

## THE 43s



DICK CHENEY



CONDOLEZZA RICE



DONALD RUMSFELD

## THE 41s



BRENT SCOWCROFT



JAMES BAKER



COLIN POWELL

# One proud Poppy, but...

WASHINGTON — At this month's christening of the nuclear aircraft carrier bearing his name, former President George H.W. Bush delivered a rousing endorsement of his son.

"I am very proud of our President," the elder Bush said in rain-swept ceremonies in Newport News, Va. "I support him in every single way with every fiber in my body."

Yet many of his closest former aides beg to differ.

Indeed, one of the worst-kept secrets in Bush World is the dismay, in some cases disdain, harbored by many senior aides of the former President toward the administration of his son — 41 and 43, as many call them, political shorthand that refers to their numerical places in American presidential history.

For five years, the 41s have bit their collective tongues as, they complain, the 43s ignored their counsel. But as the war in Iraq has worsened and public support for the current administration has tanked, loyalists of the elder Bush have found it impossible to suppress their disillusionment — particularly their belief that many of 43's policies are a stick in the eye of his father.

"Forty-three has now repudi-

**EXCLUSIVE**  
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ated everything 41 stands for, and still he won't say a word," a key member of the elder Bush alumni said. "Personally, I think he's dying inside."

To 41 loyalists, the bill of indictment is voluminous. Some alleged 43 has betrayed his father's middle-of-the-road philosophy by governing as a divider, not the uniter he promised in the 2000 campaign. Others, like former 41 speechwriter Curt Smith, argue 43 isn't conservative enough.

"Conservatives want limited government, a balanced Middle East approach, a foreign policy that builds, not destroys, and general, not special, interest," Smith said. "Bush 41 endorsed all of the above. Bush 43 supports none."

A common refrain of the 41s is that 43's muscular approach to foreign affairs — what one derided as "cowboy diplomacy" — has estranged the U.S. from

## W follies mar legacy, ex-Prez's aides gripe

its allies and diminished its authority around the globe.

The ultimate sticking point for the old guard is Iraq. They cite the appointment of 41's close friend and former secretary of state, James Baker, to chart a new Iraq policy as belated vindication.

The 41s remain incensed, however that Brent Scowcroft, 41's national security adviser and once a top outside adviser to this administration, has been demonized since he wrote a 2002 article opposing an Iraq invasion.

"What Brent said is now the accepted wisdom," a senior 41 hand said, "and everyone believes 41 agrees with him, though he'll never say it."

While the 41s do most of the finger-pointing, aides to the current President reject the criticism as nipping from out-of-touch malcontents.

They also bash the 41s for going public, charging much of the damaging material in Bob

Woodward's new book, "State of Denial," was provided by 41 partisans.

"Nobody has a monopoly on wisdom," a 43 staffer said, "especially those whose information may not be as good as when they were in power."

The family-feud fault lines were on dramatic display at the carrier christening festivities, where both camps turned out in full force.

"We're all on our best behavior," a top 43 official joked.

A few moments later, however, one of 41's most prominent counselors couldn't resist.

Trading social gossip at a reception, the ex-aide noted that former Secretary of State Colin Powell was in attendance. "He should be here," the adviser noted. "We didn't fire him" — a barbed reference to Powell's departure as 43's top diplomat after four years of bureaucratic fisticuffs with Vice President Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, two fre-

quent targets of the 41s.

"Everyone knew how Rumsfeld acts," another key 41 assistant said. "Everyone knew 43 didn't have an attention span. Everyone knew Condi [Rice] wouldn't be able to stand up to Cheney and Rumsfeld. We told them all of this, and we were told we don't know what we're doing."

Another top former 41 loyalist confided that several ex-colleagues remarked on a perceived "stature gap" between father and son as they sat on the dais.

The 41s concede their broadsides are awkward for their ex-boss, but say they're motivated by a desire to protect his legacy.

In fact, the 41s suggest a singular irony: the unpopularity of the son's administration may be rehabilitating the father's.

"By comparison, the old man looks better and better," a senior 41 hand said, with undisguised satisfaction.

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**MORTIMER ZUCKERMAN**

It's time for this administration to admit mistakes

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