

The “Poppy” Coverup Book? The “Authorized Biography” of George Herbert Walker Bush

A Preview of "Destiny and Power: The American Odyssey of George Herbert Walker Bush" by Jon Meacham

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Region: [USA](#)

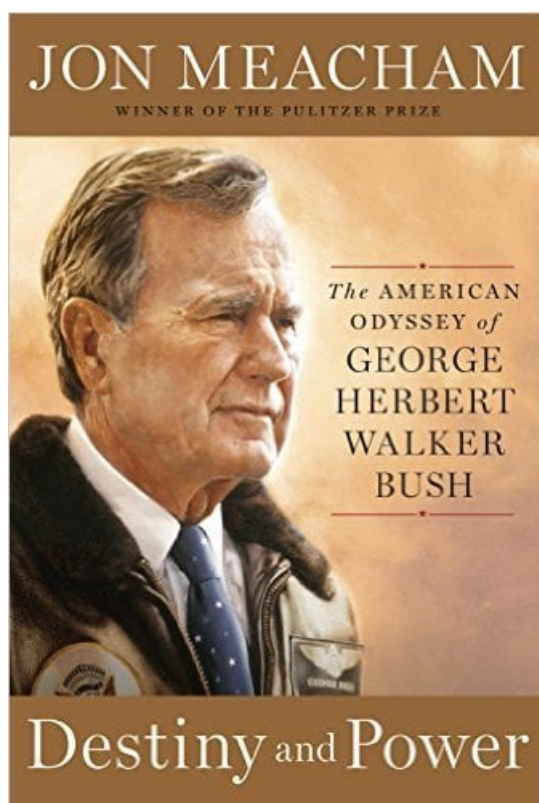
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Several years ago, when I heard that George H.W. Bush’s “biographer” was preparing an authorized account of the 41st president’s life, I was curious, to say the least. How would he handle the remarkable fact that Bush 41, known to friends and family as “Poppy,” was nothing like the man the public thought he was?

Two faces, neither good



For anyone unfamiliar with my work: I spent five years researching Poppy and his clan for my book, [Family of Secrets](#). In the course of my digging, I was positively gobsmacked to discover that this supposedly mild-mannered, nerdy, inarticulate, awkward, indecisive fellow had actually been much more interesting and consequential.

From the moment he went to World War II [as a naval aviator](#) through successive stints as an oilman, congressman, diplomat, and party official, his official work masked the fact that he was deeply immersed in the spy world. He was involved with a succession of highly

secretive covert operations affecting not just outcomes in his own country but around the world — from the Bay of Pigs to coups abroad and scandals and cataclysms at home — including Watergate and Iran Contra. (To learn more, begin [here](#), Part 1 of a series of 10 excerpts from *Family of Secrets*.)

Publicly, he said he couldn't recall [where he was](#) when John F. Kennedy was shot in Dallas, but I found out. Guess where? Dallas! Guess who he was working for? The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)! Whose longtime director and master coup planner, Allen Dulles, a close friend of the Bush family, had two years earlier been forced out by JFK.

This “double life,” explains why in 1976 — at a moment when Congress was digging into the deepest secrets of the CIA and threatening to dismember that powerful and unaccountable club — the man chosen to run it was none other than the “pleasant”, preppy, purported non-spook, George H.W. Bush.

Because virtually no one knew that he was already in the club, he could come in and give it a phony veneer of a house cleaning. However, if the media actually did its job, dug for the truth and then leveled with the public, Poppy's appointment might have opened the way to a whole new understanding of how power is wielded in America, through a cast of characters in which Poppy Bush and his brethren played a starring role.

This revelation wasn't forthcoming, of course, and to this day labeling George H.W. Bush as a master-spook sounds like lunacy, because “everyone knows” he's an affable fellow who owes his successful public career to little more than a series of curious accidents.

But those who make an effort to get the history of the Bush clan, unfiltered, from unendorsed sources — and I am one of them — know better.

Giving the cover-up a touch-up

So when I heard the inevitable drumbeat for the new “biography,” with which the elder Bush had “cooperated,” I couldn't help wondering how the author would handle this “assignment.”

I didn't have to wait to read the book, which is called [Destiny and Power: The American Odyssey of George Herbert Walker Bush](#), (and comes out Tuesday) to get the answer. Because what counts for public opinion is typically not what is in a book, since most will not buy it. And even those who do will often not read it. Or they won't read it carefully.

No, what shapes opinion most often is what the public is *told* is in it.

The pre-publicity answered the question for me: the author, Jon Meacham, a former editor of Newsweek (a magazine with its own strong [historical connections to the intelligence fraternity](#)) would simply walk around the truth, while keeping his attention steadfastly on the carefully propped up facade.

When I saw the excerpts, I knew for sure that this would be another whitewash — another dishonest contribution to the disinformation campaign that has for so long kept most Americans in the dark about key episodes in modern United States history.

Typically, publishers take their best shot with the snippets, morsels and advance peeks they

dole out to their favored outlets in the media. That means that whatever is most shocking is revealed at the outset. In the case of this new book, the shocker is that Poppy Bush doesn't like what became of Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney, and blames them for, to some extent, leading his son and namesake astray.

Example, from *The New York Times*, which of course got an advance copy:

He said he thought Mr. Cheney had changed since serving in his cabinet. "He just became very hard-line and very different from the Dick Cheney I knew and worked with," Mr. Bush said. He attributed that to the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. "Just iron-ass. His seeming knuckling under to the real hard-charging guys who want to fight about everything, use force to get our way in the Middle East."

... He added, "Rumsfeld was an arrogant fellow and self-assured, swagger."

Whatever one makes of these not really very shocking "shocking" news items, rendered in Poppy's inimitably mangled, imprecise and inelegant diction, it hardly goes to the essence of this man.

What really amazes me, despite how often I have seen it played out in the course of my career, is how superficial, purblind, fundamentally dishonest our media establishment is.

You can be sure that with the red carpet rolled out for this author by virtually every major network and media show of every stripe, while every publication dutifully "summarizes" the "major revelations," Poppy Bush will rightfully perceive himself to have won the war of perceptions over those who have struggled to unearth the truth.

At the same time, I can't help wondering if, deep down, George H.W. Bush doesn't feel just a little bit frustrated that his life has been reduced to a bland fiction — when it really is such an extraordinary story.

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