

INDECISION '92

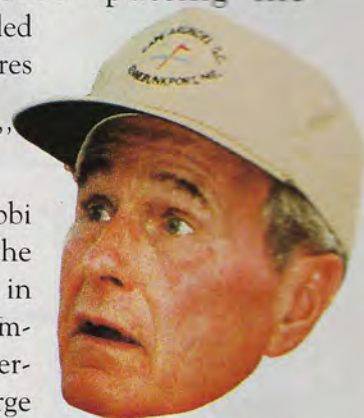


It's come to this: "George Bush *does not get it!*" said Georgia Governor Zell Miller, one of the keynoters at the Democratic National Convention. "Another male officeholder who *just doesn't get it,*" said Senator Bill Bradley the same night. "Hollywood *doesn't get it,*" said Dan Quayle the day after his handlers ordered him to step up his campaign against the "cultural elite." This being election season, the catchphrase crafters are out in force—putting the *dis* back into discourse—and they've concluded that "it" isn't being gotten. The inference being . . . being, well, *what?* That the desires of the American people are like a particularly obtuse traveling-salesman joke?

And she says, "Is that a domestic policy in your pocket or are you just happy to see me?" Um. . . I don't get it.

We all know, from hearing our moms try to tell the one about the priest, the rabbi and the imam in the rowboat, that when someone doesn't get it, it's more often the fault of the teller than of the listener. Never has this been more apparent than in 1992, the Year of the Disgruntled Voter. For a startlingly long stretch of the campaign, the polls showed the candidates' percentages of support hovering in the high twenties to the low thirties—numbers even George McGovern could have beaten. For a chilling 148 days, significant chunks of the electorate seriously considered voting for a half-pint paramilitarist Texas autocrat who espoused homilies, not ideas. For several months, right up until convention season, insurgent campaigns and eleventh-hour entries were rumored, promised, hoped for: Mario Cuomo, Richard Gephardt, Jack Kemp, Vice-President Jeane Kirkpatrick. For the length of the Perot campaign, the punditocracy was rife with speculation over the possibility of a House-brokered tiebreaker, the nuances of which would play out like an Elizabethan farce: *Bush cancels out Clinton, Foley demurs, Quayle shoots Gore, Gore's spirit passes into a chalice, the chalice falls on Pat Buchanan's head, and he's sworn in—as a Democrat!*

Now that we're in the homestretch, with the endorsements in place and the slander ads airing at regular intervals, the choices are clearer. But if the tumult of '92 has left you in a fog—if you *just don't get it*—we hope the next twelve pages will illuminate your navigations through the murky, mud-filled days leading up to November 3. You'll learn what the Northeast Rockefeller-Republican Establishment thinks of its wayward son George Bush, who never met a home state he didn't like. You'll recap the trials of Bill Clinton, the only candidate who can be accused of getting it too much and too often. You'll find out how we can solve the recession and at the same time have fun! And much, much more. Get it? Good.





By John Sedgwick

Is George Bush a Traitor to His Class?

Let's review that noblesse-oblige thing

he nearest George Bush came to campaigning in his hometown of Greenwich, Connecticut, during the primary season was when he attended a Texas-style hoedown inside Hangar No. 26 at the Westchester County Airport, in White Plains, New York. To the Muffy-and-Chip contingent, the event must have seemed like an alien invasion. There, just miles from the international epicenter of good taste, a whole vast airplane hangar had been dolled up like a high-school stage set of *Oklahoma!*, with cutesy picnic tables, smoky barbecue, "three-alarm" chili and, of all things, a hay bale-lined horseshoe pit. When asked what might be the Greenwich equivalent of this hootenanny, one nice lady in bright-pink shorts had to think for a second. "We'd probably have a lawn party," she said, "and play croquet."

