock'n'Roll Towers walked along with me and talked about conditions in his native Ethiopia. He was not looking forward to any great changes in his country, he said, even now that Mengistu has been thrown out.

"The problem," he said, "is that we have too many provinces, and they do not want to be in one country, and they all have arms, and they kill each other, and that won't stop."

At the desk of my building, an attractive blue-eyed woman talked to the concierge. We rode up in the elevator together and I learned she lived next-door to me. She's a well-known TV reporter and anchorwoman. "I don't handle the fluffy stuff," she said. "I handle hard news, like the Oscars, what's happening at the ski resorts. Not fashion or lifestyle pieces. I was trained at Ohio State and it was pretty serious."

A series of frantic calls back and forth to New York to fact-check items in a story by yours truly about a player in a collapsing daisy chain scheme who happens to insure people's lives. My fact-checker was a woman "from the Islands" in the Caribbean who could barely speak English, had almost no background in finance (no, make that *no* background), and also could not stay near the phone long enough to take my calls. It was left to her boss, a man in his fifties who is a true genius, to finish the job.

When I consider the general level of productivity of younger workers, and their general lack of connection with the larger world, I tremble. Just as if to emphasize my point, the phone rings and it's Wendy, a beautiful woman whose father has offered to pay her way through law school. The problem

is that she cannot really stand to take tests, mostly because she prefers to ski. Also, she is not quite sure exactly what a law is, and wonders if lawyers get to make up laws as they go along. Maybe she's got it right. Myres McDougal had a theory that lawyers could do exactly that. Legal realism. Could Wendy, on her ski slopes in her little bunny outfit, have come upon the same theory as McDougal and Harold Lasswell? From Squaw Valley to the Sterling Law Library at Yale? It could happen.

Out to a meeting at a TV production company, where a group of us sat around and talked about a TV show which would star little *moi*. It would be about a man who was frozen in a Defense Department experiment in 1955, then thawed in 1991, and how he adjusts to being back in a world he never made. I would play the guy who was frozen.

On the way back from the meeting, a TV producer told me she was making a MOW (movie of the week) about teenage sex. "We've just discovered," she said, "that teenage girls have sex largely to express their unhappiness and to get back at their parents and to get attention. This has just been discovered since 1990, and we think it's worth making a movie about."



A nap in my little condo, which is about the highest point in Los Angeles, and then back to a meeting at a hotel with a major league producer. On the way, I ran into totally stopped traffic, what we call a "sig-alert," on La Cienega. One schmuck in an ancient Oldsmobile had crashed into one crummy stop sign, and hundreds of cars were immobilized, along with their drivers. A metaphor for life. I sat in the car with Trixie and ate candy. She started to get so nervous that she threw up. That's how it is here. The traffic makes even the dogs sick.

My car phone rang. It was a call from Tricia, the mother of a lovely girl of about sixteen who was badly injured in her school during her drama lighting class when several huge lights fell on her. The girl was in a coma for two weeks, and then recovered almost completely. The family is suing the school, and Mom is really upset.

"My lawyer tells me that Tanya [the daughter] could easily get a million dollars, but Bruce and I won't get a thing. That means she could be rich and we wouldn't be rich. And I asked her if she would lend me \$200,000 for the down payment on a new house, and she just laughed at me. I mean, how long have I been wanting a house with a gourmet kitchen? And who stood at Tanya's bedside all those nights while she was in a coma? And now I'm not supposed to get a new house out of it? I really can't believe how selfish my own daughter is. Maybe you could talk to her."

This could be just coincidence, but Trixie threw up again just as I put down the car phone.

The producer was staying in a bungalow at the Beverly Hills Hotel. He was an emaciated man reading a newsletter about gold bullion. "You look familiar," he said to me. "You look like that economist Herbert Stein. Do you know him?"

"He's my father," I said. "That's why I look like him. Knowing him by itself would not have the same effect."

"That's what I like about you, boy-

chik," the producer said. "You're well spoken. That goes pretty far in this world. You're well thought and well spoken."

The producer wants me to write a feature about what happens if Moses comes back to earth and sees whether or not people are following the Ten Commandments. He gave me a few general commandments of his own about "arc" and "franchise" and then showed me photos of his new estate in Scotland. He's a Brooklyn boy who made money producing pictures, and now he's about to become a laird in some poor valley near Perth.

Someday I am going to wake up and life will make sense. I hope so. Maybe not. The producer waved his hands around and jumped up and down and told me how the script should go, and I watched him. I was wearing a jacket from Polo and a Hermes tie, and he was wearing jeans and a sweatshirt. What can that mean?

The producer patted me on the back and told me that he was sure it would be a great movie, and that we should certainly expect Kevin Costner to play in it.

I drove out to Malibu and watched the sun set over toward Santa Cruz Island. I got a telephone call from my friend Earl, a yacht salesman in Miami who is losing his mind from worry about money. I got a call from my pal Lenny, who is marketing the world's best suntan lotion, made with his very own "tri-solar" compound, which may or may not be baby oil. He is also losing his mind from worry about money.

The gravity of money. I used to make enough of it so that I felt weightless. I could buy anything I wanted except real estate. It was great. It was like being high all of the time. I can see why people would commit huge scams and crimes over it. I don't make much money any longer, and I feel its mighty gravity pulling me down to earth. In a way it's a good thing.

A call from my pal Wanda, a young woman who goes to the same self-help

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