

THE DEAD-ENDERS DO DALLAS

There are two notable details about this article on the reunion of the Bush dead-enders in Dallas to plan W's legacy.

Dick Doesn't Do Dallas

The first is the absence Peter Baker does note; apparently, Dick's not doing Dallas.

Not coming to next week's session is former Vice President Dick Cheney, who in the final days of the administration argued with Mr. Bush about his failure to pardon Mr. Cheney's former chief of staff, I. Lewis Libby Jr., who was convicted of perjury and other counts for his role in the leak of Valerie Wilson's employment with the Central Intelligence Agency. Mr. Cheney later went on television to air his grievances with Mr. Bush, while also accusing Mr. Obama of endangering the country.

That is an approach Mr. Bush has rejected, telling aides that for now he is intent on giving his successor room to govern without criticism from him. Besides, he says, he is too busy in his own new life.

While I'm all in favor of flogging the "Cheney in a huff over Scooter" story (maybe it'll spark some interest in why Cheney feels so strongly?), Cheney's absence is more interesting, IMO, given his apparently recent decision to keep his records—and the loot he received as gifts while serving as the Fourth Branch—in the National Archives in DC rather than in the Bush Library.

Last fall, an architect for Bush's library indicated that Cheney's records and artifacts would be coming soon, but that apparently was a mix-up. Cheney

wants them to remain in Washington as he writes his memoirs.

[snip]

During talks last year, the National Archives suggested that Cheney's artifacts – like a set of gold Murano glass candlesticks and bowls from Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi – be sent to the Bush library. That way they could be displayed with Bush's items, including the 9 mm pistol that Saddam Hussein held when captured by American soldiers in Iraq.

"The VP preferred to have the VP artifacts remain with the records," said Sharon Fawcett, assistant archivist for presidential libraries.

Plans for the Bush library at SMU include space for new collections, including Cheney's archives. His official and personal records would need an estimated 6,000 cubic feet, according to the National Archives.

Last fall, e-mails between Bush architects and the archives, which ensures that the library meets federal standards, signaled that Cheney's records would be coming to Dallas.

In October, one architect wrote to the archives: "We received a call from [George W. Bush Foundation president] Mark Langdale that the Vice Presidential holdings will now be located at the GWBPL [George W. Bush Presidential Library]" and asked for guidance to update the library's designs.

But there was "a miscommunication," said Rob Saliterman, spokesman for the nonprofit Bush Foundation, which is in charge of building the library, museum and policy center.

I'm reading "miscommunication" here to be Cheney-speak for change of plans, or more likely, long-time deception about his real plans. But given Cheney's repeated attempts to bypass the Presidential Records Act, particularly his attempts to have his emails, visitors, and classification actions hidden, I suspect his decision to keep his records in NARA reflects a desire to exercise continued control over access to them.

But it also means you've got Bush in Texas writing his memoirs using one archive, and Cheney in DC writing his own memoir using different archives. I can't wait to write the set of posts comparing the two memoirs, reflecting as they will two totally different archives about the events portrayed within them. I almost imagine that Bush is the one Cheney's keeping his archives away from, lest he find out what really happened during his presidency.

A Legacy without a Brain

And then there's the other notable detail: Baker's complete silence about whether Rove will attend.

Condoleezza Rice will be there. So will Karen Hughes and Dan Bartlett and Michael Gerson. And George W. Bush himself.

The old gang is getting back together next week in Dallas for a reunion of sorts, the Bush team's first since leaving the White House. On tap is a dinner with the former president and a day-long discussion of the future George W. Bush Policy Institute.

Apparently, the Dallas News tried to answer the question Baker's silence doesn't address—though with no better luck.

Those expected to attend include former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and media advisers Karen Hughes and Dan

Bartlett.

Former Vice President Dick Cheney will not be there. It was unclear whether Karl Rove, a top Bush political adviser, would attend.

Now, unlike Dick, Karl is definitely still working on the George Bush legacy project. Witness his strong reaction to Joe Biden's recollection of a meeting at which Biden warned Bush that the President might be a leader, but no one was following.

"I remember President Bush saying to me one time in the Oval Office," Biden said, "'Well, Joe,' he said, 'I'm a leader.' And I said: 'Mr. President, turn and around look behind you. No one is following.'"

Yesterday, Rove said the exchange was purely "fictional."

"It didn't happen," Rove said in a taped interview (which appears below). "It's his imagination; it's a made-up, fictional world.

"He ought to get out of it and get back to reality," Rove added. "He's making this up out of whole cloth."

"I hate to say this, but he's a serial exaggerator," continued. "If I was being unkind I would say liar. But it is a habit he ought to drop."

And the best part is that the same Karl Rove that spread Cheney's rumors that Valerie Plame had a low-level desk job at the CIA, and put up with Cheney's claims that Iraq contributed to 9/11, is now lecturing that Vice Presidents shouldn't lie or exaggerate.

"You should not exaggerate and lie like this when you are the Vice President of the United States," he quipped.

Thanks, Karl. Glad to see your newfound concern about the veracity of the Vice President.

Of course, Karl might just be cranky. After all. On the same day Rove went after Biden, he also went after a Tom Feeney staffer in a restaurant, warning of his "file" measuring Feeney's disloyalty.

Though, come to think of it, Karl's just about due for his little chat with the House Judiciary staffers, so maybe there's a reason he's so touchy.

Still. Karl Rove is the man who created whatever historical profile George Bush has. And here they are, brainstorming ways to turn shit into gold. And they can't even tell the press whether Bush's brain is going to show up.

That says something, I think, about the future of Bush's legacy.