

Bush's failure was his own fault

By KEN LEONARD

What can I say? What can an arch-conservative from the Buchanan Brigades of New Hampshire say about the recent election results?

I could blame the press for letting Clinton and Gore get away with telling some pretty blatant lies ("these are the worst economic times since the 30's," ignoring the Carter era). I could blame Perot for entering when he was obviously motivated by a personal grudge against Bush.

I will, instead, be a mature adult and lay the blame where it belongs: with President Bush. Ever since he was nominated in 1988, George Bush has been trying to distance himself from Ronald Reagan and the eight years of growth — in every meaningful way, as well as economically. Even the poor get richer (by 11 percent, according to the IRS) under Reagan, but Bush promised to sit down with Congress and make deals so as to avoid the conflicts which marked the Reagan era.

These conflicts with Congress gave us economic growth, the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe and parts of Central America, and reduction of waste in government. Such gains are well worth any conflict.

For four years, Bush has allowed Vice President Quayle to be mocked, failing to bring forward the achievements of the man who, as a Senator, led the fight to save

the obscure SAM-D surface-to-air missile now known to us as the Patriot. When Quayle brought forward good points in the campaign, the press and Bill Clinton jeered, and Bush made him back off. Quayle was a lone conservative in a gang of moderate-to-liberal Republicans: Bush, James Baker, GOP Chairman Rich Bond, and the rest of Bush's key players.

Bush surrendered the social agenda, giving in to the liberal demands that he do so. (They, of course, are going to press theirs by seeking special treatment for their cases and funding for their "choices." I thought they wanted the government out of it all.) This left him with this unconvincing economic message: Oops, I did what he would have; I won't do it again.

Perhaps true. The "oops" message, though, is hard to sell.

It is wrong, however, to say that the election of Gov. Clinton indicates that the American public wishes they'd re-elected Carter in 1980. Or even that they wish they'd elected Dukakis in 1988. It means that George Bush blew it, both in the campaign and in his term of office.

The Clinton Administration will be short-lived. The current economic recovery will continue, but increased government spending and regulation will soon start tearing away jobs, and you can count on a repeat of the Carter era — in spades.

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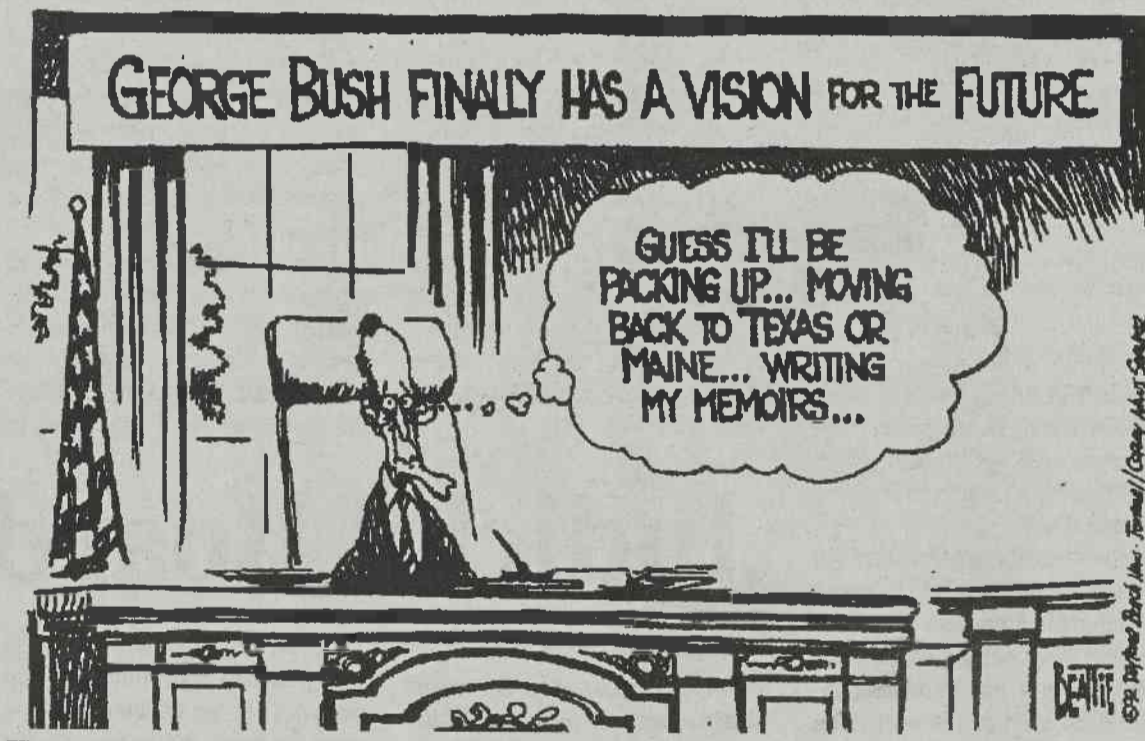
Socially, every value anyone holds near and dear will be thrown away, and Clinton will not only fail to deliver a cure for AIDS, he will watch his own programs further its spread by telling kids lies and by overruling parents in schools. (Clinton's wife does not think that parents should be allowed to make decisions "unilaterally" in dealing with their children, and that schools should give sex education, abortion counseling, and condoms even if parents object. Bill Clinton heartily concurs.)

