

The Bush family devised a simple, numerical means to distinguish between the presidencies of father and son: George H.W. Bush was called "41," and George W. Bush became "43." To mark the imminent - and merciful - end of 43's reign, here are 43 remembrances of the departing administration.

There were actions to pacify or mobilize the right-wing elements that brought Mr. Bush to power:

43. Restoring the so-called Mexico City policy prohibiting American aid to groups that provide abortion counseling in other countries.

42. Brokering an embryonic stem cell compromise by falsely claiming there were 60 viable cell lines (about five times the actual number).

41. Attorney General John Ashcroft's puritanical cloaking of the Justice Department's semi-nude "Spirit of Justice" statue.

40. Political adviser Karl Rove's use of gay marriage ballot measures to rally evangelicals for the 2004 election.

There were poor staffing choices and the willful ignoring of sound advice:

39. White House adviser Claude A. Allen's arrest for illegal merchandise exchanges at Target.

38. The Supreme Court nomination of Harriet E. Miers, whose sycophancy trumped her lack of qualifications for the bench.

37. Treasury Secretary Paul H. O'Neill's puzzlement that the president could sit through an entire briefing without asking a single thoughtful question.

36. "Brownie, you're doing a heckuva job."

35. Rejecting Gen. Eric K. Shinseki's estimate that "several hundred thousand" American troops would be needed in Iraq.

34. Dumping Secretary of State Colin L. Powell even though he risked his reputation with the 2003 U.N. testimony about supposed Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, which he later deemed the "lowest point" of his life.

33. The president's petulant refusal to consult with his actual father, who knew something about invading Iraq, in favor of war counsel from a "higher father."

There was a penchant for deception and secrecy:

32. A gay male escort, working under a pseudonym for a bogus news agency, was permitted access to White House press conferences.

31. The executive order rebuking the Presidential Records Act, sealing 41's vice presidential papers from public view.

30. The altering of a 2003 Environmental Protection Agency report showing evidence of global warming.

29. Hiding from Congress the Medicare prescription plan's internal cost estimate until the bill passed.

28. The creation under Vice President Dick Cheney's supervision of the Office of Special Plans to cherry-pick Iraq intelligence data.

27. Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld's claim that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction stored "around Tikrit and Baghdad and east, west, south and north somewhat."

26. The later attempt to blame pre-war intelligence failures on CIA Director George J. Tenet.

And, at No. 25, Mr. Bush's infamous 16 words in the 2003 State of the Union address: "The British government has learned that Saddam Hussein recently sought significant quantities of uranium from Africa."

Though Mr. Bush in 2004 couldn't cite a single mistake he had made (No. 24), for the self-described "Decider" (No. 23) indecision was often costly:

22 through 18: As the terrorist attacks unfolded on Sept. 11, 2001, he froze for seven precious minutes in that Sarasota, Fla., classroom, reading *The Pet Goat*; he wasted vital weeks that autumn before dispatching special forces to hunt down Osama bin Laden; his re-election at stake in summer 2004, he delayed for six months sending troops into Fallujah to suppress the growing insurgency; he fiddled for three days in August 2005 before delivering federal resources to New Orleans after Katrina; and he sank four years, 4,000 deaths and billions of dollars into Iraq before changing his failed strategy there.

On the domestic front, there were tax cuts for the wealthiest sold as an economic stimulus that never occurred (No. 17), a failed attempt to privatize Social Security that would have cost the treasury billions (No. 16), and budget deficits all eight years (No. 15). Despite trillions borrowed or lost to tax cuts, the administration claimed there were insufficient funds for children's health insurance (No. 14), college tuition assistance (No. 13) or veterans' benefits (No. 12).

Nos. 11, 10 and 9: Opponents were smeared, from John Kerry via the Swift Boat Veterans front group to Ambassador Joseph C. Wilson IV by outing his wife, CIA asset Valerie Plame, to triple-amputee Vietnam veteran Max Cleland during the 2002 Georgia U.S. Senate race.

American values were sullied abroad in Abu Ghraib (No. 8), at home through domestic

wiretapping (No. 7) and in between at the jurisdictionally murky Guantanamo prison (No. 6).

Most of all, there was hubris, from Mr. Rumsfeld's glib "known unknowns" monologues at press conferences (No. 5) to Mr. Cheney's media-dodging after shooting his friend in the face (No. 4), and from Mr. Bush's infantilizing habit of giving everyone nicknames (No. 3) to his failed promise to be a "uniter, not a divider" (No. 2).

If polarizing the country, wrecking the economy and turning the world against us was the goal, then the No. 1 entry is painfully obvious: "Mission accomplished."

Thomas F. Schaller

Thomas F. Schaller teaches political science at UMBC. His column appears regularly in The Sun. His e-mail is schaller67@gmail.com.

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