The invitation said no jackets, no ties. But the guests couldn't bring themselves to get down quite that far. For the most part, the men hung loose by replacing their tasseled loafers with Weejuns sans socks. One fellow topped off his Levi's and T-shirt with a spanking double-breasted blazer with shiny brass buttons; he looked like a British admiral on a dude ranch. Only Greenwich's own Louis Bantle, the chairman and CEO of the parent company of U.S. Tobacco, who hosted the party for his good friend the president, affected much Texas style. He sported the biggest belt buckle ever seen in the Northeast. His wife wore a fringed cowgirl blouse. "Who in heaven's name are they?" someone behind me asked. "Roy Rogers and Dale Evans?"

In such a setting, one half-expected Sam Houston to come riding in on a horse. But no, the blue Air Force One Gulfstream that nosed up to the hangar disgorged President George Herbert Walker Bush



BRED FOR LEADERSHIP: GEORGE BUSH, CIRCA 1950, IN THE SHADOW OF HIS FATHER, PRESCOTT BUSH, RIGHT. ALSO, BARBARA, LEFT, SON GEORGE AND MOTHER DOROTHY.

looking, for the moment, very Andover '42 in his bankerish gray suit. After a quick trip to see his ailing 90-year-old mother in Greenwich, he clambered onstage with the other G.O.P. dignitaries. By now, Bush had cast off his jacket and tie and rolled up his sleeves to go Texan—despite the tiny, haute-prep “GB” embroidered on his shirt pocket, just over his heart. In shirtsleeves, he looked baggier and more gangly than usual, a bit like John Updike’s aging basketball player Rabbit Angstrom, who likewise made an uneasy transition from North to South. Bush sang along as his new pals the Oak Ridge Boys did a four-part-harmony version of the national anthem, which everybody else watched mutely.

After a brief, forgettable stump speech detailing his plans for the country, Bush plunged into the fun part: a game of horseshoes with the only three other people in the Northeast who play the game on any kind of regular basis. “Most of the horseshoes you see around here are on the bottom of horses,” the head of the Greenwich Republican Party admitted. Bush himself scored the game’s only ringer, which brought cheers from the party faithful. He also made the game’s single worst toss, which caused him to flick out his fingers and splutter “Oh, fffffffhthhhhhh.” This provoked no applause, of course, but it must have produced a few pang of fellow feeling from the observers. You can’t go “Oh, fffffffhthhhhhh” in public in Odessa, Texas, but it’s perfectly okay in Greenwich, Connecticut. Our roving president was home off the range.

It may be good politics for Bush to play up his Texas connection. But it makes for awkward psychology, producing the goofy, scattered individual who seems to have a fault line running right down the middle of his brain, with

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IN NAVAL FLIGHT-TRAINING, 1942.

the good ol' boy on one side and the preppy on the other. Texas and Connecticut aren't simply states; they represent the two polarities of American life. Overstatement versus understatement, six-packs versus teacups—the contrasts in tone and manner are endless, and all of them are currently at odds in George Bush's weirdly bifurcated soul. But these conflicting stylistic touches reflect the real battle underneath that rages far more deeply and, for the country's sake, far more fatefully within him—between his old-money roots and his new-money affectations.

Bush fled Connecticut, after all, because a life for him there seemed "pat and predictable," as he wrote in his autobiography, *Looking Forward*, and went to Texas in search of "something challenging, outside the established mold." He went, in short, to make his old money new.

The aristocrat and the entrepreneur have been jostling for position at the peak of society in America ever since the Constitution specifically outlawed titled nobility (Article I, Section IX) but rarely so openly as in the Eighties, when Reagan came to power. As a Hollywood actor who had been born poor, Reagan was certainly new money, and he introduced the country to its politics, with some unsavory results, as in a soaring deficit, an astonishing savings-and-loan debacle and a widening gap between rich and poor. When Bush took over, the old-money crowd had reason to hope its time had returned.