What else did Bush do wrong? He had no idea what he was doing at times. James Baker, we were told, was going to return to the State Department. Then he was going to become the "domestic policy czar." If he was going to manage both foreign and domestic policy, what was Bush going to do? Richard Darman, who helped the Democrats write the 1990 budget deal, was rumored to be on a list of to-be-fired White House staffers. Conservatives were glad to see him go; we never wanted him as Budget Director in the first place. Then there were rumors he would be Treasury Secretary. As bad as Nicholas Brady has been, Darman is worse.

Bush lacked the direction of

Reagan, and therefore failed to prove wrong the popular Republican joke: What's the difference between Bush and John Gotti? At least Gotti has one conviction. Jack Kemp was right in 1988 when, during a debate, he charged Bush, "You will kill the Reagan Revolution."

That's what happened. Bush failed to present a case to re-elect him, and he wasn't. Perhaps conservatives were right to ask him to decline re-nomination. Maybe he'd lost the election for any Republican — he certainly took some good Senate and House candidates with him. In any case, Democrats are now out of scapegoats. They run it all. Vote Kemp, 1996.



Unconventional sculpture revealing

By EVERETT M. ADELMAN

Although immediately struck by the painterly authority and knowing traditionalism evident in the artist's 20-year purview of oil and watercolor paintings, it was however the less conventional of Post-Modernist sculpture of the past few years that revealed artist J. Chris Wilson's autographic complexity.

In an exhibition at the Rocky Mount Arts Center, the form is the metaphor in Wilson's "Wrapped Still Life" sculptures that are cloaked, shrouded, bundled, and bound, boxed, and crated. His formal concealments invite inquiry and engagement like Pandora's box.

Unavoidable by any means are two huge wooden crates, one monochromed intense blue, "The Sweet Seduction" (1991) and the other bright red "Red Chair from St. Simon's" (1992). Wilson disrupts the preciousness of the salon tradition by asking us to witness the "arrival" and "departure" of two ambiguous collections coded by color and durably packed.

The red chair construction signifies heirloom, and its color is passionate. Among other things, the unwritten, informal histories of the antiques that furnish old homes. The blue crate in proximate view of its red counterpart not only activates the gallery by contrasting color and the dynam-

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ics of scale, it offers a cooler sense of concealment and charged suspicion of its unseen contents.

Nearby in the exhibition stands another sculpture featuring a chair, elegantly poised on a low pedestal, protectively shrouded and ossified in hydrocal plaster. Like the furniture of rooms put to rest indefinitely while the heirs of such estates are yet to be born or like a carved shrouded tombstone, Wilson's choice of objects and detailing cross-reference his art and diverse professional concerns. For instance, a small

hydrocal humoresque called "Wrapped Still Life" (1990) with three small painted bundles huddled together must in some context refer to "the three graces" and Wilson's academic wit as an art historian.

Two pieces, although quite different from each other, contextualize the exhibit as a whole. In site-specific "Rocky Mount Arts Center, Wrapped Still Life" (1992), Wilson uses some adept trompeleoil humor in his painted wall relief that extends the Art Center's interior pegboard motif into sculptural space. "Wrapped Still Life Sketch" (1991) is a conventionally framed curious assemblage that hangs on the gallery wall among Wilson's

watercolors. Layers, stacks, packets, and wads of the artist's working sketches and color swatches are tied and secured in a hierarchy of presumed utility and ultimately wrapped in cellophane like a keepsake bridal bouquet. This piece demonstrates Wilson's flexibility between flat painterly space and concrete three-dimensional space.

Chris Wilson has been the Project Coordinator for the relocation and restoration of Wesleyan College's Bellemonte House (c. 1817) since 1988. The Bellemonte House will provide additional office space for the college and will open later this month. Wilson is a Professor of Art at Barton College in Wilson.