

# Intervention Magazine

WAR, POLITICS, CULTURE

## Article & Essay: Karl Rove's War Against Cindy Sheehan

To slander opponents so their political positions are discredited -- Karl Rove's doctrine has been immensely effective in defeating Bush's challengers; will it now be effective in defeating grieving mother Cindy Sheehan?

By Stewart Nusbaumer

Dirty fighting is in their political blood. It's their *modus operandi*. It's their cr me de menthe. By slandering and lying and thrashing they decimate enemies and capture political office -- they win, which means everything to them. Now they are eyeing Cindy Sheehan, the mother of a soldier tragically killed in Iraq, a grieving mother protesting the war from a ditch near George Bush's ranch. They want to slaughter the mother lamb to destroy her resonating antiwar message. They want to win again.

Henry Kissinger once joked seriously that "90 percent of politicians give the other 10 percent a bad reputation." Hunter Thompson once said that Richard Nixon, although this could have been about the 90 percent of politicians, "could shake your hand and stab you in the back at the same time."

But George Bush and Karl Rove are not just back-stabbers -- they make Richard Nixon look like an angel. Rove and Bush are unique. Their vulgarity is wrenching, their lies are outrageous, their maliciousness is extreme, and their morality is nonexistent. All of which is evident in their sordid thrashing of three honorable military veterans.

## Campaigns of Sleaze & Malice toward Three

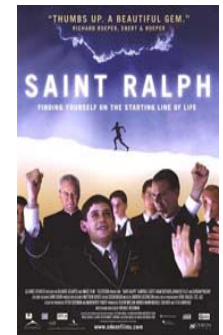
### 1) John McCain

In the 2000 presidential primary, shadowy forces spread rumors that John McCain, who had spent six years in a North Vietnamese prisoner of war camp, was mentally unfit to be president. The Bush-Rove attack machine spread stories of McCain's out-of-control temper and his so-called outrageous behavior; they worked up outrageous stories that McCain had been a stoolie when imprisoned in Vietnam. Innuendoes circulated and vicious attacks cut, leaving McCain dazed and fuming. The Bush-Rove team perpetrated a sleazy e-mail campaign alleging that he had fathered an illegitimate black daughter,



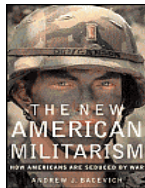
## Movie Reviews

**Saint Ralph**  
Reviewed by Mark Biskeborn



## Book Reviews

**The New American Militarism**  
By Andrew J. Bacevich  
Reviewed by Mark Biskeborn



**Spanking the Donkey**  
By Matt Taibbi  
Reviewed by Scott D. O'Reilly



**Dying to Win**  
By Robert Pape  
Reviewed by Mark Biskeborn

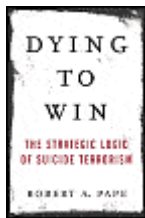
## Cost of Iraq War

**US Soliders:**  
**1,854 (15 Aug 05)**  
[Details](#)  
[Count Controversy](#)

**US Dollars:**  
**\$189,186,565,284**  
[Details](#)

## Quoted

"It is really incredible that



alienating conservatives in the crucial state of South Carolina.

A former Enron marketing executive, Karl Rove, discreetly spewed propaganda that crawled and seeped into the media, his attacks were sneaky and relentless, vicious, and his lies mean, all intended to plant in the public's mind that John McCain's mind wobbled unstably and his morals had foundered. The cumulative effect of the vicious Rove "marketing campaign," although impossible to quantify, was a major contribution in the undermining of John McCain's personal and political credibility.

we are doing so well in the media because I keep telling all of the reporters that I am doing their jobs. I am asking the tough questions of the President that they don't ask."

-- Cindy Sheehan

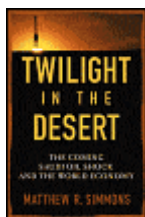
"Although I wear a uniform, I was not born to fight."

-- Leonard Cohen, *Last Years Man*

"Other than telling us how to live, think, marry, pray, vote, invest, educate our children and, now, die, I think the Republicans have done a fine job of getting government out of our personal lives.."