Until he boarded his now-famous Studebaker to try to make it as an independent oilman in a little shotgun house in Odessa, Texas, George Bush was as old money as they come. His genes were so pedigreed that, just before the 1988 election, Burke's Peerage announced that Bush had more connections to British and European royalty than any president in history. (Among other surprises, it turned out he was a distant cousin of Queen Elizabeth II.) And he grew up like an American prince. As a Greenwich resident, he lived

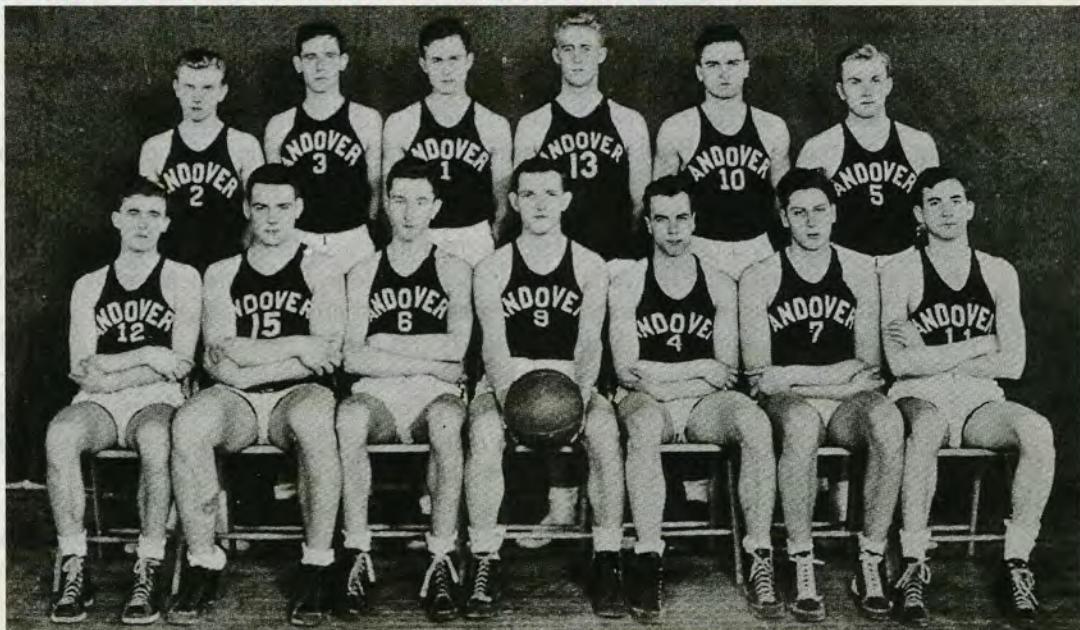
in one of the richest towns in America. Young Poppy was chauffeured to Greenwich Country Day, then attended Andover and Yale, where he received the supreme WASP accolade of being tapped for Skull and Bones.

In going to Texas, Bush tried to put all that behind him, apparently unaware that his great western adventure was as classic an old-money move as any. In the terminology of Nelson W. Aldrich Jr.'s book *Old Money*, it is one of the "three ordeals" that old-money heirs customarily experience to prove their worth to a world that is inclined to dismiss them as spoiled rich kids. Significantly, Bush undertook the two others as well, in going off to boarding school and to war. Native Texans, however, always knew that anyone who wanted to establish a soccer league in Texas (as Bush once did) was not the genuine Lone Star article. As journalist Molly Ivins put it, "Bush has to know that there are three things a Texan does not do. We do not use 'summer' as a verb. We do not wear blue ties with little green whales on them. And we do not call trouble 'doo-doo.' We're not setting the standards high. But there they are."

The little green whales may seem of small political consequence, but they are emblematic of Bush's almost-eerie nowhere-man quality. Bush loyalists, like his Greenwich neighbor Joseph Verner Reed, Bush's former chief of protocol (until that little problem with the queen of England's lectern) and now an under secretary at the United Nations, claim that Bush has gone beyond Connecticut and Texas to become a man "from all of America." If Bush's declining polls are any indication, American voters seem to regard him as all over the map. His geographical schizophrenia is all too reflective of his many ideological flip-flops over such fundamentals as civil rights, abortion, Reaganism and taxes.

