

Historical Verdict on Bush Will Be Harsh

By [Sherwood Ross](#)

Global Research, October 27, 2008

27 October 2008

Region: [USA](#)

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The judgment of history may well be that the United States has been “taken into, and kept in, the Iraq War by a guy who is not quite right in his head,” a distinguished legal scholar says.

“It may take 25 or 50 years, but it is almost certain that one day this character will be exhibit number one for the danger of having a nut job in the oval office,” says Lawrence Velvel, dean of the Massachusetts School of Law at Andover.

Writing in his latest book, “An Enemy of the People,” (Doubtless Press) Velvel said, “In everyday life, someone who refuses to recognize the actual facts of the world around him, and who instead lives in a dream world in his head, is regarded as not being sane, as being, to use the blunt words, insane or crazy. Why is it different when it is a national leader who refuses to recognize facts in the world and instead lives in a dream world in his head?”

Velvel goes on to say, “Most interesting is the idea that Bush suffers from a condition called ‘dry drunk’. Essentially, this means that even if one eventually stops drinking, as Bush did, years of alcoholism cause irreversible damage to brain chemistry. Results of this damage include such Bushian traits as rigid judgmentalism, irritability, impatience, grandiosity, obsessive thought patterns, incoherent speech and other unlovely characteristics.”

“Bush also seems to have characteristics,” Velvel continues, “that, whether or not they are characteristic of ‘dry drunks’ are symptomatic of people who don’t fully have a grip. These include immense anger, exploitativeness, arrogance, lack of empathy, and difficulties arising from relationships with one’s father.”

“With regard to the specific analyses of Bush, there seems to be wide agreement that Bush is a sociopath, defined, one gathers, as someone who feels no empathy with others, who cannot feel for others, who does not feel or care for their pain (to use Clintonian jargon,)” Velvel writes.

“That Bush is utterly devoid of empathy seems plainly true to me. Unlike Lincoln or even Lying Lyndon Johnson, who sent people to their deaths but agonized over it, Bush is thought by the shrinks, and appears to the lay eye, to give not one damn about how many Americans he kills, let alone Iraqis.”

Explaining why Bush can’t feel guilt, Velvel writes: “Given his defense mechanisms, one gathers, and his psychology of having to overcome obstacles, overcome his father, etc., one gathers that Bush is a sociopath (or another word for it, a psychopath). Using charm as a vehicle for aggrandizement, he can’t allow himself to feel guilt and so feels no empathy for all those he smashes up in his pursuit of is grandiosity and delusions.”

Velvel professes amazement that a man of Bush's character could rise to the White House: "One wondered how he could have been picked as the nominee and then elected. After all, it was clearly early-on that he not only had been a long-time drunk, but had failed at every business venture, so that time and again he had to be rescued by Daddy's friends and wanna be friends."

He goes on to say, "Bush's life refutes fundamental values we grew up with: hard work, competence, intelligence, modesty. His life, with its drunkenness, serial failures, lack of competence, repeated salvation via Daddy and Daddy's friends, all followed by the presidency no less, and by disastrous ill-considered policies, makes a joke of the values we absorbed as youths and still try to live by."

Living in his Father's shadow, Velvel writes, "his own lack of diligence and intelligence caused him to be mediocre or a failure everywhere for about 25 years; he was mediocre at Andover; he was mediocre at Yale; he was a drunk to the point where he could cure himself only by stopping cold turkey... conceivably he escaped a securities prosecution only because Daddy was president."

Velvel writes, "One view is that Bush has a narcissistic personality. Due to insecurities, he has constructed a grandiose vision of himself and is thus immune to the criticisms or views of those who do not go along with his views. Because he is no intellect (to put it mildly), he dismisses intellect entirely, and utilized his strength, personal affability, to win over others. Narcissistically, he apparently will do anything to protect his psyche from the destruction of being shown wrong—including causing the deaths of thousands of Americans and Iraqis in pursuit of a mere long shot opportunity to proceed."

The author believes it is necessary for psychiatrists to investigate political personalities to find out what makes them different from the rest of us once in power. "It seems to me that people in today's America who seek and reach office are different from you and me and other decent people in this society," Velvel writes.

"They are willing to say and do things that would make a lot of the decent people gag, maybe make all of the decent people gag. Psychiatry should investigate, should analyze, what kind of people these are who will say and do these things, and why they are like they are. Why investigate and analyze this? For the obvious reasons, so that we can know what we are faced with, and can start looking for and electing a better kind of person."

Dean Velvel is cofounder of the Massachusetts School of Law at Andover, a law school purposefully dedicated to providing minorities, immigrants, and working-class students a quality, affordable legal education. The dean has been honored for his contributions to the reform of legal education by The National Law Journal and has been described as a leader in the law school reform movement by The National Jurist.

Sherwood Ross is a Miami-based writer who formerly worked for major dailies and wire services. Currently he is Media Consultant to Massachusetts School of Law at Andover. Contact him at sherwoodr1@yahoo.com

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