

## Bush's cabinet bare

Well, we finally have a president. After weeks of waiting and nights of watching MSNBC and CNN, in December the nation finally learned who would lead the country for the next four years.

Amid much debate and controversy, George W. Bush was declared the winner of the November Presidential election.

### From the Editor

So, in the past few weeks, Bush has been nominating the people who will be his closest political advisers and, in some cases, conspirators, in the next four years.

Bush's choices for cabinet positions leave much to be desired, especially for those who are more moderate on the political spectrum. Indeed, Bush's nominees for cabinet positions include for Secretary of the Interior, Gail Norton, who once worked under James Watt, an opponent and bitter foe of environmental groups.

All U.S. citizens can expect from Norton and Bush is exploration in the Alaskan National Reserve for untapped oil in a vain attempt to avoid finding other alternatives to our obsessive and fossil fuel dependent society.

In addition, the nominee for attorney general, John Ashcroft, is simply Bush's nod to the Religious Right, to the right-wing, conservative, fundamental people that still rear their heads from time to time on issues such as abortion, civil rights and the environment.

Ashcroft is no exception to this common perception of the Religious Right; indeed, his track record on both abortion and civil rights has more moderate Republicans and Democrats alike scratching their heads at Bush's selection. He is, in fact, an opponent of abortion and his loyalty to ensuring civil rights is questionable. North Carolina Senator John Edwards (D) is just one of those who has vocalized concerns about Ashcroft's nomination.

With Bush's inauguration this Saturday, Jan. 20, and the Senate hearings next week for cabinet approval, we are nearing the date that will determine our country's fate for the next four years? Do we want to ignore and cover up environmentalists, feminists and civil rights advocates? If all Bush's cabinet selections go through, that will certainly be the case.

## I Dream of Jimmy

CHRISTINA HOLDER  
Associate Editor

They were flying somewhere over Virginia when my grandfather broke the news.

My dad, only twelve then, had looked up into my grandfather's face not knowing quite what to anticipate. The two were on their way to Washington, D.C., and Dad had never been before.

"Son, you better begin thinking about what you are going to say to Caroline," he said in a serious voice.

My dad, confused, waited for my grandfather to explain.

"We are having dinner with the Kennedy's tonight."

And what began as harmless humor to lighten the thick, stuffy air in the crowded plane, turned into the controlling thought in my father's head.

My dad was never supposed to buy it. At least that's what my grandfather thought.

But Dad's head had already begun spinning as he began shifting nervously. *What would he say to Caroline Kennedy? He loosened the top button on his white-collared shirt. What do you say to a president's daughter anyway?*

It wasn't until well into the day, as the two passed the Capitol, that my grandfather reassured my father that dinner with the Kennedy's was merely a joke. Dad blew a sigh of relief. Grandfather chuckled. And they walked on.

I chuckled too, as I thought of the story standing in line outside of Quail Ridge Books last Thursday sometime around 5 p.m.. Well, I was standing in the vicinity of Quail Ridge. I was actually about 1000 people back, wrapped around the shopping center and standing on Ridge Road.

Jimmy Carter, thirty-ninth president of the United States, was somewhere inside, dutifully surrounded by secret service agents, and I was going to meet him. He was at Quail Ridge promoting his new book *An Hour Before Daylight*, a memoir of his childhood growing up in rural Georgia.

When I walked from my dorm room across screaming-Wade Avenue traffic to the

store, I was only half-prepared for the crowd that awaited.

My friend Sarah had warned me that when she had dropped by the store earlier that day, people had already set up camp, firmly seated in lawn chairs placed around the book aisles. According to her, they had been there since 2 p.m.

Carter was scheduled to sign books only from 6 until 8, and due to a shoulder injury, the booksellers warned the crowd there was no guarantee he would get through the entire line. Still, I took my place, deciding that it was worth a try to meet a former president of the United States.

But what would I say to him? I didn't want to sound like everyone else, exploding with some drippy, saccharine monologue that he would never remember. I wanted to sound refined, intellectual, appreciative. After all, I respected him for his character, even if he didn't have the greatest presidency.

So the first hour I tossed around conversation starters.

*President Carter, your work with Habitat for Humanity is a model for all American people.*

*My sister and I aren't getting along. Can you teach me how to master a peace talk?*

*Jimmy, great to see you! How is Rosalynn?*

And then I did that for the second and third hour too.

Occasionally my concentration would break as the line ahead ebbed inside the store and I moved a few feet forward. But I always returned to the same thoughts that could not seem to match the search for the perfect opening.

So I began doing what any journalist would. I began talking to the people around me for some ideas. No luck. I flipped open the book and began reading, hoping to be inspired by a passage that I could comment upon. Still no luck.

In the back of my head, I envisioned my own ten-minute conversation with Jimmy talking about school, politics and the good old days.

When I finally got inside the store shortly after eight, I began to feel the same nervousness my dad must have felt

anticipating what he would say to Caroline Kennedy.

As my line flowed into the store, I searched for Jimmy. I assumed he was near the back considering the glop of people that seemed to bounce around in that area. I considered making a beeline for the huddle, but then I caught a glimpse of the clerks directing traffic in front of me.

They stood stoically at strategic places amid the bookshelves looking like the stern ticket-takers at the Ferris wheel.

And as I looped around the dictionaries and travel books, I accordingly felt like a kid waiting in that never-ending amusement park line.

When I rounded the final corner before reaching the table where the President sat waving his pen across pages, a clerk stopped me and told me to open my book to the title page.

Finally as I stepped up to the table, a clerk took my book and began sliding it across the table like it was a non-perishable being scanned at the grocery store, as she did the book after mine and on and on down the line.

Carter, who was wildly signing title pages, looked up periodically to smile and say "hello." He looked up to the man in front of me and the woman behind me. But his head was down when I passed.

"Hi, nice to meet you, thank you, bye," I said with more speed than grace. I passed on through, feeling like one of the sheep passing through the checkout line in John Updike's "A & P."

It was so very disappointing.

I had waited over three hours to meet Jimmy Carter, former President of the United States. I didn't get to say anything to him.

I didn't even get to shake his hand. And the only thing that was on my mind as I opened to the title page to see "J Carter" scrawled quickly in a diagonal, was reprimanding myself for not having been one of the first one hundred in line. Then, maybe he would have signed his full name.

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