

NOW THIS IS INTERESTING SCOTTIE MCCLELLAN NEWS

Back in November, when Scottie McClellan's publisher first started to pitch Scottie's book, he made a stir when he posted the following blurb about the book.

The most powerful leader in the world had called upon me to speak on his behalf and help restore credibility he lost amid the failure to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. So I stood at the White house briefing room podium in front of the glare of the klieg lights for the better part of two weeks and publicly exonerated two of the senior-most aides in the White House: Karl Rove and Scooter Libby.

There was one problem. It was not true.

I had unknowingly passed along false information. And five of the highest ranking officials in the administration were involved in my doing so: Rove, Libby, the vice President, the President's chief of staff, and the President himself.

That set off a minor firestorm, as people misread the plain language of the blurb to mean that Bush had knowingly asked Scottie McC to lie about Libby's and Rove's involvement in the leak of Valerie Wilson's identity. As I pointed out then, the firestorm probably contributed to making little Scottie rich.

Scottie McC's publisher has pulled off quite the coup—taken a detail that was, largely, already known, and used it to cause a stir about a book that will not yet be published for another 6 months. Already, Dodd is calling for an

investigation, folks are calling for HJC or Waxman to hold a hearing. What the left has done is read one publishing blurb designed to generate this kind of buzz, and played right into the plan. Congratulations. You're all making Scottie McC rich.

And while I still don't advocate that you all go out and buy Scottie's book (tell you what—I'll buy it and tell you the interesting bits), this little revelation is interesting news.

McClellan also suggests that Libby and Rove secretly colluded to get their stories straight at a time when federal investigators were hot on the Plame case.

"There is only one moment during the leak episode that I am reluctant to discuss," he writes. "It was in 2005, during a time when attention was focusing on Rove and Libby, and it sticks vividly in my mind. ... Following [a meeting in Chief of Staff Andy Card's office], ... Scooter Libby was walking to the entryway as he prepared to depart when Karl turned to get his attention. 'You have time to visit?' Karl asked. 'Yeah,' replied Libby.

"I have no idea what they discussed, but it seemed suspicious for these two, whom I had never noticed spending any one-on-one time together, to go behind closed doors and visit privately. ... At least one of them, Rove, it was publicly known at the time, had at best misled me by not sharing relevant information, and credible rumors were spreading that the other, Libby, had done at least as much. ...

"The confidential meeting also occurred at a moment when I was being battered by the press for publicly vouching for the

two by claiming they were not involved in leaking Plame's identity, when recently revealed information was now indicating otherwise. ... I don't know what they discussed, but what would any knowledgeable person reasonably and logically conclude was the topic? Like the whole truth of people's involvement, we will likely never know with any degree of confidence." [my emphasis]

This meeting had to have taken place between July—when it became clear Rove was a source for Bob Novak and Matt Cooper—and late October—when Libby was indicted and subsequently resigned. Probably, it was in July, when Scottie McC was under a great deal of fire for vouching for Rove, and in precisely the time frame when Robert Luskin offered to have Rove testify again (for the fourth, not yet the fifth, time). Which, incidentally, means it was before Libby wrote an Aspen letter to Judy Judy Judy and released her to testify—so it was during a period when Libby believed his ruse of hiding behind "journalists" had succeeded (though it would have been just after Judy went to jail).

Scottie describes Rove, not Libby, initiating the meeting, which suggests that if Scottie McC is correct and they were comparing notes, it would be about something Rove knew and not Libby. If I had to guess, I'd say one or several of the following was the subject of the meeting.

- Luskin's upcoming plan to claim he found the Rove-Hadley email after having "learned" from Viveca Novak that Rove did have a Matt Cooper problem. It would have been important for Rove to alert Libby to this plan if this email was not what it appeared to be or if

there had been a concerted effort to destroy incriminating emails. Which, of course, there appears to have been.

- Either the news that Richard Armitage was Novak's "source" and/or Rove's plan (implemented the night before the indictment) to smoke Armitage out by pushing Woodward to reveal he had received a leak from Armitage. Don't forget Woodward's comment, suggesting he told Rove himself that Armitage had leaked to him: "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."
- Rove's recognition that he would have to testify again—making it more likely that Fitzgerald would learn more about the July 9, 2003 Libby-Novak conversation that both men had tried to hide. In particular,

depending on how Rove testified in October 2005, Rove might have made it clearer to Fitzgerald that Libby had—at a minimum—leaked the still-classified CIA report on Joe Wilson's trip to Novak during that conversation.

- Update: This was also the period when (presumably) Rove was spreading a false story about Ari Fleischer being a big source here. I can imagine why he might want to clue Libby in on that smear—and Libby did try to use it in his defense.

In Libby's trial, Patrick Fitzgerald presented a good deal of evidence to suggest that Libby and Cheney met several times in October 2003 to get their story straight. It takes no great leap of imagination to believe that everyone involved in leaking Valerie's identity was doing so repeatedly.

And there are several reasons why Rove might have felt the need to compare stories with Scooter Libby in July 2005.