

THE ONLY PICTURE ON DICK'S WALL



I hate to keep harping on Politico's blowjob for Cheney. But I've been obsessing all morning by this picture accompanying the story, showing the sole picture hanging on the wall of Cheney's office (click to enlarge; the other Politico pictures show a lot of family pictures on furniture, but this appears to be the only one on the wall).

How odd, first of all, that an article trying to redeem the Bush-Cheney failed presidency gives pride of place to an earlier historically unpopular President, Gerald Ford. And how odd that this picture accompanies this statement—highlighted by Peterr.

Not content to wait for a historical verdict, Cheney said he is set to plunge into his own memoirs, feeling liberated to describe behind-the-scenes roles over several decades in government now that the "statute of limitations has expired" on many of the most sensitive episodes. [my emphasis]

See, I'm interested in Cheney's focus on statute of limitations and on that picture for several different reasons.

Cheney talks about statutes of limitations going back decades. But of course, the ones that would be expiring now would be those for crimes he committed (he seems to be admitting) during the Bush Administration—those crimes committed about five years ago, in many cases.


A number of smart lawyers have been reminding me via email of late that, while the statute of limitations on things like FISA violations may be expiring in the coming weeks, the statute of limitations on any conspiracy to cover up those

crimes would not expire until the conspiracy to cover-up those crimes was over.

Except.

Except that that is only true for as long as Bush and Cheney tried to hide their crimes from law enforcement. You know—from people over at DOJ like Alberto Gonzales and John Ashcroft. If, for example, Cheney ordered the future AG to go to then-current AG John Ashcroft and tell him they were going to violate FISA even though Jim Comey told them not to, then they couldn't very well be accused of covering up the crime from DOJ, could they? Keeping DOJ in the loop at each stage of the process seems to inoculate the White House—to some degree—from this kind of cover-up charge.

Maybe the smart lawyers can explain in comments how this works.

 In any case, it sure looks like Cheney learned his lessons from the Nixon-Ford era well.


The other reason I'm interested in Cheney's focus on statutes of limitations and that damn picture on the wall is this. The picture appears to be fairly recent; the apparent flag pin in Cheney's lapel would seem to date the picture to some time between 9/11 and Ford's passing at the end of 2006. But I'm struck that Cheney's picture of Ford in the White House may have been taken the same night as this picture (note, in particular, Ford's tie). That is, I'm wondering whether the sole picture on Cheney's wall is a picture of him with President Ford from the night of Ford's 90th birthday party at the White House—on July 16, 2003.

You might remember, that's the party the guest list of which Patrick Fitzgerald had to subpoena in 2004, at the time when he was honing in on Scooter Libby and Dick Cheney. The party at which—we have reason to believe—Dick Cheney told the wife of that night's honoree, Alan Greenspan, that the story she should be covering

was not the way in which Libby and Cheney had used propaganda to get us into the Iraq war, but the role that Valerie Wilson played in trying to crack down on nuclear proliferation. What was Joe Wilson's reaction, Andrea Mitchell asked him four days after the party, to "what White House sources were telling her about the real story being not the sixteen words but Wilson and his wife."

"Here's the night I outed a CIA spy," that picture seems to be saying.

Mind you, I'm sure Dick's got Ford on his wall for completely different reasons. I'm sure Dick's got it up as a tribute to the President under whom he learned his considerable bureaucratic skills, which have served him masterfully ever since.

 So I'm not trying to argue anything about this picture—this post is mostly free association based on it. Nevertheless, I find it an interesting choice for pride of placement in his office.

Update: Thanks to JimWhite for finding the original of the picture, which is indeed from the day Cheney was probably actively pushing the outing of a CIA spy.