

BURMA SHAVE - BUSH BUSTS OUT A COMPASSION BEARD

✘ This is shaping up to be a monumental week with important news flying in like a furious wind from every direction, from the primary election battle, to all of the various political scandals, to diplomatic agendas, the Iraq war that has taken a shockingly deadly turn for the worse on all fronts with little notice by the distracted and weary public, to, of course, the economy. Saddle up cowboys and cowgirls, it could be a rough ride. Oh yes, and Marcy will be back soon, rested and ready herself.

The first blow to land for the week did not fly in like a furious wind, it *was* a furious wind. Specifically a typhoon that blew a path of waste and destruction through the already destitute and oppressed tinderbox that is currently known as Myanmar, and was formerly known as Burma.

The cyclone and storm surge that tore through Myanmar's Irrawaddy delta killed at least 15,000 people and left 30,000 missing, officials said on Tuesday, warning the toll could rise in low-lying, remote villages.

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Giving the first detailed account of the worst cyclone to hit Asia since 1991, when 143,000 people died in Bangladesh, Foreign Minister Nyan Win said on state television 10,000 people had died just in Bogalay, a town 90 km (50 miles) southwest of Yangon.

After a meeting with Myanmar's ambassador to Bangkok, Thai Foreign Minister Noppadol Pattama said he had been told 30,000 people were missing after Saturday's devastating storm.

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The total left homeless by the 190 km

(120 miles) per hour winds and 12 foot (3.5 meter) storm surge is in the several hundred thousands, United Nations aid officials say.

The scale of the disaster in the military-ruled southeast Asian nation drew a rare acceptance of outside help from the diplomatically isolated generals, who spurned such approaches in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.

If there are words sufficient to describe the desperate plight of the people of Myanmar, then they surely escape me. It does add a degree of relative perspective to the mere struggles of democracy we labor on here daily. The random vagaries and inequalities of the human condition on this planet are both stunning and stark; but for a virtually indecipherable molecular difference in a couple of genetic alleles, there may go you or I. Very sobering. I will leave substantive analysis of what, if anything, can be done for these poor souls in Myanmar to better and more capable minds than mine. What struck my curiosity was the official reaction and statement of the United States government in response to the tragedy.

Now, we all know that special brand of compassionate interest that George W. Bush oozes exudes in the hours and days following a catastrophic human predicament caused by the wind and water fury of nature. In case your recollection needs refreshing, here is the record from just such an occurrence right here in his own country that he supposedly leads.



So if that is what Bush does when it is the citizens of one of the great cities of his own country dying from the deluge; what does he do when it's the po folk of some remote, destitute country in Southeastern Asia instead of the po folk of New Orleans? Nothing, he doesn't make

any effort at all; instead he inexplicably trots out his automaton wife, Laura, to stand at the Presidential podium in the White House and address the tragedy. From Dan Eggen at the Washington Post:

Laura Bush condemned the military government in Burma yesterday for its "inept" response to a deadly weekend cyclone, marking an unusual foray by the president's spouse into a high-profile foreign policy crisis.

Appearing at a White House news conference, the first lady said the military junta in Burma is preventing the United States and other nations from providing help in the wake of Tropical Cyclone Nargis, and she alleged that the country's rulers purposely declined to warn people of the impending danger.

Very nice. Both brilliant *and* sensitive. Or not. One of the dictionary definitions of "beard" is:

...a person who diverts suspicion from someone (especially a woman who accompanies a male homosexual in order to conceal his homosexuality)

And that is exactly what we have here, Laura is propped up as a beard to mask the fact that Bush just doesn't give a damn and can't be bothered. Probably too busy hitting the treadmill in the gym with Condiliar Rice to be concerned with people who actually subsist on rice, and just had their rice producing region obliterated. i guess i shouldn't complain, Laura actually did a better job of reading the prepared statement than her husband could have managed, although she did mangle and misrepresent a couple of facts in her personal zeal to decry the military junta running Myanmar. This is certainly not an earth shattering fact in the relative scheme of things, but it is a rather sad and pathetic reflection on the man at the helm of our

republic.

In closing, a little background on the source of the title to this post is in order. Burma-Shave was a United States brand of brushless shaving cream, famous for its advertising gimmick of posting humorous rhyming poems on small, sequential highway billboard signs.

Burma-Shave sign series appeared from 1925 to 1963 in most of the contiguous United States. The exceptions were New Mexico, Arizona, and Nevada (deemed to have insufficient road traffic), and Massachusetts (eliminated due to that state's high land rentals and roadside foliage). Four or five consecutive small billboards would line highways, so they could be read consecutively by motorists driving by. The signs themselves were originally produced in two color combinations: red-and-white, and orange-and-black, though the latter combination was dropped after only a few years. A special white-on-blue set of signs was developed for South Dakota, which restricted the color red to official warning notices.

This use of the billboard was a highly successful advertising gimmick during the early years of the automobile, drawing attention and passers-by who were curious to discover the punchline. However, as the Interstate system expanded in the late 1950s and average vehicle speeds increased, it became increasingly difficult to attract motorists' attention with relatively small signs, especially near major cities with their burgeoning arterial interchanges.

For more on Burma Shave, and what was one of the most innovative and legendary advertising schemes in history, see [here](#). We won't be needing the help of Burma Shave to cut through

Bush's beard though, it is already so thin and transparent that it is almost non-existent.