One might expect that his fellow members of the WASP elite would indulge Bush a bit, considering he is one of their own. So I was quite surprised, not long ago, during a lunch with a few of the Old Guard at the venerable Tavern Club in Boston. Six gentlemen with impeccable WASP credentials and, for the most part, nearly slavish devotion to the Republi-

BUSH, NO. 1, PLAYED CENTER FOR ANDOVER'S BASKETBALL TEAM IN 1941 . . .



can Party sat about me. When I asked what they thought of the president, all of them reached out their right arm in what I took at first to be an ancient tribal gesture. They made a fist and then extended their thumb down. They held this pose in silence for a moment. "George Bush has been a terrible disappointment to us," one man said finally.

Let's call him what he is: George Bush is a traitor to his class. The charge was originally leveled against Franklin D. Roosevelt halfway into his first term, when he presented the beginnings of the radical New Deal legislation that most Americans now take for granted. No one knows who actually first made the accusation. Roosevelt biographer Frank Freidel says the line was "in the air." He recalls a Peter Arno-like cartoon in which a child in a well-to-do household confesses to his mother that he has written a dirty word on the sidewalk. The word was "Roosevelt."

In FDR's case, the betrayed class was the moneyed interests, who were angered by his attempts to redistribute the nation's wealth. By that standard, George Bush is no traitor; one of the few constants of his administration has been his determination to lower capital-gains taxes and continue the massive transfer of wealth from middle class to rich that was begun under his predecessor. But by the more important standard of the deeper old-money principles—of steadfastness, of commitment to a higher cause, of selflessness, of vision—George Bush has been a travesty.

"He's an absolute wimp with no convictions about anything," says E. Digby Baltzell, the blue-blooded sociologist who invented the term "WASP" in his 1964 book, *The Protestant Establishment*. "It's absolutely terrible! I've never heard Bush say *anything* I was sure he absolutely believed, have you?" Baltzell goes so far as to claim that Bush is dragging down the whole WASP class. "Think about it," he says. "The last WASP president was John F. Kennedy, a Catholic. The last WASP tennis player was Arthur Ashe, a black. The WASP himself doesn't stand for anything in America anymore. He's good to his friends, a sportsman on the tennis court, a decent guy. But he doesn't count, because he can't compete with the unscrupulousness of those

in control." What is perhaps even more incriminating in Bush's case is that he has competed with the unscrupulousness of those in control all too well—by topping it with unscrupulousness of his own.

In some corners, the WASPs who found themselves emulated by the patrons of Ralph Lauren in the go-go Eighties are now, as the Bush administration leads us into the no-go Nineties, developing other sentiments about the ancien régime. "People hate me because of George Bush," declares *Old Money* author Aldrich, himself a Rockefeller relative and the great-grandson of a Rhode Island senator. "People come up to me and ask 'How could you have done this?'" Aldrich finds this particularly exasperating because, to him, Bush's WASPiness isn't the problem. It's his *abandonment* of WASPiness that is the problem. "Look what he has jettisoned," Aldrich says. "He's jettisoned civil rights"—in his 1964 congressional campaign, as a sop to Goldwater Republicans—"abortion rights, all concern for the 'weak and unfortunate,' as my grandmother used to call them. He's jettisoned *the whole thing*." Aldrich can hardly contain his indignation. "But you know what the worst of it is?" he goes on. "The peculiar virtue of privilege that we all appreciate is magnanimity, and this guy hasn't got it at all. Think of either Roosevelt. There was a real largeness of spirit that hit you. But this guy Bush, he's an embarrassment."

The evidence is so damning that the only question is, What



ANDOVER'S FIRST BASEMAN, 1942.

... AND ALSO CAPTAINED THE PREP SCHOOL'S SOCCER TEAM, FRONT ROW, CENTER.



went wrong? What drove Bush to abandon all his old-money principles? It's not as if he never had them. It's hard to imagine a more solidly WASP upbringing than George Bush's. Greenwich may now be the home of Diana Ross and the home away from home of Leona Helmsley, but when the Bushes arrived from Milton, Massachusetts, in 1925—when George was 6 months old—the town was such an Establishment oasis that none of its residents' names, with the possi-

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ble exception of Godfrey Rockefeller's, would have been recognized by the public at all. In those days, Connecticut was genuinely rural. Its remoteness was symbolized by the state's nearly square license plates, as though it were a different country altogether. Even today, in the warm months, when the leaves are green, the town seems less a suburb than a primeval forest dotted with a number of very expensive houses.

