

“What’s Next for George W. Bush”: “Do you look forward to the role of grandpa?”

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In what must rank as one of the most dubious magazine interviews ever published, AARP’s “The Magazine,” circulation 24-million, devotes its January/February cover to a propaganda makeover on behalf of ex-president George W. Bush.

Next to the happy, smiling face of this clueless warmonger are the words: “What he regrets, what he wants next (grandkids!)”—as if Bush is some typical retiree who hadn’t started two wars over resounding global protests and brought misery and death to millions.

The title of the article is “What’s Next for George W. Bush?” and the idea of his being put on trial for crimes against humanity is, of course, never mentioned. Under the article title are words designed to bathe Bush in the sunlit glow of virtual sainthood. To quote Editor Nancy Perry Graham’s introduction: “At this relatively mellow moment in his life, George W. Bush, the 43rd president of the United States, wants nothing more than to be a good friend and neighbor.”

Among her “bush-league,” softball questions are, “Do you look forward to the role of grandpa?” and “Do you view your parents as role models for you in retirement?” And how about, “Is there a secret to being happy?”

Worse, Graham’s questions can contain ridiculous assumptions. How about, “You’ve won just about everything you’ve set out to get in life. What are your secrets for winning? How much is family? Luck? Persistence?” (Facts: Bush couldn’t “win” the war he started against Afghanistan and his most infamous decision, to invade Iraq, has spawned dozens of books with such descriptive titles as “Fiasco” by Thomas Ricks and “George W. Bush, War Criminal?” by Michael Haas and which documents 269 war crimes including No. 183, raping children in prison. That makes him a “winner?”)

Editor Graham’s bland, “What’s next?” approach is virtually the same treatment she lavished on former Secretary of State Colin Powell. He was portrayed smiling broadly, seated in a comfortable armchair on AARP’s July/August 2006 cover above the words “What’s next?” Powell, it must be remembered, was the key figure in beating the war drums for Bush at the United Nations in a speech filled with falsehoods to justify the use of violence against dictator Saddam Hussein. In a world with any semblance of justice, war-makers Powell and Bush would be portrayed sharing a bench in a prison cell.

Nor does Ms. Graham challenge Bush’s absurd responses. When Bush says “I feel very strongly that if the United States were to leave, Afghan women would suffer” he is allowed to pose as a champion of women’s rights, overlooking how his invasion of Iraq spelled

catastrophe for millions of women there who lost family, jobs, and their lives, or who were reduced to prostitution to survive. To quote Dr. Souad Naji Al-Azzawi, a former Vice President of Mamoun University, Baghdad, "The most significant loss that Iraqi women have suffered (in the Occupation) is a complete and total loss of security."

She explains, "in the vast majority of cases the criminals, mafias, militias, death squads, US occupation forces and Iraqi police and army forces committing crimes against women are not held accountable for their actions. This has in turn encouraged the development of a situation characterized by lawlessness and criminality, in which women are prime targets. As such, many women have been forced to leave their jobs and quit their education, for fear that they may be the next victim of rape or assassination." She also writes of the "drastic increase" in the child mortality rate.

Dr. Al-Azzawi goes on to speak of the impact of Mr. Bush's war just in her own circles. In an interview published in Electronic Intifada of January 10, she counts 22 of her relatives and 50 of her friends dead, and "15 abductions of close relatives and people I know and love." The deaths of 1.3 million Iraqis and the millions more wounded by the Bush invasion and the 2-million forced to leave the country is never mentioned by the AARP article. This is typical of the real story about GWB that "The Magazine" does not tell.

Perhaps the most egregious omission of Editor Graham's Q. and A. is that she allowed to stand unchallenged Mr. Bush's incredible assertion that he made the war in Iraq because he believed Saddam Hussein was a danger to peace! He "was a threat to peace before we went in" and would have remained so "had we left him in power." This from the man who destroyed the fragile peace of the Middle East and started wars that have now spread across three nations at a cost of 5,000 American lives and handed a bill to taxpayers of more than \$3 trillion!

Over and again, Bush is allowed to rationalize his crimes to AARP readers: "I regret the fact that Saddam didn't have weapons of mass destruction that we thought. I don't regret removing him from power." (UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan did. He called the war "illegal" in that the invasion was not sanctioned by the UN Security Council. "From our point of view and from the Charter point of view it was illegal," Annan told BBC.)

Again, Bush said that in Afghanistan, "we face an enemy that murders innocent people to try to shake our psychology to get us to leave," as if his invasion hadn't done just that.

Of course, I could be totally wrong about the AARP's "The Magazine" article and I urge you to read it for yourself. But in the years that I served as the publicity consultant for AARP's predecessor publication, "Modern Maturity," I remember no such piece of bald political propaganda. It's time for AARP to tell its members the truth about the smiling tyrants it glamorizes.

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