

# **ONLINE JOURNAL™**

[www.onlinejournal.com](http://www.onlinejournal.com)

## **The spin is spinning George W. into the ground**

**By Martin Heldt**

June 27, 2000—There are so many spinners, spokesmen and paid consultants spamming the political coverage these days that a news junkie soon learns to ferret out statements that just don't ring true.

This week though, the Bush campaign let loose with a good one about the reason that George W. Bush failed to appear [for military duty] and was grounded for a missed physical examination that included a screening for narcotics.

"He knew the suspension would have to take place."

That is the excuse that Bush spokesman Dan Bartlett gave the Sunday Times of London in an interview last week about Bush's failure to report for a newly instituted National Air Guard drug screening.

Bartlett stated that Bush knew as soon as he left Houston that the Guard wouldn't get his new status processed and that he would be suspended from flying.

In the past the Bush campaign has stated that Bush was grounded because Bush was in Alabama while his physician was in Houston.

Neither answer sounds quite right. Bush was supposed to be at an air base and this physical was a general order that applied to many other men at that time. It is unfathomable that there were no qualified physicians in Alabama at the time.

Bush's most recent answer is troubling. Bush left Texas to work on William Blount's Alabama campaign for the U.S. Senate in late May 1972. The drug screening physical that Bush missed was in August 1972.

This statement tars the service as being so tardy that it would take it most of the summer just to process the orders for a physical. I don't think that many will buy Bush's argument.

Bob Stein, a political science professor, with his office in the James Baker III building at Houston's Rice University, said the Guard story will become an issue only if Bush changes his story.

"It is just not an issue," Stein continued, "unless the very act of asking the question forces the candidate to deceive or to lie."

Well, Mr. Stein, the AWOL story just became an issue.