The Bushes lived on Grove Lane, located on a rocky hill above a ravine close to the heart of town. There are better Greenwich addresses, but this would certainly do. Still standing, the house is a big, ramshackle, shingled place that seems more a summer home than a principal residence. The Bushes themselves maintained the vacation spirit by installing a Ping-Pong table in the front hall. Mr. or Mrs. Bush read the Bible to the children every morning at breakfast, and they worshiped at the tony Episcopal Christ Church, near the town's center. "The Bushes were always religious," says one friend, "but not irritatingly so, if you know what I mean." They belonged to the best clubs—the Field Club for tennis and the Round Hill Club, where George's father, Prescott, was president, for golf. George Bush met the former Barbara Pierce at a Round Hill Club mixer; she belonged to an equally swank country club in her hometown of Rye, New York, and the two clubs were exchanging dances.

The roost was ruled by Prescott Bush, who was tall and forbidding, with a sternness of character leavened only by his fondness for the show tunes he'd learned as a member of the Yale Whiffenpoofs and still sang years later in his penetrating baritone. As a partner at the private banking firm of Brown Brothers Harriman, he sat in the communal partners' room at an ancient, Dickensian rolltop desk. He took the 7:48 New Haven Railroad club car into New York every workday morning, and he returned on the 5:32. A later political rival, Albert Morano, claimed that Bush could have spelled his name "Busch" because of his stern German demeanor. He scared his five children right down to their socks. Asked if he had ever disagreed with his father, George Bush said it had never occurred to him. "I mean, he was up here"—he lifted his hand as far as he could—"and I was this little guy down here." Prescott's wife, Dorothy, was one of the few who ever stood up to him. At lunch at Kennebunkport one day, Prescott teased her by saying "Let's all hear what Dottie has to say" whenever his wife was about to join in the conversation. Mrs. Bush bode her time until the moment came when Prescott started to tell a story, and then she gave it right back to him. "Oh, let's all hear what *Dad* has to say," she grandly announced. "I'm sure it'll be very funny."

Prescott Bush had his standards. According to one political colleague, he "set the tone" as moderator of Greenwich's Representative Town Meeting, the town's chief governing body. When Prescott ran for the Senate, he enlisted a quartet of Yale Whiffenpoofs to entertain the crowds at campaign stops. He was deeply

(continued on page 300)

Recov Recov

The Not-So-Great Depression of the Nineties has everything its Thirties counterpart had: an ineffectual president, a population out of work, Okies, folkies and an election year ending in "2." All it needs now is a new New Deal



BUSH'S BETRAYAL

(continued from page 232) hurt when his friend and Brown Brothers colleague Averell Harriman endorsed his Democratic opponent. An Eisenhower Republican, Prescott accepted his wife's involvement in Planned Parenthood, no matter how much it cost him politically in the heavily Catholic state. And he voted to censure Joseph McCarthy at a time when that was still politically dangerous. When George Bush was asked how his father, who died in 1972, would have reacted to the Willie Horton ad and other low-road tactics of his 1988 campaign, he said, "I think he would be very proud of his son." Friends of the

never leaving a trace. In *Pot Pourri*, the school's yearbook, his list of social accomplishments and affiliations tops the class with twenty-four items, from being elected president of the senior class down to winning the John Hopkins Prize—the only academic honor he attained—for his near-perfect attendance record. He came in third in the tallies for Best All-Around Fellow, Most Respected and Most Popular and second in the Most Faculty Drag category, the honor serving as an index of what later students would call "suck."

Bush's Day Hall roommate, George "Red Dog" Warren, later admissions direc-

with by the Secret Service and local police.

Henry Stimson, the president of Andover's board of trustees and FDR's secretary of war, delivered the commencement address the year Bush graduated, urging the students to continue their education because he expected the war to be a long one. Prescott Bush hoped this would persuade his son to stay in school, but George Bush bucked both of them and signed up for the navy on his eighteenth birthday. After training in Corpus Christi, Texas, he got his wings in June of 1943, perhaps the youngest pilot in the U.S. Navy. He flew

What is the point of victory? Only in sports is winning a goal in itself.

family wonder about that. "I think he would be troubled by his son's lack of a core," says one.

