

# Lonesome George takes it on the chin

"The Congress will push me to raise taxes, and I'll say no, and they'll push me, and I'll say no. And they'll push again. And I'll say to them: Read my lips, no new taxes."

George Bush,  
August 18, 1988

It has been a rough week for most of us, but especially George Bush. Republican congressmen facing congressional elections have publicly denounced the president, abandoning him in his hour of need like rats fleeing a sinking ship. The rich are demanding blood, and anti-tax conservatives are urging people like Housing Secretary Jack Kemp to quit his cabinet post, get in touch with his feelings, and whip up a major hate campaign against tax increases. Even the man who stood by Nixon and later Reagan during their darkest days, Pat Buchanan, looks worried.

The shame and humiliation heaped upon George Bush during the past week have taken their toll. The president was forced to flee Washington for the west coast, winding up in Honolulu this weekend feeling rejected and betrayed. His early morning jogs on the beach were empty and lifeless. Old women shook their fists with rage, children screamed filthy curses, cheerleaders threw

medical waste and mutilated themselves.

Later, alone in his desolate, empty room, George tried to console himself. A hint of a smile flashed across his face as he recalled that the Senate failed to override his veto of the Civil Rights Bill.

He chuckled out loud as he went over the details of his administration's latest Supreme Court case, the one that would ban counseling on abortion at federally funded family planning clinics, despite the fee-speech "thing."

Good, healthy laughter rose from deep within him as he realized that congress would never override his veto of the Family Leave Bill; that no workers would be guaranteed six weeks unpaid leave for childbirth or medical emergencies.

But his joy was short lived. Vice President Dan Quayle had referred to the election process in this country as "the political silly season," Senator Bob Dole was advising the president to "Join the Red Cross," and National Republican Congressional Committee Co-chair Ed Rollins was frantically urging everyone who would listen to him to "campaign against the budget bill and the president's leadership."

I don't think President Bush will be able to bear much more

of this treachery. This is the man who brought us a thousand points of light, who saved the country from Michael Dukakis, who stood up to Saddam Hussein. George Bush has devoted his life to serving the public, and now he is being shunned like a leper with the Black Plague and foul breath.

The American people can be so ungrateful and cruel...

## QUINN SOLEM

I became emotionally troubled and shamed by the injustice George Bush was being forced to endure. I wound up walking the streets of East Erie late one night, whispering harshly to myself while the rain soaked my clothes. I finally broke down completely, leaned up against a grimy cinder block wall, and sobbed for what seemed like hours...

Eventually I recovered and looked around. On a street corner ahead a hazy neon light flickered "The Get Stabbed Bar" in the darkness. I remembered Rob Prindle saying that a visit to one of the small provincial "Pubs," found on almost every street

corner of the East Side, would add cultural seasoning to the rich mix of exotic Erie night life. Rob never lies, not even in print, so I was certain that friendly people, good food, and inexpensive drinks waited for me on the other side of the bar's rusty, steel-painted door.

Inside I was cheerfully greeted by the barmaid, a hearty 300 pound woman with no front teeth and a minor speech impediment. She wiped off the bar with one swipe of her massive forearm, banged a can of Stroh's down in front of me, then rushed off to referee a chain-fight in the ladies room.

The gentleman sitting on the stool next to me must have known that I needed to talk. When I looked over at him, taking in every detail of his carefully groomed appearance, he perceptively asked "You got a problem, buddy?"

I began to relate the terrible saga of George Bush, the golden boy of the GOP, abandoned by his party and shamed by an openly biased media. As I talked he scraped dried blood from under his fingernails with an ice pick, and carefully pondered the meaning of my words.

"Yeah, but Bush lied about no new taxes," the man said. "He flat out lied."

"The Democrats made him do it," I cried! "The pushed, and

pushed, and pushed until he couldn't take it any more. He's been under tremendous pressure lately."

"That what all you guys say, but the president's been planning to raise taxes since around January," he growled, as he carefully picked glass shards from his face.

"No, those were User Fees, not taxes," I explained. "There's no comparison."

"Look, all I know is that I have to pay more for gas, beer, and smokes," he fumed. "I use all those things, so you can call it a user fee, but I call it a tax."

"But what about all the great things President Bush has done for this country? Doesn't that count for anything," I asked?

"What great things? He gives the rich tax loop-holes, the economy is a mess, we're about to go to war and nobody knows why, and everyone is losing faith in the government."

