

# The Huffington Post



Peggy Drexler

## We Have Met Scooter. And He is Us

Posted July 8, 2007 | 03:44 PM (EST)

Lewis Libby won't be folding prison laundry after all. We went to his checkbook, and settled up the \$250,000 fine. His boss is even dangling the possibility of a full pardon. And a firewall now stands between accountability and the people who actually ordered the outing of a working CIA agent.

Really -- did we expect this to come out any other way? Do we deserve it to?

It is simply another piece fit neatly into a pattern of arrogance unlike anything seen in the history of American leadership. For eight years, this country has said to the world: "We're right. You're wrong. Deal with it."

It's a style of leadership that has been discounted, dishonored and discontinued virtually everywhere except in the West Wing. In those keenly self-confident confines, the default remains set to the old Lyndon Johnson's definition: "A leader is someone who -- if you don't do what he says -- can do something terrible to you."

It is a view legitimized by big weapons and big money, and fueled by the determination to prove that our way fits all cultures like spandex -- even those who have gone 7,000 years without a bit of practice in making it work.

It justifies shipping young Americans off to house-to-house combat -- even though a check the military records of those so eager to dispatch them shows the closest you will come to combat experience is Donald Rumsfeld giving military pilots flying lessons. At the top of the org chart, Dick Cheney had five deferments because he had "other priorities." And, even though Dan Rather was bum-rushed from the anchor chair, the Commander in Chief has yet to explain that big hole in his service record.

If you want to see the full military bonifides of those who argue that if you blow up enough people the rest will take your point, search the term "chicken hawk." It amazing how many not only did not serve -- but would not serve. (Rush Limbaugh, for one, was excused because of a nasty boil on his posterior.)

It is also fair to assume that not one of the neocon dogs of war sent his or her own child into harm's way. While men and women are being dismembered along the sun-scorched roadsides of Baghdad, the Bush twins are doing Jager-shots in Upper West Side bars.

Military experience, of course, is not a check-list qualification for leadership. And nobody wants their children in the cross-hairs of a death cult. But if you are going to send others off to die in the service of your personal world view, it might be nice to have some skins in the game.

Where does this kind of arrogance come from? How does it survive in the face of epic incompetence, rampant corruption and a country's slide from beacon of hope to object of derision -- the Albanian exception duly noted?

It's simply a creature of the country we have become.

We have fallen into the certainty that being American means we're entitled to our due and proper. We can go on consuming a disproportionate share of the world's resources. We can go on ignoring the support of corrupt and violent regimes that play ball. We can continue to allow this country to be the arms-supplier to the world. We can continue to drive vehicles that are multiples more powerful than we need, and consume far more energy than we can afford. We can stay well-fed, well-cooled, while great masses of people are on the knife edge of survival. We can allow torture in secret prisons because the torturers tell us it makes us safer. We can absorb body blows to the First Amendment because we're patriotic.

Let's be honest, if this war had been as tidy and bloodless as advertised, would anyone still be concerned about the fact that we attacked a failing country that was no threat to us on the pretext of WMD that our leaders knew full well didn't exist?

A president who knew we would allow him to disregard judge, jury and a perfectly reasonable punishment in return for omerta is simply part of the package. Let's stop whining, and let Scooter Libby get on with finding a think tank and establishing his appearance fees. He earned it. And we asked for it.