-- Editorial Page, *Portland Oregonian*

**Twilight in the Desert**  
By Matthew Simmons  
Reviewed by Scott D. O'Reilly



George Bush won the Republican nomination, John McCain returned to the Senate bitter, and then the Supreme Court appointed Bush to be president. Rove obviously learned some great marketing tricks during his top management tenure at Enron, now the icon for corporate corruption, if not slime.

What Karl Rove started back in Texas, developed in South Carolina, refined in Georgia, and perfected nationally was how to conduct a well coordinated clandestine campaign to discredit an opponent's integrity in order to destroy his candidacy. Attack the person, then their ideas won't matter; trash their reputation, then their policies are dead. That is the way to win elections the Enron way.

So politics is character assassination, and everything else is commentary -- or secondary. And Karl Rove directs these malicious, odious personal attacks on honorable people to destroy their politics from behind an iron façade of cowardly secrecy. The Texas style of politics is sneaky and dastardly.

**China: The Gathering Threat**  
By Constantine Menges  
Reviewed by Scott D. O'Reilly



## 2) Max Cleland

The next noteworthy battle was the 2002 Senatorial race in Georgia. The target was the triple-amputee Vietnam veteran Max Cleland -- a man who certainly sacrificed for his country. But the vile Bush-Rove directed propaganda claimed Cleland never sacrificed for America, giving credibility to the incredulous that his own grenade ripped his three limbs off -- not true, but it didn't matter. The Cleland campaign was off keel and vulnerable. Again, Rove used the tactics he learned at Enron, our corporate symbol of deceit and fraud.

## Get Involved



The Rove "marketing team" painted Cleland soft on terrorism. Cleland was repeatedly attacked by his Republican opponent, Rep. Saxby Chambliss, "for breaking his oath to protect and defend the Constitution." To drive the point home a slanderous television ad under the influence of Rove identified the Senator with Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein. Cleland's congressional record was relentlessly distorted and this distorted record was then ruthlessly attacked. For instance, Cleland was called a traitor for voting for an amendment to the Chemical Weapons Treaty, yet the majority of the Senators, including Sen. Bill Frist (the current Senate majority leader, then the chairman of the Republican Senate Campaign Committee) who handpicked Chambliss, also voted for the amendment.

## Poetry



**For the One Thousand**  
By Charles McCullagh

Not surprising, these Republicans were never called traitors.

These are banana-republic-style tactics, where the media is intimidated, if not shackled, and accountability is nonexistent so anything can and is said. It produces an endless chase to refute lies, because character assassination has become the essence of your democracy. It produces not the free exchange of ideas, but a continuous bombardment of the deceptive and the distorted. It is Enron politics,





Explore the issues and discuss the events, make new friends and discover new idiots. Join us in our **Forum**.

and Karl Rove doesn't lose in Enron politics.

Cleland lost his Senate seat. Again the smearing of a Vietnam veteran and the discrediting of his service in Vietnam was effective. Karl Rove and George Bush won again.

The conventional political wisdom advised candidates to attack their opponent's weakest point; Rove disagreed with this central tactic. He said go after your opponent's strongest attribute. When Vietnam veterans were the opponents, discredit their military record -- McCain was a stoolie for the communists, Cleland blew himself up -- then you will discredit their candidacy. At the same time, Rove was defending his candidate's *greatest* vulnerability, a candidate who insisted he was tough and a straight talker-- Bush's military record.

George Bush joined the Air National Guard to avoid fighting in Vietnam, a war he strongly supported but refused to fight in. In the Guard, he had a shabby record that pointed toward drug abuse and even going AWOL. By immediately lambasting an opponent's honorable war record, Karl Rove transferred attention away from Bush's miserable military record, and by continuing to lambaste the honorable veteran, he discredited the candidate. It defeated John McCain and Max Cleland. Sure, there were other reasons for their defeat, but the underlying character assassination of both candidates was crucial.

A veterans' honorable military service had always been above partisan politics and would have never ended up as campaign fodder; a repugnant public would have given the offending candidate a crushing election defeat. That is the way it has always been in America, but not anymore. Karl Rove and George Bush are different, and they have been central in making repugnancy mainstream in America. They have been crucial in moving the ethics of Enron into the political mainstream.

