

# Pat Buchanan Gets it Right

*Is there any other way for a Special Consultant to the President?*

By Henry Allen

Patrick J. Buchanan, special consultant to the President and special scourge of the media since the abdication of Spiro Agnew, knows the description by heart. He recites it with a tart laugh — recites it with the briskness of a preemptive strike, in fact, as if he'd prefer to beat you to the punch by saying it himself.

Still, he laughs. He leans back in his swivel chair under the lofty ceiling of his Executive Office Building office, his face brightening with feistiness at the mention of the describer, Garry Wills, who included it in his book, *Nixon Agonistes*. It reads: "As usual, he has a black overcoat on, with the collar wrapped up around his lumpy raw face — a 40-year-old torpedo, hands on the iron in his pockets? No, he is 29, a writer, one of Nixon's fresh batch of intellectuals. Pat was, indeed, the very first."

That was in February, 1968, in an Oshkosh, Wisconsin, motel press room very early in the 1968 campaign — back when Nixon was still battling not to be the old Nixon, or the new Harold Stassen, the knee-jerk campaigner. At that point, Buchanan had been working for "the boss," or "the old man," as he calls him, for just over two years, shrugging off the scoffs and wonderment of old Columbia Journalism School comrades who wanted to believe nothing else Nixon ever said except: "You won't have Nixon to kick around anymore."

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Nixon then was in his "just another concerned American like yourself" phase—the humble newspaper reader. But Buchanan saw the cool, hard analysis Nixon has persevered in, his "management by objectives," his energy that has him waking up in the middle of the night to write down

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notes and memos. Nixon has dissembled throughout his career, like a Catholic priest in a Protestant neighborhood, finding it more politic to keep his intellect in the background. But Buchanan would tell anybody who wanted to listen that Nixon was incredible, a fantastic command of the facts and the logic, if only people understood . . .

Now, five years later, Buchanan is still overseeing the approximately 25-page single-spaced news summary that Nixon finds every morning inside a blue notebook labeled: "Eyes Only for the President — The President's Daily News Briefing." And he's still the house conservative, and proud of it; he advocates legislation to "break the power of the networks," which he has called "a marriage of left-wing bias and network power."

In 1971 he married a receptionist in the West Wing of the White House, a low-voiced, high-polish blonde named Shelley Scarney, who had been a Nixon loyalist well before Buchanan, having served as a Nixon secretary in 1959. The couple live in the fine isolation of the Watergate.

But only after the Watergate scandal did Pat Buchanan gain much reputation beyond being a brain, a right-wing ideologue, the reputed author of Nixon's law and order speeches in the 1968 campaign, and of the famous verbal cavalry charge that Agnew led on the media in Des Moines in 1969. (Though when asked if he wrote it, he says: "We don't discuss that.")

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Then, on September 26, the Watergate committee found itself being harangued, disputed, queried, lectured and otherwise backed into corners by a Buchanan feistiness that some called arrogance, and others applauded as one of the few shows of conviction and spirit on the part of the Watergate witnesses. What's more, he came away looking more innocent than he'd arrived.

So in an administration so Republican-cloth-coat that Henry Kissinger looks like a swinger, Pat Buchanan, previously noted

as a tough, studious political aide, emerges in the midst of the Watergate scandals and stupidities as Mr. Hard-but-Fair, Mr. Integrity, an intellectual.

He leans back and laughs at the Wills description.

"Yeah," he says, "a 40-year-old torpedo with his hands on the iron in his pockets."

He is earnest, even diffident, as he explains: "One of my advantages in front of the committee was that I was innocent of wrongdoing. I felt a strong sense of injustice. They were trying to sandbag me on national TV, calling me up with no time to prepare, and leaking stuff to the press. Sam Dash (the committee's chief counsel) had a problem. He was dealing in an area with which I'm very familiar, and he isn't. Which is campaigns. (Buchanan was touted as the "star witness" in the committee's "dirty tricks" probe.)

"Afterwards, all kinds of people came up to me on the street to congratulate me. I was walking over to the University Club to go swimming when one of these Impeach Nixon kids headed toward me. So I headed straight for him," he says, apparently relishing the memory of a confrontation in the offing. But: "The kid said, 'Hey, you're Buchanan, you did a good job up there this morning.'"

