

# BOB WOODWARD, BLOGGER

Let me just say, without qualification, that of the high profile journalists whose techniques were discussed or entered as evidence in the Scooter Libby trial, Bob Woodward had the best note taking. Judy Miller, Matt Cooper, Bob Novak, Andrea Mitchell (and, I'm sure, Marcy Wheeler)? They all were put to shame by Bob Woodward's exactitude and organization in the way he recorded his interactions with government officials.

Which is why I find it so amusing to see Woodward take to Tom Ricks' blog to rip Donald Rumsfeld's memoir to pieces. Woodward knows he has the documentation to back up his critique and he cites the notes of his October 23, 2003 and July 7-8, 2006 interviews with Rummy in detail. Here's the cattiest example:

Near the end of the Oct. 23, 2003 interview – page 39 of my transcript – this interchange took place, illustrating the worst and the best of him:

Rumsfeld: "And you lie, you told people I stuck a finger in your chest. I never stuck a finger in your chest."

Woodward: "Yes, sir, yes, yes."

Rumsfeld: "I never touched your chest."

Woodward: "I swear you did."

Rumsfeld: "Did I?"

Woodward: "Yeah, you did."

Rumsfeld: "Physically?"

Woodward: "You did, physically, it wasn't hostile you were illustrating a point."

Rumsfeld: "Good."

Woodward: "I explained that. I thought you scored a very good point."

Rumsfeld: (laughter)

Woodward: "Which was about surprise and off balance."

Rumsfeld: "Oh yes, I did. I remember that you're right ...Yeah, right, you are right ...I said you got to get a little off balance – I've done that. He's right, I'm wrong."

He had moved from calling me a liar to acknowledging that my memory was correct and his wrong. He probably should have been more tentative at both the front end and the back end, but there it was, Rumsfeld in full.

Meanwhile, Woodward exposes Rummy's own inconsistent claims about his notes.

"I don't have notes," Rumsfeld insisted. "I don't have any notes." His memoir cites his personal handwritten notes dozens of time.

Sure, Woodward does this, in part, to ensure no one questions the accuracy of his own books as authoritative narratives of—among other things—the timeline leading up to the Iraq war. He also seems, in part, to be protecting Bush.

And sure, there are tidbits where the old Woodward shines through, even in his own self-reporting.

On January 9, 2002, four months after 9/11, Dan Balz of *The Washington Post* and I interviewed Rumsfeld for a newspaper series on the Bush administration's response to 9/11.

According to notes of the NSC, on September 12, the day after 9/11, Rumsfeld again raised Iraq saying, is there a need to address Iraq as well as bin Laden?

When Balz read this to Rumsfeld, he blew up. "I didn't say that," he said, maintaining that it was his aide Larry DiRita talking over his shoulder. His reaction was comic and we agreed to treat it as off the record. But Balz persisted and asked Rumsfeld what he was thinking. [bold original; underline emphasis mine]

But I gotta say, for a newbie blogger, Woodward sure took the medium.