### 3) John Kerry

The showcase for Karl Rove's underhanded prowess to win through slander and lies was the 2004 presidential election. On the floor of the Republican Convention, official delegates held a parade mocking John Kerry's Purple Heart decorations -- given for combat wounds in Vietnam. The "Swift Boat Veterans for Truth" trashed not only Kerry's medals but everything related to his military experience: his motive for going to Vietnam, his actions in Vietnam, his behavior after the war. He was accused of being a liar and a fake, an untrustworthy candidate, even an unpatriotic American. Not merely accused, but bashed for months up to the election.

Immediately after the Democratic Convention, Kerry was shoved on the defensive and he never recovered as the Swift Boat Veterans did the dirty work that benefited George Bush-- they smeared a veteran with false accusations and outright lies. The combat vet Kerry was destroyed, the candidate Kerry was limping.

Karl Rove's goal is not necessarily to persuade the public to vote for George Bush, at least not initially, but to instill *doubt* in voters about the opponent's integrity and past actions -- in these cases, integrity as soldiers and actions in war. When voters began to view John McCain, Max Cleland, and John Kerry as possibly less than honorable, possibly immoral, George Bush was safe. His dismal military history and serious integrity questions were on the media's back burner. That George Bush had little to offer America

Home Zone  
By Jan Barry

toilet paper  
By Joseph E. Fasciani

God Off His Back Porch  
By Stephen Oliver

Calling Allen Ginsberg  
By Lydia Howell

Coaching Winter Track  
in Time of War  
By W.D. Ehrhart

The Truth Is Not Hidden  
By Jim Bush

## Language



Common-Language  
Barrier

By William Marvel  
Although we speak increasingly in a single bland dialect, we seem to be understanding each other less.

A Fine Hand  
By William Marvel  
The mechanistic word processor has replaced the penmanship of the fine, revelatory hand.

Nitwit Nation  
By Penny Stone  
Is America the most

**[Stuff Happens](#)**

a play by David Hare about the lead up to the Iraq war.

[www.newint.com.au](http://www.newint.com.au)

**[Religion Run Amok](#)**

7 Great Lies Of Organized Religion A Hard Look at Past & Present

[CoffeeshouseTheology.com](http://CoffeeshouseTheology.com)

**["I Did Not Vote 4 Bush"](#)**

Black Protest Wristbands Join the Movement!

[www.ididnotvote4bush.co](http://www.ididnotvote4bush.co)

**[God Loves Soldiers](#)**

A site for soldiers about Jesus Christ

[GodLovesSoldiers.com](http://GodLovesSoldiers.com)

except an abundance of unintended comical lines and an exaggerated swagger, the voting public quickly forgot. With the myopic-tunnel-vision media in its dumb groove and the public riveted on baseless accusations, George Bush was safe.

The fact is, doubt wins elections more often than convictions, uncertainty is often more important than certainty. This is especially true for the babbling, pathetic candidates.

With John Kerry's credibility as a sailor in Vietnam in tatters, with his political credibility discredited, George Bush won again. Again Vietnam had been used successfully against his opponent. Again the war, in vile manipulation and distortion, returned to defeat a veteran of that war. This was a different America than had ever existed before. The politics of Enron had sunk the country to a new low.

**4) The Media**

From John McCain to Max Cleland to John Kerry, there is a clear pattern that Karl Rove's strategy is to smear a candidate's military service and his sacrifices for country to create doubt in voters and to hide the truth that George Bush is the unworthy candidate. The linchpin for dissimulating Rove's smear campaign is the 4th Estate.

Rich Lowry, admirer and friend of Karl Rove, and editor of the conservative *National Review*, smugly said that John McCain, Max Cleland and John Kerry "make the smallest caucus in American politics -- Thin-Skinned Vietnam War Veterans Adored by the Media (TSVWVAM)." In fact, the media does not "adore" these veterans; in fact, the media made possible the repulsive, historical thrashing of McCain's, Cleland's, and Kerry's military careers.

Black has now become white, slander is fact, and disservice is adornment -- that is the political world of Enron carried out by unpatriotic Republicans.