Andover marked George's first step away from the convictions of his father. One tends to lump all New England boarding schools together as old-money bastions, but there are important distinctions, chiefly between such large college-style academies as Andover and Exeter and such small church schools as Groton, St. Mark's and St. Paul's.

Established in the midst of the Revolution in 1778, with a seal cut by Paul Revere, Andover is certainly old money. With its handsome Georgian buildings arrayed about a green, it might pass for an English public school. Andover's founder, Samuel Phillips, intended the school to stand as a bulwark of traditional Tory educational values against the rising revolutionary tide, but over the next two centuries it grew into a large, impersonal school that emphasized what one of Bush's schoolmates termed "individual excellence" over any larger moral concerns. As such, Andover served for Bush as a kind of prelude to Texas. "It's my view that Andover and Exeter espouse the basic bourgeois values—competitiveness, personal aggrandizement, commercial success," says Aldrich, himself a St. Paul's graduate. "Aristocratic virtues are nowhere to be found." It was at Andover that Bush learned to play the small-minded career game he now plays at the White House.

While Groton was determined to level its students socially with a uniformly Spartan existence of spare cubicles and cold showers before breakfast, Andover endorsed social distinctions by requiring scholarship boys to wait on tables and maintaining plummy secret societies for the moneyed elite. George Bush joined the best of them, A.U.V. "He was what we used to call a 'smooth article,'" says Hart Day Leavitt, one of Bush's teachers at Andover. Bush floated along on his grace and charm, getting everything he wanted and

tor of the Rhode Island School of Design, appreciated Bush's affability. "On a one-on-one basis, he was one of the most totally charming human beings I've ever met. He had a lovely, quick sense of humor. He was pleasant, friendly. He positively oozed charm." But there was something disturbing about him, too. "He was always on a popularity kick, always competing for something," Warren says. But the scary part was that the better you got to know Poppy, the less there was to him. This was most apparent with Bush's near-total impatience with ideas. When Warren used to sit around with his friends "dicking" about life in the manner of earnest secondary-school students, Bush invariably hung back and said little, "except occasionally to deride our whole discussion with amusing, snide comments." Although Warren has, overall, fond memories of their Andover days, he loathes Bush now. "I am absolutely outraged by his politics and his presidency," he says.

Leavitt remembers the future president as being the dullest boy in his English class and absolutely nothing compared to his classmate Donald Marshman, the boy with the withered arm who went on to cowrite the screenplay for *Sunset Boulevard*. "Marshman was a real character," Leavitt recalls, "very outspoken in his beliefs about education and many other things." He was everything that George Bush was not. Leavitt gave Bush a 67, barely above flunking. Something of Bush's get-along, go-along qualities manifested themselves when he greeted Leavitt in 1981 when visiting the school as vice-president. On seeing Leavitt, Bush snapped his heels together, saluted and barked out "Sir!" Then, still gripping the older man's hand, he pulled Leavitt along the receiving line without further comment. Bush returned to the school eight years later as president, but by that time Leavitt had become too infuriated by the vacillations of his presidency to see him. As it was, about fifty students protested noisily—only to be dealt

fifty-eight missions; four planes either malfunctioned or were shot out from under him. A courageous performance, certainly. But even at a time when his purpose in life was clearest, he betrayed the essential befuddlement that *The New Republic* would later collect as "Bushisms." As he bobbed alone on the ocean after being shot down one time, his thoughts turned to "Mother and Dad and the strength I got from them—and God and faith and the separation of church and state."

