

MIKE ALLEN'S PUNDITRY ETHER

Today, Mike Allen published one of the most masturbatory articles I've seen come out of the beltway in quite some time.

In it, he describes how Bush's minions still push Bush's spin to reporters to try to salvage his legacy. What's weird, of course, is that these minions are presumably pushing the spin to Allen. Which means the anonymous journalists used as sources in the article may well be none other than Mike Allen!

The defense never rests. When President Barack Obama released his own policy this week on former President George W. Bush's practice of attaching controversial signing statements to legislation, **a reporter** quickly got a tip from a Bush loyalist: the cell phone number for a White House lawyer in the past administration.

[snip]

A few days before Obama announced he was abolishing Bush-era limits on federal funding for embryonic stem cell research, Bush supporters who frequently appear on TV received an e-mail from an adviser saying: "I wanted to send you the following two documents on President Bush's record on stem cell research: 1. a Bush White House fact sheet on President Bush's record of advancing stem cell research in ethical, responsible ways and 2. a November 2007 Washington Post column by Charles Krauthammer, 'Stem Cell Vindication.'"

Recipients said the information was helpful and that they were struck by the fact that it wasn't talking points – just a savvy reminder of points the press was likely to overlook.

What are the ethics behind a reporter granting himself anonymity under his own byline?

(To be fair, I'm not sure whether recipients here refers to the minions or to the journalists. And who is this advisor if Bush isn't pushing Bush himself?)

Then Allen goes on to describe the minions as "approaching celebrity."

Participants say the effort is not coordinated or organized but, rather, a natural result of the hunger by bookers and reporters to get the views of aides **who approached the status of celebrity** through their service in a two-term presidency. The Bush alumni said they make their points subtly – both because the former president does not want to feed an Obama vs. Bush story line and because they know they will never win that battle.

What Allen doesn't point out is how his own adulation for these hacks is one of the only things that accords them any celebrity—many of them are virtually unknown except among political junkies.

The Bush defense forces include Fleischer; former press secretary Dana Perino; Bush **political czar** Karl Rove, who has contracts with Fox News, The Wall Street Journal and Newsweek; **economics guru** Tony Fratto; the prolific Peter Wehner, former director of the White House Office of Strategic Initiatives; and the **graceful speechwriter** Michael Gerson, who writes an opinion column for The Washington Post.

Sure, Karl Rove has his own well-deserved notoriety. Dana Perino is by far the best looking of Bush's press secretaries. But what did Michael Gerson ever do to graduate from

being a plain old speechwriter to being "graceful" one? I'm a political junkie myself and have no idea who Peter Wehner is, much less what he's done to be labeled "prolific." And jeebus!! Who in their right mind would label Tony Fratto an "economics guru"?!?!?!

Ultimately, Allen's point is that Bush's flaks are still out there and still relevant.

So the Bush message persists in the punditry ether.

But if it weren't for Allen's own writings, would they even register?

If a disgraced Bush hack shits in the punditry ether and Mike Allen's not there to record it, does the hack really make a sound?