

'Politics of Personal Destruction' Began in Bush's '92 Campaign

by Edward Spannaus

It is more than a little ironic to hear George W. Bush and his campaign team decrying the Clinton scandals of the past eight years, or to hear Bush the Younger declare that "I want to change the tone of Washington to civility and respect."

The scandals of the last eight years were *all* an outgrowth of Bush the Elder's 1992 campaign.

In fact, it goes back even before 1992. Scarcely had George Bush taken office in 1989, when he deployed Lee Atwater, who headed Bush's Opposition Research in the 1988 campaign (remember the Willie Horton ads?), to Little Rock to dig up dirt on Bill Clinton. Atwater had a staff of 35 during the '88 campaign, which had grown to 40 by 1989, and continued to be housed at the Republican National Committee.

Bush was looking ahead, and he had determined that Clinton would be a formidable opponent in the 1992 Presidential election, so Bush wanted to ensure Clinton's defeat in the 1990 gubernatorial race in Arkansas. Atwater said that he would work with local Republicans "to throw everything we can at Clinton—drugs, women, whatever works."

The same nest of Clinton's enemies with which Atwater made contact in 1989, later become the key informants for Bush's 1992 campaign, as well as for the lazy vultures of the news media who fed on stories handed to them by the Bush campaign and other anti-Clinton operatives in Arkansas.

An unnamed Republican opposition researcher told *U.S. News & World Report* in 1992: "If you get 70% of the work done, that's about enough for reporters to follow up. If you give them 30%, most won't do the story."

In the book *The Hunting of the President*, by Joe Conason and Gene Lyons, it is recounted how a Bush aide whom Clinton knew, urged Clinton not to run for President in 1992, and not to try and deprive Bush of a second term. "We think you're the only one who can beat him," the Bush aide told Clinton. "And if you run this time, you'll never be able to run for anything again."

And of course Clinton was hit with numerous scandalous allegations. Most widely publicized were the "bimbo eruptions," as they came to be known, the most prominent of which was Gennifer Flowers's totally unsubstantiated story of a 12-year affair with Governor Clinton—which, among other things, included stories about trysts at a famous Little Rock hotel, two years before the hotel was even built.

Sex and Whitewater

As an article in the March 5, 1999 *EIR* showed, both the Whitewater and the sex scandals aimed at Clinton, came out of the Bush campaign.

In early September 1992, a politically motivated and baseless "referral" was made from the Resolution Trust Corp. to the Justice Department, alleging criminal wrongdoing in the Madison Guarantee Savings and Loan case by Bill and Hillary Clinton. Both Bush's Attorney General William Barr and Bush's White House Counsel C. Boyden Gray intervened to try and get a criminal investigation of the Clintons opened before the election. They didn't succeed at the time, but by January 1994, after Clinton was in office, an independent counsel was appointed.

The second avenue of Bush campaign opposition research and dirty tricks, revolved around investigations of Bill Clinton's personal life. Chicago businessman Peter W. Smith (a major bankroller of Newt Gingrich's GOPAC) began financing an investigation into Clinton's sex life during the 1992 campaign, and put at least \$80,000 into these efforts up through March 1994. Much of the research was conducted and supervised by attorney Richard W. Porter, who was Special Assistant to the President (Bush) in 1990-91, then Counsellor to the Vice-President (Quayle) during 1992, and who then became a partner in Kenneth Starr's law firm, Kirkland and Ellis. In the summer of 1994, Starr and Porter worked together on preparing an *amicus curiae* brief to support Paula Jones's argument against Bill Clinton.

Later, Porter was to become one of the "elves"—the network of Federalist Society-linked young lawyers who operated behind the scenes to create secret channels of communication between Paula Jones's lawyers, Independent Counsel Starr's office, and reporters who were digging around the emerging Monica Lewinsky story.

Opposition research by the Bush-Quayle campaign delved into other areas as well, such as trying to prove that Bill Clinton had been a Soviet agent ever since his visit to Moscow in 1969. Some pro-Bush State Department employees rifled through Clinton's passport files, looking for any derogatory information, or, even better, evidence of treason. (This resulted in the appointment of an independent counsel to probe the passport inquiries.)

After the elections, Smith renewed his project from the 1992 campaign, getting David Brock of the Richard Mellon Scaife-bankrolled *American Spectator* to come to Little Rock to meet with two renegade Arkansas state troopers. This led to the infamous "Troopergate" article in the *American Spectator* in late December 1993, that led to the Paula Jones civil suit, and that suit eventually gave Starr the "perjury" and "obstruction of justice" hook to launch the Lewinsky investigation.

So, if George W. Bush wants to clean up the mess in Washington, he could start by 'fessing up about his father's responsibility for all this scandal-mongering.