

**THE BLOG**

Pardoning the Turkeys

By Marty Kaplan

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What do President Bush and the national turkey have in common? They both received Thanksgiving pardons from President Bush.

As Flyboy pardoned “Flyer” at the White House, half a world away, in the United Arab Emirates, 41 pardoned 43. The bird won his freedom in the 59th annual photo op in which the media are cheerful accomplices of the poultry industry. The incumbent President won his pardon at a “leadership conference” (is that code for “speaking fee”?) where a staged speech by George H. W. Bush unleashed the opposite of cheers from his audience.

The liberator of Kuwait must have been expecting huzzas for his this-will-not-stand stand. But instead, what he heard were derisive hoots — aimed not at him, but at his son. “We do not respect your son,” a woman said, prompting whoops and whistles from the room. “We do not respect what he’s doing all over the world.”

The AP reported that 41 “appeared stunned.” The President who refused to invade Baghdad; whose son publicly disses him and his foreign policy team; who has played Laius to son’s Oedipus, and Lear to his Goneril and Regan: Poppy was expecting what — Kennebunkport holiday gentility?

“My son is an honest man,” he responded, defining the antonym of “talking turkey.” “This son is not going to back away,” he said, “voice quivering” according to the AP, a tremolo caused perhaps by his bizarre substitution of “this” for “my.” Maybe that’s just how they talk within the dynasty. “This President would like some white meat, Bar,” one imagines 41 saying. “Would this son like seconds of stuffing?”

Sr. defended Jr. as though someone were trying to pin the “wimp factor” on this son. “He’s not going to change his view because some poll says this or some poll says that, or some heartfelt comments from the lady who feels deeply in her heart about something,” prompting Gold Star mothers all across America to wonder which of them was “the lady” in question. “You can’t be president of the United States and conduct yourself if you’re going to cut and run,” 41 told his Abu Dhabi critics; clearly he hadn’t yet received the memo that “cut and run” was no longer the pejorative of choice in the brave new bipartisan world. “This is going to work out in Iraq,” he said, sending a subtle *realpolitik* signal to this son. Victory? Winning? Not gonna happen. “A National Strategy to Work Things Out in Iraq”: that’s the ticket.

Flyer's name, as well his alternate, Fryer, were chosen via "Gobble the Vote," an online poll conducted on the White House's Web site, proving once and for all how hep these Bush cats are to the internets. "I am granting them a full Presidential pardon so they can live out their lives as safe as can be," said 43 in the Rose Garden, leaving the parents of our armed forces serving courageously in Iraq to wonder whether things will work out as well for their sons and daughters.

Happy Thanksgiving.

UPDATE: Mea culpa. Laius, not Laertes, was Oedipus's Poppy. Corrected above.

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