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Say Goodnight, Karl

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As Karl Rove packs up his things, few in the chattering class can let him depart without a good-by. Some come to praise him; others to bury him. All seem fascinated by him.

The words "political genius" are being thrown at him like rice to a departing bride and groom.

But genius?

When you look behind Karl Rove, some might see a legacy. I see what you find when you drain a swamp.

His most obvious legacy was that he twice engineered the election of a man who proved to be woefully short of the job description. The second time he did it, we already had a clear suspicion that this man and his handlers had misled us into a disastrous war. So points to Karl for execution.

I don't know if he was Bush's brain. But he was at least that part that might otherwise make a sitting president see the task of the building of an administration as something more than populating it with dim, but loyal party hacks. One can only wonder how many "Brownies" are out there doing a heck-of-a-job letting problems fester, while telling the administration what it wants to hear.

Clearly, he created new school of political strategy: you can fool some of the people all of the time. And that's good enough to win. He managed to micro-target groups with the narrowest of agendas, and make them believe they all had something to gain by sticking together.

How did he cobble such a diverse coalition of intolerance, fear and greed? How did he get those who believe in the right to life sit in the same tent as those who defend national bazaars to sell weapons made specifically to kill? Maybe his brilliance was to realize that they didn't really care, as long as theirs got a seat at the table.

Rove's most accomplished sleight of hand was to avoid having to answer to the great binary question about the cause for war. Is this the dumbest administration in American history? Or is it the most cynically devious? Through misinformation, misdirection and sending up well-timed alerts that the terrorists are coming, he somehow managed to win an election without that question being adequately addressed.

Winning, of course, is the only thing -- even if it means your boss calls you "turd blossom." Karl Rove did win -- with damage to the country that will take decades to repair.

He proved that you can run the office of the President of the United States like an extended political campaign. Everything is about the political base because the political base is everything. It's not about the good of the country, it's about the interests that provide the money and those who hold together to create the slimmest of margins.

Ultimately, though, the "boy genius; "the architect" could not save this administration from the gravitational pull of its lies, ineptitude, division and manipulation. He is taking his leave as it all comes crashing down around him.

I wonder when he looks back on the last eight years, what will he point to with pride? Will it be health care, immigration, security, our reputation in the world; our sense of being a cohesive and forward moving nation?

I think all he can say is this: "I got a man elected to the presidency twice, who never should have been elected once."