

"AT 56 YEARS OLD SAYS HE IS DONE WITH POLITICAL CONSULTING"

I've laid out some possible reasons for Rove's resignation here. But I'd like to do a close reading of the WSJ story associated with the announcement, partly because I think it so fascinating that Rove would feel the need to pitch his own successes and failures on his way out the door.

The Investigations

Far and away the most interesting comment in the article, though, is this self-assessment from Rove:

His biggest error, Mr. Rove says, was in not working soon enough to replace Republicans tainted by scandal.

Consider the logic: Rove believes that if he just got those who were mired in scandal to step down before the scandal broke, then he might have been able to save the Republican majority. This, from a guy stepping down before—Josh Bolten has dictated—everyone must commit to stay through the next election. That's not definitive proof, of course, but Rove logic would suggest that Rove may well be imminently tainted by scandal. And Rove doesn't deny he's stepping down because of scandal. Instead he throws incendiary words out there like "mob" and "Mark of Rove," without ever denying that there may be is merit to the allegations. (Speaking of which, check out this link from pseudonymous in nc, which suggests there are hundreds of pages of papers relating to the Don Siegelman case at DOJ.)

What about those who say he's leaving to avoid Congressional scrutiny? "I know they'll say that," he says, "But I'm not going to stay or leave based on whether

it pleases the mob." He also knows he'll continue to be a target, even from afar, since belief in his influence over every Administration decision has become, well, faith-based.

"I'm a myth. There's the Mark of Rove," he says, with a bemused air. "I read about some of the things I'm supposed to have done, and I have to try not to laugh." He says the real target is Mr. Bush, whom many Democrats have never accepted as a legitimate president and "never will."

I especially like the way Rove admits that "the real target is Mr. Bush," not because Rove observes the banality that many people believe he was not elected. But because, as I've suggested, Bush may well be the target.