

O'Connor in which Bush reminded his eminence that he is a long-time friend of the family.)

God knows it took an alchemist's skill to turn McCain, the card-carrying self-avowed Reaganite, into a dangerous liberal, as Bush succeeded in doing with Republican voters in South Carolina. And Bush kept the liberal blitz up, cornering the Republican vote by capitalizing on such McCain performances as ripping into tobacco companies and televangelist extremists like Pat Robertson. But when Bush gets the nomination, that dog won't hunt, as they say in Texas; he is damaged goods.

Heaven Help Us

As early as 1993, writes Ivins, Rove groomed Bush, ordering him to stick to the script, and to stay "on message." That rote-like coaching continues, with a reading list of books and titles, foreign and domestic affairs advisors (many from Daddy's network) and "on

message" edicts which have improved his debate performances. When Bush flies solo we get "Kosovarians," "full exposure" for full disclosure, and such hilarious mixed metaphors as John McCain "can't take the high horse and claim the low road."

Ivins ponders a point that should be examined by any voter seeking enlightenment. "From the record it appears that he doesn't know much, doesn't do much and doesn't care much about governing. The exception is a sustained effort on education with only mixed results. In fact, given his record, it's kind of hard to figure out why he wants a job where he's expected to govern." Why, indeed. Bush promises to do for America what he has done for Texas. Heaven help America.

This is a slim book (179 pages). But then Bush has a slim record. As Ivins and Dubose write, if readers find Bush's resume "a little light, don't blame us. There's really not much there there. We have been looking for six years." ●

Double Legacy

Have a political childhood and eight years under Clinton prepared Al Gore for the presidency?

By Jacob Heilbrunn

BILL CLINTON MAY NOT, AS AL GORE defiantly declared during the impeachment process, be one of the "greatest" American presidents, but he is certainly the most successful Democratic one since Harry Truman.

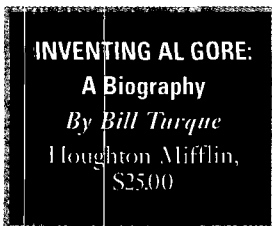
John F. Kennedy was tragically murdered before he could realize his vision of a New Frontier. Lyndon B. Johnson's presidency ended in the jungles of Vietnam. Jimmy Carter was knee-capped by the economy and the storming of the American embassy in Iran.

Today, the situation could not be more different. Crime and inflation are down, while employment is up. The stock market is booming. Welfare is at a historic low. The budget has been balanced. As the economy continues to surge and American preeminence remains unchallenged abroad, Clinton's key role in transforming the United States is

starting to become appreciated among the more perceptive members of the right. In the *National Review*, for instance, Norman Podhoretz marveled at how Clinton has moved the Democratic party back to the center, thereby condemning the GOP to impotence.

Podhoretz correctly noted that Clinton has turned the old McGovern wing into a rump faction by embracing everything from a balanced budget to welfare reform to school uniforms. Likewise, in foreign affairs, Clinton has not been averse to using military power to forward Wilsonian goals, while the GOP returns to older isolationist impulses. At

the same time, Clinton has profited immensely from the nature of his domestic enemies: A key turning point in the fortunes of the GOP was the impeachment hearings, where the social conservatives spun out of control. The current battles among conservatives over John McCain and George W. Bush and the role of the religious right are stage two of a meltdown



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created by the successes of the Clinton presidency.

But if Clinton has set the stage for American prosperity, no one might do more to solidify his legacy than Al Gore. In *Inventing Al Gore*, Bill Turque, a veteran *Newsweek* reporter, closely examines the vice president's life and political odyssey. As the son of Senator Albert Gore, Al was always in the political arena. Turque deftly explores his relationship with his parents, his undergraduate years at Harvard, his brief stint in Vietnam, his service in the House and Senate, and his vice-presidency. Turque has conducted numerous interviews and dug deeply into Gore's record. The result is the most substantial and illuminating biography of Gore to appear.

And yet, for all his legwork, Turque falls into the trap of trying to expose character flaws and hypocrisy in Gore. Clinton's personal foibles, coupled with the tabloidization of the media, have apparently made sensationalistic revelations a must for reporters who are pushed by their editors to substitute tawdry details for analysis. In the case of the rectitudinous Gore, however, this method is a little like searching for the hidden scholar in Dan Quayle. To be sure, Turque does provide some interesting information on the Gore family's dealings with the crooked tycoon Armand Hammer. But that isn't what has caused a bit of a stir: Turque's book has received pre-publicity for its "revelation" that, according to a somewhat dubious former friend of Gore's, the vice president was a heavier pot-smoker than he had previously let on. My, my. This is supposed to be shocking? If true, does it render Gore unfit to be president? Turque does not say.

Similarly, Turque tries to make heavy weather out of Gore's visit to the Buddhist temple, his claim that he invented the Internet, and his champagne toast to Chinese leader Li Peng. These acts, Turque says, "tether him even more securely to all that the country wishes to forget about the Clinton years." Not only is it unclear just what the country wishes to forget about the Clinton years, but Turque's insinuations about Gore fail to make a dent. Gore is hardly beyond reproach, but his missteps did not amount to serious offenses. Indeed, it would be a pity if Turque's seemingly obligatory sniping were to obscure the Gore who emerges from this dogged research—a moderate Democrat who, far from reinventing himself, has consistently recognized the importance of technology, the environment, and globalization.