"Is there anything else you have against George Bush," I asked fearfully?

"Yeah," he said. "He shouldn't have married his mother."

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# Oh, the excitement of war-talk radio

by Mike Royko

Poking the car radio buttons, I thought I had come across a sports call-in show. The voice was saying: "You gotta have a plan, and you gotta get in there and win."

I was about to punch the button because there is nothing more terrible to hear than sports call-in shows, with those seething fans demanding that a coach be lynched, a quarterback set afire, or--even worse--concocting trades. ("Hey, why don't the Cubs trade, uh, this Luis Salazar for, uh, Jose Canseco, huh? Whatya think?")

But before I could hit the button, the host of the show asked if the caller meant we should just seize Kuwait or obliterate most of Iraq and kill Saddam Hussein.

The caller thought about that for a moment, and then said: "I'm not sure. One or the other. But we got to do it fast."

A moment later, a sweet, grandmotherly voice came on. She had no strategy or timetable, but she wanted it known that "I'm behind the boys over there. We should all get behind the boys over there."

Next came an elderly gent who favored a no-nonsense, total annihilation approach. "We ought

to blast 'em so hard we turn all that sand into glass."

Before I got downtown and parked, I heard all sorts of war game plans: Blast Iraq with everything we can put in the air; demand that Japan junk the constitution we gave them so it can send troops over there; set a deadline, start a countdown, and if Saddam doesn't jump when the alarm clock rings, pow, we remove Iraq from the map.

I truly regretted having to turn off my radio and leave my car. Maybe I've become jaded, but I no longer care if a coach is or isn't exiled in disgrace; which quarterback is humiliated before that's the way it goes, and she's behind the boys over there, you have to hear the little tremble and squeak in her voice to fully appreciate the depths of patriotism.

I don't know why we don't have more radio call-in shows of this sort. Instead of still another sports-talk open line, we should have more war-talk open lines. Maybe programming directors don't know it, but when this thing breaks out, and the bombs are falling, the rockets soaring, and the tanks rolling, the infantry charging, the buildings disintegrating, and the bodies bouncing, it is going to be big. Bigger than the World Series,

bigger than the Rose Bowl, bigger than the Sugar Bowl, even bigger --and I hope nobody thinks I'm irrelevant for saying this--



Mike Royko

than the Super Bowl. Well, maybe not the Super Bowl, but almost.

So I hope more radio stations open their lines. If I thought I could get through, I'd wait on hold for a week just to get in my two cents.

All I want is my minute or

two so I can say: "I'm Jack in Naperville and I think we should stop fooling around and blast Iraq back to the Stone Age and then go in and keep Kuwait for ourselves and keep Iraq for ourselves; then all the oil will be ours and we can sell it to Japan and jack up prices, and then we can make them give us back all of our golf courses."

"And while I'm on the line, how about if we trade Luis for Jose, huh?"

His mother's eyes; and whether Luis is traded for Jose. Every season, every sport, it's the same stuff; only the games and names change.

But mass death and destruction, fire in the sky, body parts flying every which way--that's something worth calling a radio station and venting a spleen.

And the call-in format makes it much more invigorating than when Ted Koppel gathers his flock of staid White House officials, thin-lipped think-tankers, quibbling congressman and wild-eyed Arab diplomats. All they think about are our options, U.N. resolutions, the hints of possible negotiations, and President Bush's resolve to halt the spread of aggression. you hear now hint of negotiations, you've heard them all.

It makes me envy the talk show hosts and, even more, those who have the patience to sit with phone to ear, kept on hold for hours on end, maybe days, so they can go on the air to say we should bash Saddam, or bash Kuwait's rich emir, or bash Israel, or bash somebody.

And the best part of it is that they don't even have to give their names, so no disagreeable person can say to them: "You know, that was really an idiotic idea, and I ought to punch you out." It's just Joe or Sally or Ernie might be Phil. And who's to know if Joe might not really be Ed? Or that Ernie might be Phil? It doesn't matter. They can say what they wish and be heard by a vast radio audience, possibly shaping the considered opinions of others.

Why am I envious? Because I, too, have a strong opinion on the Mideast crisis, but if I express them, people will know they are mine and will sputter on the phone or write unkind letters.

Besides, it doesn't come across in print the way it does on the radio. When an old granny says that if we have to spill blood,

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