After the war, he rejoined many of his Andover classmates at Yale, where nearly half his prep-school class matriculated. With so many returning servicemen on campus, Yale was a more serious place than usual, and sobered by war and his recent marriage to the woman he still calls Bar. Bush was more serious, too. He and Barbara lived off-campus; their first child, George W., was born at the end of Bush's freshman year. Nevertheless, he found time to serve as president of his fraternity, Delta Kappa Epsilon, and, more famously, as captain of the Yale baseball team. He was also one of the fifteen good men tapped for Skull and Bones, the most select of Yale's seven secret societies. Skull and Bones paid some attention to merit beyond bloodlines. The editor of the *Yale Daily News* and the captain of the football team were routinely tapped for Bones. But bloodlines certainly mattered, and Bush's were nearly unsurpassed. Prescott had been a Bonesman, and his employer, Brown Brothers Harriman, paid the society's tax bill. More important, Bonesmen had to be safe, reliable, nice young men who wouldn't upset anyone or anything. It's revealing that Franklin Roosevelt was passed over for Harvard's equally vaunted Porcellian Club, yet Bush made Bones. There are limits to the virtue of clubbability.

Bonesmen lie down in a crypt inside a secret vault and confess sexual secrets to their brethren, but the social bonding is just part of the experience. There is an important practical element as well. Once

you make Bones, you are set for life. It's rumored that Bones actually awards a \$15,000 stipend to each member. Whether Bush received one or not, he certainly took advantage of the attendant connections. His first job, with Dresser Industries in Odessa, Texas, when he was supposedly setting out on his own, was lined up for him by his father's Bones brother Neil Mallon, who ran the company.

In Greenwich and at Andover and Yale, Bush possessed one quality in spades: a fierce competitiveness. It eclipsed his other, softer attributes the way bad money drives out good. He was captain of two teams at Andover—soccer and baseball—and he played varsity basketball as well. Frank DiClemente, Andover's former basketball coach, believes that Bush was one of the top twenty athletes he'd ever seen at the school, and probably the single-most-driven. "He used every bit of the talent he had," he says. "He never quit." Three times in his last soccer season, when he was captain, Poppy Bush scored a goal in the closing seconds to tie or win the game. DiClemente still recalls the goal Bush scored with fifteen seconds left against Deerfield—"There was a pass to George Bush in the middle, and bang!"—to preserve the undefeated season.

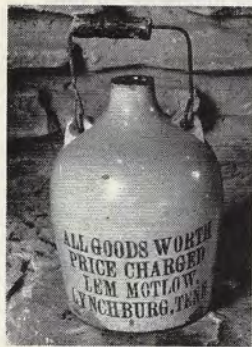
This characteristic may be his parents' most-lasting genetic contribution. Nathaniel Reed, a former assistant secretary of the interior and brother of Joseph Verner Reed, who was likewise a friend of the Bush family's, says that Prescott Bush's recititude applied everywhere but on the golf course, where "he was the most competitive man you ever met. He wouldn't give you a fourteen-inch putt. Wouldn't give it to you!" George's mother, a demon on the tennis and paddle-tennis courts, had her name inscribed on innumerable plaques at the Greenwich Field Club. She once took on young daughter-in-law Barbara in paddle tennis. Giving Barbara a twenty-love lead, she still beat her, then beat her again playing left-handed. Barbara Bush, in an unknowing echo of Nathaniel Reed's description of Prescott, calls Dorothy "the most competitive living human." The two of them passed these values on to their children. Whenever George's sister, Nancy, double-faulted in tennis, says an intimate, she was sent to her room.

William Sloane Coffin, a contemporary of Bush's at Andover and Yale, once played squash with Bush at Yale when Coffin was its chaplain and the two were in their forties. Squash was one of the few sports Bush hadn't perfected, and Coffin took the match three games to none, but Bush wouldn't stop. Coffin beat him three-zip again. Once more, Bush played on. "This time, I could see his maxillary jaw muscles



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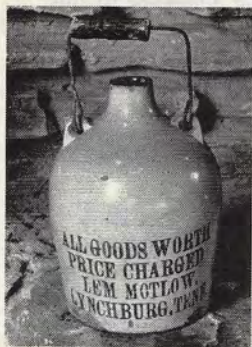
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BUSH'S BETRAYAL

tightening a bit," Coffin recalls. "I thought, This man is locked into a losing policy." Coffin trounced him one last time, three games to none. As the two men finally walked off the court, Coffin told Bush "This has been very good for my morale and even better for your character."