But without the compliance of the mainstream media, there would not be the endless repetition of unsubstantiated charges that grind the truth down, that eventually make the truth irrelevant in our political campaigns. With the refusal of the media to investigate and report the truth, with history and context shunned for flashy outrageous statements, the bogus took center stage and unsubstantiated accusations replaced facts. The media is Rove's megaphone to slander character and discredit candidates. Without the media Karl Rove would be ineffective; with the media he is highly effective.

None -- absolute none -- of the Swift Boat Veterans charges have ever been substantiated. Not one. Yet, these charges were crucial in the election defeat of a man running for the presidency. The role of the media as watchdog of government and guardian of the truth is an utter sham today. The media is silly putty in the hands of Rove-type sleaze balls committed to saying the lie to destroy the credible.

Few American institutions have fallen as far and fast as the 4th Estate. It makes all the Enron politics possible.

**Campaign of Sleaze and Malice toward Cindy**

literate nation on earth? At the rate we're going, it may soon be the least literate.

**Dispatches from NM**



**By Stewart Nusbaumer**

**House of Bush Done?**

Having won the election, is Bush now losing his presidency?

**One Man's Lone Stand**

There is a man in Albuquerque who stands every day for a better America.

**Addicted Administration**

There is only *one* explanation for the twisted behavior and corrupt morality of the Bush Administration.

**Vets Link**



**Archives**

**Features**

Search



## Main Menu

- [Home](#)
- [Mission Statement](#)
- [Magazine Staff](#)
- [Writers Guidelines](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

## Creation/Evolution



[Religion Instead Of Science](#)  
By [Frederick Sweet](#)

[Creationist Terror in American Classrooms](#)  
By [Frederick Sweet](#)

[Genesis by Observership](#)  
By [Scott D. O'Reilly](#)

[Evolution vs. Creationism](#)

An angry, yet gentle, broken-hearted mother of a dead soldier killed in Iraq, Cindy Sheehan protests the war just down the road from George Bush's Texas ranch. She has now returned to California to tend to her ailing mother, but Cindy remains committed to her cause. She stands tall as a courageous American, while Americans watch in fascination. But Karl Rove is not fascinated; he is looking for his weapons to smear her all the way to ill repute.

"You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind is blowing," Bob Dylan sang. And we don't need a mind reader to know what Karl Rove is thinking.

Already there has been a so-called uncoordinated "citizen outrage" counter-demonstration, just like Rove organized in Florida during the disastrous vote recount. Legal action is being discussed to restrict if not prohibit the mother's protest -- a rifle shot was fired -- a truck ran over the sacred crosses of our war dead. The humid Texas air is thick with tension and anger. Karl Rove and George Bush are smiling.

There are charges that Cindy is disgracing her dead son's legacy "by serving as a pawn for well-organized, anti-American activist groups ... is a willing poster child for radical left-wing America haters ... is using her son's death ... is cruelly robbing our fallen soldiers of the high honor that they deserve ..." -- [this](#) in Cindy's hometown newspaper. The Republican letters brigades are preparing to roast Cindy in public.

The Republican troops are coming together and the guns to smear are being prepared. Some activists are under General Rove's command, while others are jumping on the bandwagon propelled by the Bush-Rove attack machine. The dirty war has started. Last night the Fox News "fair and balanced" commentators lit into Cindy Sheehan claiming she is running a circus that is dangerous for the U.S. soldiers in Iraq. This is a central Rove tactic. Hide behind the well-being of our troops, even when our troops are dying; honor the troops while denigrating the veterans. That is the voice of a moral vacuum without limits.

There are charges that Cindy receives finances from left organizations, which supposedly taints her message. But those in left-wing organizations are also Americans, and plenty of Americans contribute to right-wing causes and candidates. Yet, the media carries the message, allowing the implication to stand, and the planting in the public's mind that somehow Cindy is hiding something awful.

There are rumors that Cindy's husband is divorcing her because she was unfaithful, repeatedly unfaithful the more enthusiastic propagandists claim. Her sexual orientation is questioned; it's whispered she's a radical lesbian -- she is mentally unbalanced and getting more unbalanced. Members of her extended family "spontaneously" line up as Republican sheep, denouncing this whacked out woman disgracing America and her own dead son. The dirty war has begun; Enron "reality" is real.