And telegrams and letters congratulated him, some of them from people as unlikely as Pierre Salinger, who was press secretary under Kennedy. Buchanan remains the leading inner-circle survivor of the Watergate purges that carried away Haldeman, Erlichman et al. And the inheritor of the limousine that Kissinger rode in before he moved to the State Department.

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So the windburned Irish hit man image has matured. He still looks feisty, of course, with flat, quick brown eyes, and a mouth he holds tight, like a man who operates comfortably with a light background hum of anger.

But the hair curls over the collar, and the sideburns are a bit longer than the





Patrick J. Buchanan

Photographed by Matthew Lewis

White House norm, as Buchanan is glad to point out. Despite his three miles of jogging or half mile of swimming every day, a hint of a double chin provides a prosperous air. He is sleek and tough. He has the look of a bright-young-man who takes pride in his maturity. Established, now.

"I'm basically and instinctively a conservative," he says. "I remember when I was growing up, looking at the maps of the Korean war every day in the Times-Herald, watching the Communists close in on our

troops around the Chosin Reservoir. The Hungarian Revolution in 1956 got to me. I had buddies in the Marines when they landed in Lebanon in 1958.

"My father used to take me into the office on Saturday mornings. He had a whole drawerful of columns by Westbrook Pegler and George Sokolsky. He'd give them to me to read. I used to see him sitting in front of the TV, cheering for Joe McCarthy. I think he went down to see him lying in state in the Rotunda.

"We were very pro-Joe, very Irish Catholic. I remember when I was at Georgetown, at a meeting of the Gold Key Society, which is their equivalent of Phi Beta Kappa, I got talking politics with some guy. Now, people at Georgetown were very big on Kennedy. I was sort of a closet conservative. The guy asked me how I liked Kennedy and I said not all that much, and it turned out he didn't either . . ."

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Two longtime loyalists, Buchanan and his wife, Shelley

**Buchanan, from page 13**

Growing up Catholic in the '50s: it's a phrase that Buchanan uses a couple of times, sitting behind his desk, brisk in his shirt sleeves and sipping coffee from a mug. It was a good decade to do it in. And Buchanan's family did it the way it was supposed to be done; nine kids, seven of them boys, with Pat the third oldest. They all went to Catholic elementary schools. All the boys went to Gonzaga College High School, where W. Baldwin Buchanan, their father, had been graduated in 1923, and they all went on to Catholic colleges, three of them to Georgetown as day-hops, as their father had been before he became an accountant as his father had been before him, and two sons after

him, three generations of Washingtonians, with a fourth growing up now—Pat's nieces and nephews. An established family.

The family house, on Utah Avenue in Chevy Chase, is a big, white six-bedroom place with a Spanish-style tile roof, and a dark, Spanish solidity inside—an atmosphere it's tempting to compare with that of Gonzaga or Georgetown with their dim airy hallways and sense of purpose, true establishments.

"Ignatius of Loyola was a soldier," says the Gonzaga yearbook for Buchanan's year, 1956. "... persecuted, accused ... but the court could find neither error in his doctrine, nor evil in his life."

Gonzaga is Jesuit, obviously, with a militance and loyalty, that have set the Jesuits apart, with their fierce en-

ergy. "The teachers were tough, strong men," Buchanan recalls. "They'd bang you up against a locker if you weren't behaving."

Buchanan was valedictorian. The yearbook shows the same tough eyes, the same tight mouth that mark him today. But then, photographs make him look meaner than he is, in person.

"It was an amazing school," Buchanan says. "It was so small, but the football and basketball teams were the best in the city."

Gonzaga, St. Ignatius, Joe McCarthy, closet conservatism at Georgetown ... all beleaguered, but righteous. Buchanan had the best of opportunities to live with the frustrations that turn American conservatives snappish.

At Georgetown, on a scholarship, Buchanan majored in

English and philosophy. He was a day student, living at home, so he didn't mix much in the campus scene. "I was never a fraternity type. I used to run around with my real brothers."

One October night in 1959, Buchanan disputed a traffic arrest, sent two cops to the hospital for treatment after a fight they ended with their nightsticks, and got expelled from Georgetown for a year. "I gave as good as I got till they pulled out the sticks," he recalls. He returned to finish third in his class, and won another scholarship to Columbia Journalism School.