It seems his character could use still more work. Bush remains overwhelmingly, almost unrelievedly, competitive. As he has said about the current campaign, he will do "whatever it takes" to win. But what is the point of victory? Only in sports is winning a goal in itself. In an election, winning should mark the beginning, not the end, of the real campaign: to do something for the country. It may be pompous to suppose that the upper class is uniquely positioned to understand this concept, but that was the glory of both Roosevelts and John Kennedy, the other well-to-do presidents of our century. They were ambitious, surely, but they were something else, too. They occupied the White House for a purpose higher than themselves. One cannot say that of the current incumbent. Secure in his privilege, blessed in his educational background, Bush should be free to take the longer, wider view. Instead, we get his graceless babbling about "the vision thing." As one friend of the Bush family laments, "George has had all the material, all the background, all the doors open, to have really made a big difference to this country. He could have said 'Look, kids, we're in a dreadful state. We've gone through a decade of foolishness, and now we have to face the facts.' Or something! Anything! But instead we get nothing. All my friends agree, he has let us down terribly."

Texas isn't entirely at fault for that, of course. But I can't help wishing that George Bush would give up his legal residence in the now-bankrupt Houstonian Hotel and come home to Connecticut for good. I don't believe I'm alone. When the Westchester County Airport hoedown and fund-raiser was over and Bush was heading back to Air Force One to go on to Kennebunkport for the weekend, all the fine Connecticut ladies and gentlemen pressed up against the restraining rope at the edge of the tarmac to see him off. Leave-takings are always poignant, and this one especially so. Who knew when Bush would come back? As the last true-blue Bush partisans lifted their arms in the air, baring tasteful gold bracelets and antique gold watches, I fancied they were not bidding him goodbye but instead pleading with him to stay on with them forever—with his people, and with those few grand things in which he really believed. •

John Sedgwick wrote about the Bulger brothers of Boston in the May GQ.

RECESSION CULTURE

(continued from page 237)hackers whose jobs fell victim to the disintegration of Michael Dukakis's Massachusetts Miracle; recent college graduates for whom facility with computers is their only marketable skill.

NRA: The National (in) Recovery Administration.

Goal: to generate awareness that Congress, due to a dysfunctional history, has developed compulsive and self-destructive behavioral patterns, that it is currently *in denial* and that it can achieve *recovery* only by *accessing its inner child*, okay? To generate awareness that all Americans are *codependents* in Congress's problem, that they are currently *in denial* and that they can achieve *recovery* only by *accessing their inner children*, okay?

Will provide jobs for: the thousands of therapists, counselors, shamans, etc., currently idled by economic downturns in California, Vermont and the Pacific Northwest.

NLRB: The National Liver Relations Board.

Goal: to improve the public image of organ meats.

Will provide jobs for: laborers in the chronically depressed meat-packing industry.

FMAC ("Freddy Mac"): The Federal Mall Assistance Corporation.

Goal: to stimulate shopping and retailing activity at moribund malls built during the Eighties development boom; to assuage the glut of unleashed commercial space. Unemployed consumers spend forty-hour work-weeks "shopping" with federally underwritten credit cards, purchasing their wares from retailers whose stores are stocked with federally underwritten inventory. At the end of each workday, retailers are credited with a subsistence-level percentage of the day's "take." Shoppers retain a similar percentage of their purchases.

Will provide jobs for: society wives who want to do their part for the country; former employees of Crazy Eddie, Newmark & Lewis, B. Altman, Bonwit Teller, Charles Scribner's Sons, Alexander's and various Trump and Helmsley holdings.

Nowhere will the Neo Deal differ from its predecessor so significantly as in the hugely expanded Four Arts Project. In the Thirties, Franklin Roosevelt authorized the Works Progress Administration to begin four federally funded arts programs: the Federal Theatre Project, the Federal Writers' Project, the Federal Art Project and the Federal Music Project. Given the immense pool of unemployed or underemployed artists and writers that now exists in the U.S., the new Federal Four Arts Administration (FFARTA) will be the most