As Turque notes, Gore inherited his interest in these issues from his father. Decisively shaped by his hardscrabble years in Tennessee, Albert Gore Sr. was a New Deal Democrat who saw how big-government

projects like the Tennessee Valley Authority could help the little guy. He was a classic Southern Democrat who never veered to the far left, but did push for civil rights, opposed the Vietnam War, and worked to curb the arms race. It's easy to poke fun at his flowery rhetoric, as Turque does, but contrasted with the politically retrograde blow-dried mannequins who people the Senate today, Albert Sr. comes off looking pretty good.

Where Turque shines is in showing the influence that both Gore's mother, as well as his father, had upon him. Gore's mother was the driving force in the family, a classic no-nonsense Southern woman who pushed her husband and son to excel in politics. She played a big part in her husband's congressional and senatorial campaigns, and "when Gore ran his first congressional race in 1976, Pauline was a critical behind-the-scenes player, working her own intricate network of contacts and acquaintances to jump-start her son's candidacy."

Albert Sr., Turque shows, was intent from the outset on turning his son into presidential timber, and even made sure his birth was announced on the front-page of *The Tennessean*. "The public truth of Al Gore's childhood," writes Turque, "was that he lived in a world of privilege and material advantage, created by two striving children of the Depression who endowed him with an immense self-assurance and sense of mission. The personal truth is that those same parental gifts exacted a steep emotional cost."

But the latter assertion may be something of a cliché. Gore seems to have enjoyed himself at St. Albans, and he flourished at Harvard. In the tumultuous '60s, Gore stuck out as a man of Southern reserve but his cool head kept him from lurching into any kind of infantile leftism. One key experience was meeting Harvard instructor Martin Peretz, later publisher of *The New Republic*, under whose influence Gore became chairman of Tennessee Youth for Eugene McCarthy. According to Turque, "Peretz saw in Gore some of the same aversion to dogma and doctrine that would lead to his own estrangement from the left before the end of the antiwar movement." As an adviser to Gore, Peretz has shaped many of Gore's tough stances on foreign policy, and would undoubtedly play a major role in a Gore administration as a member of his kitchen cabinet.

Gore was almost the only member the Harvard class of 1969 to join the army. He also volunteered to go to Vietnam. Why? According to Turque, "Gore's motivations were a mix of familial obligation and personal ambition, and shipping out was the last full measure of devotion to the senator's cause." His father was

embroiled at the time in a vicious fight with Republican candidate William Brock for re-election to the Senate. Brock ran a smear campaign, a prototype of later Republican efforts. "Bill Brock Believes in the Things We Believe In," Brock's ads stated, a coded appeal to white resentment against blacks. Gore's father lost. Al never forgot the defeat—a reason, though Turque does not mention it, for his present toughness on the campaign trail.

Back from Vietnam, Gore went to divinity school and worked as a local reporter. He was determined to do good, but, in his own recollection, became frustrated by the limitations of newspaper stories. He didn't just want to report news; he wanted to make it. In 1976 he won a House seat. Even though he was finally following the career his father had chosen for him, he refused to allow his father to play an active role in the race, for fear that he would be tagged a raging liberal. The presidency was never far from his mind: His father declared that Al was "starting out one year earlier than I did, so maybe that means he'll go one step farther." Turque astutely observes that the 28-year-old Gore was quite conscious about not appearing too much the whipper-snapper: He began to part his hair down the side, not the middle, and stuck to the blue suit, white shirt, and red tie which became his "campaign uniform." Gore also was careful not to run the risk of appearing too much the liberal, like his father. He declared that homosexuality was "abnormal," opposed additional gun-registration laws, and supported the Hyde amendment barring federal assistance in ending pregnancies that resulted from rape or incest.

Gore's big issues, of course, were the environment and the arms race. But he was careful never to go too far. When one environmentalist challenged him to oppose a pork-barrel dam in Tennessee, Gore was unmoved. "What do you want me to do?" he replied. "Commit political suicide?" Gore also assembled the staff that would form the backbone of his run for the presidency in 2000. He became pals with Tom Downey, then a congressman, now a big fundraiser for Gore, as well as Peter Knight, also a fundraiser. On foreign policy, the most important aide he had was Leon Fuerth, a former pilot and Foreign Service officer who tutored him on nuclear policy. Gore made a name for himself by trying to reach a compromise between the unilateral disarmers in the Democratic Party and the hawks in the Reagan administration who wanted to squander vast sums on an MX missile. Gore came up with a compromise called the midgetman. In the end, it all proved moot

when Mikhail Gorbachev agreed to even more sweeping arms-control concessions than had been thought possible.