If you'd grown up like Pat Buchanan, the press was considerably more than a bit of adventure for a young man—this is back in the days before media became fashionable, remember, back when you told people you wanted to be a journalist and they'd say either "How exciting," or "It'll be a great experience."

But Buchanan had grown up hearing his father cite bylines and headlines and page references in his complaints about a biased press.

"It goes back to Franco," his father says, white-haired and pink-faced in an easy chair in his living room. An Irish-American gentleman, Jesuit-educated, he'll reach back to Gonzaga '23 to tell you that "any argument can be reduced to a syllogism, with a major premise, minor premise and a conclusion. That's why I liked Pegler and Sokolsky. They were logical." So, at the very least, it was the bad logic of the media that offended him. "One day you'd read that they'd taken a city in Spain. The next morning they'd say no, it never happened. Franco let the press go anywhere they wanted. The Communists kept them out. But the press gave Franco the worst of it. When Joe McCarthy was in the news, they'd show all his bad moments on the TV at night, but they'd ignore the good ones. When the Communists killed a bishop in Spain, The New York Times played it on page 57 or so. Now, if a bishop were killed in Washington would they play it that far back?"

Logic. Order. Establishment. Militance under the faith. You can speculate what sort of man Pat Buchanan might be today if his family had fallen apart, if there'd been no Gonzaga or Georgetown, but Pat Buchanan had it all, he did it just the way he

was supposed to, the right priorities and no generation gap or teen rebellion. And it worked. He has prospered, like his father prospered, with friends, influence, a happy family, and security.

It would be illogical for Pat Buchanan to be anything but conservative.

If the China visit and Russian detente came as a shock to the Pat Buchanan who'd studied those maps of the Korean war, he worked it out . . . logically.

In a short book called "The New Majority," written last Christmas to be privately printed by the Girard Bank of Philadelphia, Buchanan described the shifts in premises about China that required a new syllogism.

"A Communist China that sent Armies into Korea, crushed Tibet, threatened war in the Formosa Strait, beat the drums for 'wars of national liberation' . . . was a fit candidate for isolation and containment. But an introspective China, groggy from excesses of the Cultural Revolution, staring northward at half a million Russian troops and digging bomb shelters, might be one with whom we could have profitable discussions. . . . The President concluded that it made little sense to maintain full communications with the stronger while denying ourselves contact with the weaker."

Buchanan admits: "I was explaining it to myself."

After getting his master's degree in journalism in 1961, Buchanan tried for a job at The Washington Post, but didn't get it "because I got into a political argument on the editorial policy of the paper," he's been quoted as saying. So he found the small, conservative St. Louis Globe Democrat; he arrived there in debt, on a train, and left at the end of 1965 in a Buick convertible after three-and-a-half years of writing editorials. And after a cocktail party at the home of Globe Democrat cartoonist Don Hesse, where he met Richard Nixon and told him he wanted in on the ground floor if Nixon were running again for President.

(Buchanan had met Nixon once before, when he caddied for the then-Vice President at Burning Tree Country Club.)

Buchanan, salaried by a Republican election fund joined Nixon in New York in Janu-

ary, 1966, in time for the 35,000 mile Congressional campaign swing that kept Nixon's political flame alive—especially after the GOP picked up 47 seats. Nixon ended up holding a stack of political IOUs.

Working in an office next to Nixon's, at Nixon's New York law firm, Buchanan did the research, the intellectual logistics support, for Nixon's trips to Africa and the Middle East. He wrote speeches. He learned political strategy and political savvy. He watched Nixon ignore the media assurances that Nixon was, at best, a minor elder statesman, and at worst, a has-been who didn't know when to quit. He organized meetings with right-wing Republican youth, like the Young Americans for Freedom, back in the days when the youth vote was supposed to be the key to everything, and besides, Nixon couldn't afford not to court anyone.

Then came the long, slow campaign trail, watching Rockefeller marshalling his money and Romney blowing himself up by claiming he'd been "brainwashed" by the military in Vietnam. The primaries belonged to the Democrats, with McCarthy and Bobby Kennedy blazing away at President Johnson. Nixon's quiet battles weren't as spectacular. Buchanan served as press relations man, as preparer of a news summary, as analyst and researcher, banging from motel to plane.

