

WHO'S BEHIND WHO?

BY MICHAEL WOODS

It's about instincts. It's about money. It's about vision. It's about mobilizing your party base and reaching out to swing voters. In America, politics is about many things. But, as much as anything, it is about having the right team assembled around the right candidate. Nowhere is this more important than on the national level. Here is a look at some of the people who are helping the two major candidates running for the White House.

GEORGE W. BUSH

Though Gov. Bush purports to value loyalty above all things, most reporters have likened his campaign to a company rather than a family. The quiet, corporate approach has served him well. The level of prominence and professionalism in his campaign is as thorough as it is impressive. His extended camp includes two former secretaries of state, two former national security advisers and a former secretary of defense. Many on this all-star team are family friends or long-time members of the Bush family political network.

Karl Rove - Chief Strategist

The methodical Rove is probably the most pivotal player after Bush Sr. A lifelong Republican operative, he is the brains behind the Governor's campaign strategy. Rove has been a Bush man all of his adult life and has known G.W. since 1973. Rove encouraged Bush to read the works of Myron Magnet, Marvin Olasky and other prominent conservative scholars; and he is largely credited with shaping the Governor's right-of-center ideas into the "compassionate conservative" philosophy that he is running on. It was also Rove who advised Bush to avoid comment on drugs, avoid debates and to stick to his stump speech-decisions that have come under scrutiny since Gore overtook Bush in the polls late this summer.

AL GORE

Unlike Bush, Gore had trouble assembling a stable inner circle to run his organization. Sometimes it seemed that his campaign staff was being reinvented as frequently as he was. However, as the primaries wore on, it became evident that Gore had found his kitchen cabinet and, in turn, his stride. No one will mistake it for the ideology "war room" assembled around Clinton in 1992 and Gore's campaign is far from the Clinton ad firm of 1996. Also, the Vice President's family plays a far more public role than that of Gov. Bush.

Kareena Schiff Gore - Advisor/Daughter

Kareena is quite possibly the most influential advisor in the Gore camp - and arguably the best politician in the family. For better or worse, the 26-year old law student has helped her father shape everything from his personal image to his Convention message. As one former consultant told the New York Times, "[We] are just interchangeable operatives. When it comes down to the real decisions? It's Kareena, Tipper and his gut." She is the director of Gorennet, a project designed to involve more young people in the campaign. She is a young person herself; and many feel her charismatic presence lends a vitality to her father that no consultant could produce.

Donna Brazile - Campaign Manager

Brazile is the epitome of a political foot soldier. A fiery liberal with strong grassroots ties; she is a quintessential organizer and motivator for Gore. Also, Brazile is symbolically important, stabilizing the left for a campaign that features mostly centrist democrats. She is largely credited with pushing for one of Gore's best moves - shifting his campaign headquarters from Washington D.C. to Nashville, Tenn. She has helped cut salaries and instill passion in the staff. Still, a position in the Gore administration is not a certainty for Brazile. In 1988, she was forced to resign from the Dukakis campaign after accusing Vice President Bush of infidelity. Some believe she would be an unpredictable presence in Gore's cabinet.

Carter Eskew - Media Consultant

Gore's "message guru" is widely regarded as the campaign's most influential man. There are two reasons for this assessment. This 45-year-old consultant is seen by many as "the best Democratic adman in the business." He has a reputation for creatively dilapidating opponents' images. Second, he has been a Gore ally since the early 70's when the two men worked as reporters for The Nashville Tennessean. Eskew has worked on almost every Gore campaign and is exceptionally loyal to the Vice President. (Many see it as more than a coincidence that one of Eskew's most famous ad campaigns was for Sen. Joseph Lieberman, the man Gore selected as his running mate.) As the rumble for battleground states escalates, ads will fly from both camps and Eskew will spearhead the democrats' campaign.

George Bush, Sr. - Advisor/Father

Former President Bush has maintained a cautious distance from his son's bid for the White House. The two have very rarely appeared together. However, the knowledge, contacts and public clout that he lends to his son are well known. Also, since early 1999, he has appeared at 16 fundraisers that garnered nearly \$2.5 million for his son's campaign. The national news media has fostered the notion that the former president views this election as an opportunity to avenge his loss to Bill Clinton in 1992, an idea that the Bush clan is quick to dismiss. Senior's support for his son has been immeasurable. Several prominent members of the Governor's election team - Condoleezza Rice, Gen. Colin L. Powell, and Carl Rove most notably - have close ties to his father.

Gen. Colin L. Powell - Surrogate/Advisor

As the most respected political figure in America, Gen. Powell's influence extends well beyond either party. Not surprisingly, his decision to lend open support to the Bush campaign has been a tremendous asset to the Governor's efforts to establish national credibility. Also, he has served as a living advertisement for the concept of compassionate conservatism. Considering that he chose to eliminate himself from the list of potential running mates, it is unclear how intimately the general plans to be involved with a second Bush administration. There is speculation that he will be nominated for secretary of state if Bush is elected.

William M. Daley - Campaign Chairman

Since Clinton's suave secretary of commerce replaced Tony Coelho as Gore's campaign chairman, the Vice President's prospects have only gotten brighter. Daley is a very skilled manager who is highly regarded within Democratic and business circles. The youngest son of Chicago's most famous mayor and the brother of the current one, he helped Clinton navigate the politics of the Midwest in 1992. This year, the region is considered a critical battleground for the general election. However, his centrist politics and strong ties to the business community have not always played well with leaders of the labor movement. If Gore ascends to the White House, Daley is probably the next secretary of state.