

Notable Quotables

September 27, 2004 (Vol. Seventeen; No. 20)

A bi-weekly compilation of the latest outrageous, sometimes humorous, quotes in the liberal media.



Bringing Political
Balance to the Media

Rathergate: First the Smear...

"Tonight, a CBS News/60 Minutes exclusive: New information on President George W. Bush's record in the National Guard. Newly discovered documents spark new questions....Good evening. There are new questions tonight about President Bush's service in the Texas Air National Guard in the late 1960s and early '70s, and about his insistence that he met his military service obligations. CBS News has exclusive information, including documents, that now sheds new light on the President's service record. 60 Minutes has obtained government documents that indicate Mr. Bush may have received preferential treatment in the Guard after not fulfilling his commitments."

— Dan Rather opening the Sept. 8 CBS Evening News.

"Memos written by the President's squadron commander Colonel Jerry Killian suggest Mr. Bush ignored a direct order to appear for a physical in 1972, and that a year later Killian was being pressured by superiors to 'sugar coat' Mr. Bush's record....The documents and [Democrat Ben] Barnes' claims have given new life to charges President Bush got favorable treatment to both get in the Guard and get out."

— John Roberts on the September 9 CBS Evening News, hours after reports those "memos" might be forgeries.

...Then the Stonewall

"The story is true. The story is true....I appreciate the sources who took risks to authenticate our story. So, one, there is no internal investigation. Two, somebody may be shell-shocked, but it is not I, and it is not anybody at CBS News. Now, you can tell who is shell-shocked by the ferocity of the people who are spreading these rumors."

— Dan Rather in a sidewalk exchange with reporters on September 10, denying rumors that CBS had launched an investigation to determine if the "memos" were forged.

"Today, on the Internet and elsewhere, some people, including many who are partisan political operatives, concentrated not on the key questions of the overall story, but on the documents that were part of the support of the story. They allege that the documents are fake....The 60 Minutes report was based not solely on the recovered documents, but on a preponderance of the evidence, including documents that were provided by what we consider to be solid sources and interviews with former officials of the Texas National Guard. If any definitive evidence to the contrary of our story is found, we will report it. So far, there is none."

— Dan Rather on the CBS Evening News, September 10.

Dan's Vast Right-Wing Conspiracy

"Powerful and extremely well-financed forces are concentrating on questions about the documents because they can't deny the fundamental truth of the story. If you can't deny the information, then attack and seek to destroy the credibility of the messenger, the bearer of the information. And in this case, it's change the subject from the truth of the information to the truth of the documents. This is your basic fogging machine, which is set up to cloud the issue, to obscure the truth....Over the long haul, this will be consistent with our history and our traditions and reputation. We took heat during the McCarthy time, during Vietnam, during civil rights, during Watergate. We haven't always been right, but our record is damn good."

— CBS's Dan Rather as quoted by the New York Observer's Joe Hagan, September 15.

"I don't back down. I don't cave when the pressure gets too great from these partisan political ideological forces."

— Rather to the Washington Post's Howard Kurtz, in a September 16 article.

"Anybody who knows me knows that I am not politically motivated, not politically active for Democrats or Republicans, and that I'm independent. People who are so passionately partisan politically or ideologically committed basically say, 'Because he won't report it our way, we're going to hang something bad around his neck and choke him with it, check him out of existence if we can, if not make him feel great pain.' They know that I'm fiercely independent and that's what drives them up a wall."

— Rather as quoted by USA Today's Peter Johnson and Jim Drinkard in a September 17 article.

No Doubts About Dan's "Thrust"

"We shall continue to aggressively investigate the story of President Bush's service in the National Guard and the story of the documents and memos in Colonel Killian's file....We do feel it's important to underscore this point: Those who have criticized aspects of our story have never criticized the heart of it, the major thrust of our report, that George Bush received preferential treatment to get into the National Guard, and once accepted, failed to satisfy the requirements of his service. If we uncover any information to the contrary, rest assured we shall report that also."