By mid-campaign, the work was paying off, and the management types were climbing aboard, and Buchanan became just one of a large crew; an ideologue, though, not a systems robot.

On election night, 1968, watching the televisions in the Waldorf Towers, in New York, Buchanan was sure it had all "gone down the tube." Until 3 a.m., when the big states had fallen for sure to Nixon. And Buchanan, for the first time in his political life, was on the winning team.

Buchanan felt let down, the next day. Then the President-elect told him that's what it was always like. You had to taper off, or else you got depressed.

He says he spends an average of 11 hours a weekday on the job, with a few hours Saturday and Sunday. He still over-looks the news summary, provides a liaison with the right wing of the GOP, writes



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speeches and testy memos. Friends say he has survived because he was with the New Nixon before anybody else; and because "his paper always gets through"—meaning that Haldeman, the great valve of the President's attention, couldn't shut out Buchanan.

"I get along fine with Haldeman—now," Buchanan says, with Haldeman long gone from the White House.

"I have great loyalty to (Nixon) the man," Buchanan says. "I might have had ideological differences with him, but they ended when I joined him. I remember when Ray Price (another longtime Presidential aide) came aboard, and somebody wondered how well he'd work with us, and the President said, 'The first time we're in a fight he'll turn into a loyalist.' And he did."

The news summary is Nixon's answer to the fabulous array of media gadgets that Johnson watched and listened to, such as the console of three color televisions left on all day so Johnson wouldn't have to wait for them to warm up. Instead, President Nixon has chosen to narrow his media sources, controlling their access the way he limits almost everyone's access. If there is a methodological danger that Buchanan will provide his boss with only the news he wants to hear, the summary has received generally good marks for objectivity from a number of journalists who have seen copies of it.

On weekends, Buchanan drives around in his Cadillac convertible, visits his family in Chevy Chase, and goes to the movies at the Circle Theater, where he buys books of discount tickets. He admires Clint Eastwood movies and the political films of Costa-Gavras, though he takes issue with their leftist politics.

Politics makes very strange bedfellows in the case of Buchanan, who has friends such as Hunter Thompson, the professional radical paranoid whose *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail* describes Nixon with twitching, foaming revulsion. Thompson admires Buchanan's gutsiness, his disdain for the middle of the road. He reported with particular delight that Buchanan called Chuck Colson, another administration tough guy, "a Massachusetts liberal."

One drinking and poker buddy is Rick Stearns, the deputy manager of the McGovern campaign.

"Pat is the only man I know

who can drink as much beer as I can," Stearns says. "As a poker player, I'd have to say he's conservative."

Stearns attributes Buchanan's social ecumenicism to the fact that "he's confident enough in what he believes that he doesn't feel threatened by others."

Buchanan himself says he started to admire emotional detachment in political debate when: "I savaged a position taken by Bill Safire and it didn't faze him. It's a capacity I haven't altogether refined, as you may have seen on the Cavett show," when he "overspoke," as a friend put it, during debate with Brit Hume, at that time a Jack Anderson associate, and with Benjamin Bradlee, executive editor of *The Post*.

But then, Buchanan has always known what it is to be both beleaguered and right, scorned in spite of his logic, admired more for his intelligence and humor than for his politics. It's the lot of the right-winger since the '30s, since Franco and Douglas MacArthur and Joe McCarthy got the shaft, and Roosevelt sold us down the river at Yalta, and all the old right-wing raps, the grumblings and the hope.

Buchanan has invested his energies into homing in on the facts, and slashing through the "flabby thinking" of a lot of liberals, as he and myriad other right-wingers put it. He snags opponents on inconsistencies, logical missteps and factual errors.

Stearns says: "I sometimes think he hates error more than he loves truth."

If liberals argue from a position of discovered expediences, conservatives argue from a position of obvious truths. So what you have to do is to clear away the error, the "flabby thinking," and one fine day you'll get, say, the 1972 election, the greatest landslide in American history, the mandate.

Buchanan even considered leaving the administration last year, after that great election. But: "I wouldn't quit now, even if I wanted to."

He shakes his head with a wonderment and a fatigue when he looks back over the past year, with the mandate forgotten under the enormity of Watergate.

"It's like Sisyphus," he says. "We rolled the rock all the way up to the top of the mountain . . . and it rolled right back down on us." ■