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Is George W. Bush a deserter?

By Ollie Dawshed

October 23, 2000—Is George W. Bush a deserter? That's the inescapable conclusion of investigative journalism by the online magazine www.TomPaine.com.

The story of how this came to light is a true American original. Iowa farmer Marty Heldt was fed up with the phony media coverage his TV and newspaper were giving him. Walter Robinson of the Boston Globe had reported that there were questions about whether candidate George W. Bush had fulfilled his National Guard duty or received preferential treatment. Heldt began raising questions in a series of articles he wrote for Online Journal, then he filed a Freedom of Information Act request for Bush's military records.

What he found stunned him. According to Heldt, it was plain that after Bush received his training, he walked away from his National Guard duty to work on a political campaign and never served his full time. This was the Vietnam War, and would have been punished most severely-- had Bush not been a son of the rich and powerful. Heldt then wrote about his findings in an article he posted to his web site and sent to Online Journal. Then, working with the professional journalists at TomPaine.com, Heldt wrote the first of what have proven to be a groundbreaking series of articles.

As with other evidence of Bush dishonesty, the media ignored the story. George Magazine wrote a detailed rebuttal to Heldt's work claiming that Bush had minimally fulfilled his requirements. Salon magazine wrote a vapid echo of the George piece without even doing the professionally-basic footwork of interviewing Heldt. And then, in examining the documents that George had posted online, lightning struck.

The key document that George had relied upon for its evidence that Bush had served was a sheet purporting to represent George Bush's record for the missing year. But the sheet was torn so that no sign of the name of the serviceman, except a W, was evident. The months for which the time served were obscured. It had handwriting on it that purported to show that Bush had served his full time. And so it was clear that this document was not the version as sent from the national archives. But additionally, according to the Boston Globe, these records had been added to the file in the last two years. The Bush campaign, working with a retired Guard officer, Albert Lloyd, Jr., managed to add records to the national archives, perhaps yet another example of how the privileged and powerful are allowed to vary from standard operating procedure at will.

The George rebuttal was wrong in many ways. The magazine had erred in assuming that members of the National Guard were awarded a fixed number of gratuitous points annually. The magazine had evidently relied on the handwriting on the document to reach the conclusion Bush had served-- but failed to disclose to its readers that the handwriting was not in the original. And the magazine stubbornly ignored the summation of attendance points typed on the documents, a summation which makes it clear that Bush did not fulfill his requirements. George also refused to credit his Texas commander's written statement from the time that Bush had not been observed, arguing speciously that the commander had erred on a peripheral matter and therefore was not trustworthy to know which officers were or were not on his post.

The question of where Bush was during the missing period, or why he ceased to fly after receiving training is disputed. Bush himself was dishonest about the matter in his biography, claiming that he continued to fly, even though he applied for alternate duty in Alabama with a Guard unit where there were no airplanes. He says that he worked on the campaign of Winton Blount, and there is a newspaper

account quoting Blount workers that supports that. But, despite the fact that an award has been offered for fellow Guardsmen who could support Bush's claim of having served in Alabama, no one has come forward. And the record is very plain that Bush was not in Texas.

Additionally, the record makes it plain that Bush walked away from his post in Texas before receiving his commander's approval, and stayed in Alabama when his commander denied approval for the transfer. The record makes it plain that Bush is being dishonest about the record of his service even now.

The media have allowed candidate Bush to get away with claiming to have pushed through legislation that he had, in fact, obstructed or even vetoed-- will they now allow him to get away with claiming to his base that he served honorably, when in reality he seems to have deserted his post during the Vietnam War? If the election is to be about credibility, aren't the American people entitled to know the truth about George W. Bush's equivocations about his doubtful career in the National Guard?

The online veterans groups are reportedly buzzing with this news. Decide for yourself by reading the story at Online Journal, www.tompaine.com (three pieces), www2.georgemag.com (two pieces) and [Walter Robinson's piece in the Boston Globe](#).

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