— Dan Rather concluding a Sept. 15 60 Minutes interview with Marian Carr Knox, Killian's secretary, who said she doubted that CBS's memos were genuine, but nevertheless "the information in those is correct."

CBS Lectures Irresponsible Laura

John Roberts: "The President has yet to weigh in on new documents about his National Guard record made public last week by *60 Minutes*. But in a radio interview, First Lady Laura Bush became the first White House insider to publicly doubt their authenticity."

Audio of Laura Bush on Radio Iowa: "You know, they probably are altered and they probably are forgeries."

Roberts: "However, Laura Bush offered no evidence to back up her claim, and CBS News continues to stand by its reporting."

— *CBS Evening News*, September 14.

Experience: CBS News

"Document and handwriting examiner Marcel Matley analyzed the documents for CBS News. He says he believes they are real."

— Dan Rather on the September 10 *CBS Evening News*.

vs.

"There's no way that I, as a document expert, can authenticate them."

— Quote from Marcel Matley in a September 14 *Washington Post* story by Howard Kurtz and Michael Dobbs.

Blame Bush's Staff, Not CBS's

"If we had gotten back from the White House any kind of red flag, raised eyebrow, anything that said, 'Are you sure about this stuff?', we would have gone back to square one. The White House said they were authentic, and that carried a lot of weight with us."

— *60 Minutes* Executive Producer Josh Howard as quoted in a September 18 *Los Angeles Times* story by Josh Getlin, Elizabeth Jensen and Scott Collins. The White House was only shown the "memos" a few hours before CBS aired their story, and did not vouch for them.

Rather's Battle with Reality

"Do I think they're forged? No."

— Dan Rather discussing the "memos" he had already apologized for using, as quoted by Jeff Zeleny and John Cook in the September 21 *Chicago Tribune*.

A Rule Against Bias — Who Knew?

"A top Kerry campaign official now says Mary Mapes, the producer of the *60 Minutes* story, put him in touch with Bill Burkett, the former Texas Air National Guard officer who provided the documents to CBS News....CBS News said in a statement, 'It is obviously against CBS News standards to be associated with any political agenda.'"

— Bill Plante on the September 21 *CBS Evening News*.

Did Karl Rove Smear His Boss?

"So the Killian documents come out and are almost immediately questioned by a lawyer with Republican ties and are distributed to other news organizations without comment by the White House and they suddenly have one of their principal endorsers retract his endorsement. How many rats do you smell?"

— MSNBC's Keith Olbermann on *Countdown*, Sept. 13.

"A lot of Democrats suspect this was a set up, something set up by Republicans. So there's a lot of suspicion going around on all sides."

— ABC's George Stephanopoulos on the September 10 *Good Morning America*.

Let's Get Back to Bush Bashing

"The truth is, while Kerry may have taken a hit in the polls as a result of the largely bogus criticism of his war record, Bush, as the incumbent, is not as vulnerable — even if the accusations are more credible....The breathless debate over typewriter fonts last week shifted the debate away from Bush's questionable record."

— *Time's* Amanda Ripley in the September 20 issue.

Kerry a Hero, Bush a Hypocrite

"One guy went to Vietnam and the other guy didn't. The guy who went most likely could have avoided going, but didn't. The guy who didn't go made it clear he had no interest in fighting a war he says he supported. To the extent that any of this matters all these years later — and I'm not sure any of it does — that's really it."

— Aaron Brown on CNN's *NewsNight*, September 8.

Forgery Not as Bad as Swift Vets

"CBS will end up, if they are wrong, as it appears to be, apologizing for their mistake, and we will wait a long time before various cable channels and Fox apologizes for the Swift Boat ads and the commentary on their channels, which turned out not to be true."

— Margaret Carlson on CNN's *Capital Gang*, Sept. 18.

Maybe Time for a Career Change?

"A serious journalist can't run with a story without confirmation. Two sources at the absolute minimum....This is how your narrator made it through Watergate. If I'd gone off half-cocked, if I'd gotten my facts scrambled, if I'd run with unconfirmed leads, I'd be selling insurance right now."

— Dan Rather in his 1994 memoir, *The Camera Never Blinks Twice*, page 97.

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