And soon it will happen, the wheels are already turning. I assure you, a "Soldiers Mothers for Truth" type organization will claim that Cindy is a miserable fake and an outlandish liar. It will be the Swift Boating of Cindy Sheehan. The Rove Doctrine is as predictably as it is gutter sleazy.

## A Campaign for America?

- [Articles & Essays](#)
- [Dispatches](#)
- [Profiles](#)

## Departments

- [Commentaries](#)
- [Books](#)
- [Book Briefs](#)
- [Films](#)
- [Humor](#)
- [Music](#)

## Columnists

- [Arianna Huffington](#)
- [Jim Hightower](#)
- [Danny Schechter](#)
- [Dave Pell](#)
- [Fred Reed](#)
- [Penny Stone](#)

## Literature

- [Fiction](#)
- [Poetry](#)

## Make A Contribution



By Frederick Sweet

Creation Myths vs.  
Evolutionary Stories  
By Joseph Smigelski

## Intervention Classics



Attacked on NJ Turnpike  
By Stewart Nusbaumer

What started as a drive to an antiwar protest became a radio war in my car.

Greatest Genertion?  
By Regis T. Sabol

Exploring the commercialization and hyping of "America's Greatest Generation."

Grace Under Pressure  
By Valerie Davison

Is Nancy Grace of Court TV a feminist or traditionalist? Probably both, as well as controversial, irreverent and smart.

"Chosen by God to Lead America"

By Rick Friedman

Having received the green light from "above," Christian George is about to unleash a holiness that just might Armageddon all of us.

The question is not what Karl Rove and George Bush want to do about the mother with the potent antiwar message; they want to discredit her reputation and make her anti-Iraq War message impotent. But will they succeed? If Cindy's personal message -- the Iraq War is wrong so bring the troops home -- is crushed, then the antiwar movement will probably slip back into the doldrums, liberals and concerned citizens will return to their sports and shopping or whatever. And there will be more war, more dead, more grieving mothers -- but grieving in private.

To a large extent, what actually happens depends *not* on Karl Rove and George Bush, but on us. On students who have been in a deep coma of indifference. On liberal activists who have succumbed to inaction because the antiwar movement is inactive. On sensible citizens who have avoided the effort to think and act upon their thoughtful decisions. The outcome of this historical battle depends much more on whether we change than on what we know the Bush-Rove attack machine does.

Upon exiting the Constitutional Convention, Benjamin Franklin was approached by a group of anxious citizens who asked what kind of government the delegates had created for the new country. Franklin replied: "A republic, if you can keep it."

We can't keep our democratic republic if Karl Rove and George Bush define our politics -- bring down soldiers who sacrificed for America and disrespect mothers whose sons died in the name of America. We can't keep America if we are ruled by the Enron philosophy that says immoral attacks are patriotic. More than ever, we need courageous citizens. We need Cindy Sheehan. It's time to fight.

**Stewart Nusbaumer is editor of Intervention Magazine. You can email Stewart at [Stewart@interventionmag.com](mailto:Stewart@interventionmag.com).**

Posted Sunday, August 21, 2005

 email to a friend  print this page

[Go to home page](#)



**If you enjoyed  
this article,  
please read . . .**

### List of most recent articles posted:

- [Who Needs History?](#) (08/20/05)
- [Karl Rove's War Against Cindy Sheehan](#) (08/18/05)
- [Citizen Journalist](#) (08/17/05)
- [Wrong Religion](#) (08/15/05)
- [Asylum](#) (08/15/05)
- [The Most Amazing Thing](#) (08/15/05)
- [For the One Thousand](#) (08/14/05)
- [Battered & Bruised in Budapest](#) (08/14/05)

- [Remembering At Seal Beach](#) (08/13/05)
- [Why Are U.S. Troops Still Poorly Equipped?](#) (08/10/05)

Copyright © 2002 - 2005 Intervention Magazine  
URL of this page: [www.interventionmag.com](http://www.interventionmag.com)

[Report a bug](#)