In 1984, Gore won back his old man's seat in the Senate. When he was sworn in, Turque reports, Albert Sr. told Martin Peretz, "This is the beginning." Gore became even more driven. "His hair got shorter," says Turque, "his suits even more conservative, and his tolerance for imperfect staff work sank to zero... the House years had been a dress rehearsal for a bigger production that had just begun." After a disastrous run for the presidency in 1988, Gore signed on with Clinton in 1992. Turque believes the two men complement each other: "where Clinton's lies have been those of self-protection and survival, Gore's have by and large been ones of self-aggrandizement and glorification." Though Turque thinks that Gore's are lesser transgressions, putting it this way actually makes them sound worse. But although inexpedient, it's not clear that gilding the lily as Gore has done is really all that different from what most politicians try to pull off when boasting of their accomplishments.

Turque is at his most interesting in discussing Gore's deep distrust of the advisers Clinton had clustered around him. Gore saw them as loose-lipped and disloyal, which has turned out to be pretty much right. Gore was also exasperated by the administration's early fecklessness on foreign policy. According to Turque, he pushed Clinton to launch a retaliatory attack against Baghdad for trying to assassinate George Bush when he visited Kuwait and also took a tough line on the Balkans. Perhaps Gore's most significant efforts have come with establishment of bilateral commissions with Ukraine and Russia. "Gore's diplomacy persuaded Ukrainian officials to return to Russia the remnants of the nuclear missile arsenal in its possession." On domestic policy, Gore was crucial in getting Clinton to sign on to welfare reform and he pushed for the "reinvention of government" which, while not an unqualified success, resulted in the Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act of 1994.

As president, Gore would be in a position to pursue the policies already laid out by the Clinton administration. While he does not possess Clinton's rhetorical skills, he will be a much harder target for the right to assail. Now that the attempt to destroy Clinton has sputtered out and Gore looks like he may well win the presidency, conservatives will realize that in part they really were right. Clinton *was* a devilish opponent. He has positioned the Democrats to control the White House for another eight years. ●

Avoiding the Triangulation Trap

Reforming liberalism without abandoning it

By Stephen Pomper

KENNETH BAER'S *Reinventing Democrats* IS A history of the Democratic Leadership Council written with the detached objectivity of a hometown sports columnist covering the local team in a pen-
nant race. The DLC (they're the home team) was formed in the mid-1980s by a group of reform-minded Democrats hoping to resurrect the Party after two crushing defeats by the Reagan juggernaut. Since then, the Party has been transformed from the Party of McGovern—associated with peaceniks and radicals, free-flowing entitlements, and unwieldy bureaucracy—to the Party of Clinton—the man who presided over welfare reform and declared that “the era of big government is over.” Baer wants to credit the DLC (and its “New Democrat” followers) for recognizing that the Democrats’ McGovern-era politics “repelled the working class and middle class voters who were once at the heart of the [Democratic] coalition” and for having the vision, tenacity, and political smarts to change the Party’s course.

Despite Baer’s evident sympathies, *Reinventing Democrats* is a detailed, accessible, and useful account of how an important political institution made friends and influenced people. But the book is a lot less appealing when it goes after the opposition—not the GOP, but the old liberal wing of the Party. Baer tends to hit the liberals in spots where the DLC ought to be a bit sensitive itself. And in suggesting that the Party cast off its liberal heritage, Baer fails to acknowledge the presence in that tradition of certain core values worth retaining.

Game Plan

If you imagine the DLC as a team, then the captain would have to be Al From. A veteran of the Carter administration, From took over the House Democratic Caucus after the 1980 elections with visions of rejuvenating his ailing party. He had some natural allies. As Baer points out, there were at least three strains of Democratic pols who felt the party needed redirec-

tion—Southern Democrats like Sen. Sam Nunn and Sen. Lawton Chiles, neoconservatives like Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and neoliberals like Rep. Tim Wirth and Sen. Gary Hart. Although they came to their views from different angles, they wound up agreeing on many of the same positions: They believed that the Democratic Party should be tougher on crime and foreign policy, less spendthrift with entitlements, and less indulgent of entrenched special interests like civil servants and unions. They also thought that moving the party in this direction would “restore its electoral viability” with the middle class that had deserted it for Ronald Reagan.

How did a group of elite politicians and operatives transform a political party?

First, they gave themselves a little bit of distance. After several unsuccessful attempts to influence the party establishment from within, the reformers formed the DLC as an extra-party organization in 1985. This avoided what Bruce Babbitt referred to as the “Noah’s Ark problem”—the need to satisfy diverse constituents by taking representative positions on behalf of each one. They could also raise their own money (which DLC honchos like Virginia’s Chuck Robb were notably good at), start their own think tank (the Progressive Policy Institute), and publicize their own views without tangling with the cumbersome Party bureaucracy.

Second, they worked the rules. They pressured the party to create a new class of “super delegates” consisting of state party leaders and elected officials who, they hoped, would balance out the interest groups that had come to dominate Democratic conventions. They also lobbied to cluster Southern and Western state primaries on “Super Tuesday,” so that candidates who were strong in that part of the country (especially conservative Southern Democrats) would get an early boost that could offset a poor showing in more liberal Iowa or New Hampshire.

Third, they aimed for the top. After the

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