

# ROVE LOOKING FOR AN UNDERGROUND RAILROAD, AGAIN

Scott Horton describes how the Alabama GOP has retracted their claims that Dana Jill Simpson never did anything for the state party.

What a difference 72 hours makes. Maybe they got around, in the three days *after* that “exhaustive search” to talking with Governor Bob Riley and Twinkle Address Cavanaugh (the G.O.P. chair at the time of the events in question) about Jill Simpson? Maybe they recognized that it was going a bit far out on the ledge to deny that a former county co-chair was unknown to the party leadership? After all, an artful spinner of falsehoods knows that they must at least be somewhat plausible. **Or maybe it was Simpson’s statement to NBC’s senior legal correspondent Dan Abrams, who has now adopted the Siegelman case as a staple of his “Bush League Justice” series, that she had confirming telephone records that gave Mr. Hubbard a bit of pause?** In any event, what we see between these two statements looks remarkably close to a *retraction*. [my emphasis]

And then Hubbard turns around and asks for Simpson’s evidence.

Here’s what he says:

“Only the most committed anti-Rove/Bush activist could swallow such a tale,” party chairman Rep. Mike Hubbard, R-Auburn, wrote in the letter to “60 Minutes. **If you are unable to publicly produce hard and convincing evidence that backs**

the outrageous charges you aired to millions of viewers across the nation, I ask that you publicly retract the story on your next broadcast."

Note that Hubbard takes an immediate, intense focus on protecting Karl Rove, as if this were a chess game and Karl Rove were the player's queen. Of course the accusations against Rove were presented by a Republican operative lawyer, who testified under oath and subject to cross-examination, and who produced boxes of documents to support her testimony.

[snip]

But the most revealing aspect of Hubbard's statement was his demand that CBS produce its corroborating evidence. That, of course, is what this entire contretemps is about. Karl Rove is desperate to know exactly what evidence Simpson and CBS have before he is compelled to give sworn testimony. Why? Armed with this, he hopes to walk through the minefield ahead of him, lying and avoiding being caught. It's about that simple.

I absolutely believe that CBS should put its corroborating data on the table.

*After Karl Rove has given sworn testimony about this affair.*

Horton simply reads the obvious in making this claim: Rove's surrogates have demanded evidence while Rove has refused to hand over any of his own.

Then of course, it's more than obvious. It's Rove's MO, a central strategy he used to avoid perjury charges in the CIA Leak investigation. Early on in the investigation, at least, Ashcroft got briefings of all the suspicions

related to Rove.

Ashcroft was told no later than November 2003 that investigators also doubted the accounts that Rove, President **George W. Bush's** chief political adviser, had given the FBI as to how he, too, learned that Plame was a CIA officer and how he came to disclose that information to columnist **Robert Novak**.

[snip]

In a briefing devoted specifically to Rove and Novak, sources said, officials told Ashcroft that investigators believed it was possible that the presidential aide and the columnist had devised a cover story to present to the FBI to make it appear that Rove had not been a source for Novak's column.

Rove's lawyer goaded Viveca Novak into revealing whether Matt Cooper's source was known at Time.

Here's what happened. Toward the end of one of our meetings, I remember Luskin looking at me and saying something to the effect of "Karl doesn't have a Cooper problem. He was not a source for Matt." I responded instinctively, thinking he was trying to spin me, and said something like, "Are you sure about that? That's not what I hear around TIME." He looked surprised and very serious. "There's nothing in the phone logs," he said.

When Michael Isikoff later called for comment about Rove being Cooper's source (according to *Hubris*), Luskin got Isikoff to read him **Cooper's entire email** to his Time editors, revealing precisely what evidence there was against Rove.

And, apparently, Woodward passed his own information on to Rove, presumably revealing that Armitage had revealed Plame's identity to

him in mid-June.

MR. WOODWARD: And you know what? The special prosecutor, Fitzgerald, in a way, has discovered that there is an underground railroad of information in Washington. You're smiling because no one knows more about it than you.

MR. BERNSTEIN: Well, you were down there.

MR. WOODWARD: Well, you talk to people, you talk to somebody in the White House or the CIA or the Democratic Party, and you say, "I've heard or I understand; what are you hearing?" And one of the discoveries in all of this is that reporters, in asking questions, convey information to even somebody like Karl Rove.

—Meet the Press, July 17, 2005

Along the course of the investigation, then, Rove collected:

- [Presumably] Details on FBI suspicions of the cover story he concocted with Novak
- Confirmation that Cooper considered Rove his original source
- The entire content of Cooper's most revelatory evidence regarding his Rove conversation
- Details of Woodward's involvement that helped impugn the best witness against Rove

That collection of information served him pretty

well, as it turns out.

Now, the Republicans on HJC somewhat surprisingly supported making Dana Jill Simpson's deposition public. But looked at from this perspective, that seems to make sense, too.

To which all I can suggest is that Dana Jill Simpson avoid talking to the known members of the underground railroad—people like Isikoff and Woodward (I gotta say, I've got my suspicions about a number of people at MSNBC, too, so don't give anything in writing to Abrams, either). And journalists? Please be a little responsible when speaking with Gold Bars Luskin. I shouldn't have to say this, journalist's job is not to provide information that will help criminal suspects go free.