



Ambling Into History: The Unlikely Odyssey of George W. Bush

Frank Bruni

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As the principal *New York Times* reporter assigned to cover George W. Bush's presidential campaign from its earliest stages – and then as a White House correspondent – Frank Bruni has spent as much time around Bush over the last two years as any other reporter.

In *Ambling Into History*, Bruni paints the most thorough, balanced, eloquent and lively portrait yet of a man in many ways ill-suited to the office he sought and won, focusing on small moments that often escaped the news media's notice. From the author's initial introduction to Bush through a nutty election night and Bush's first months in office, Bruni captures the president's familiar and less familiar oddities and takes readers on an often funny, usually irreverent, journey into the strange, closed universe – or bubble – of campaign life.

The result is an original take on the political process and a detailed study of George W. Bush as most people have never seen him.

Ambling Into History: The Unlikely Odyssey of George W. Bush Details

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From Reader Review Ambling Into History: The Unlikely Odyssey of George W. Bush for online ebook

Renee Reynolds says

Although I enjoyed Frank Bruni's up-close journalistic dive into the successful presidential campaign of George W. Bush, I was surprised at the lack of space given to the Florida recount and protracted election results. Having lived abroad during that period of time, I was hoping that this book would describe what it was like during those historical days of waiting to know who was President. Sadly, at least for historical record, Bruni spent much more time poking fun at Bush's well-known malapropisms than providing his readers with an inside look at an unprecedented election.

Shawna says

An interesting book. Informative with regard to the presidential campaign process and specifically Bush's campaign. Bush is not the most knowledgeable man, but he appears to be aware of his limitations. He comes across as a sincere Christian, concerned with doing what is right.

Brian Stillman says

One of the most even handed accounts of Bush I've read. Think I read this one during the lead up to the '04 elections.

Colleen says

This was difficult for me to read. But, I appreciate some of what it said. It was an admission by a journalist who wanted to say that he and so many others in his profession gave breaks to a man that they grew to like personally.

The serious impact of these media breaks are something that I find difficult to forgive. Despite the grueling schedule of the journalist on the road with a presidential candidate, the bottom line is that it is their job to be objective.

Maris says

The book is pretty good - a look at George Bush thru the eyes of a reporter assigned to his press corps. Did not complete it, but Bruni does not paint Bush in a very flattering light. Duh!

Jerry Landry says

For me, the title was a bit misleading. While there is a good deal of discussion of Bush during the campaign and the first year of his presidency, this book operates in conjunction with another focal point, namely personal revelations about life on the campaign trail for the press corps. That being said, it was an interesting look into Bruni's experiences covering Bush and his impressions of our 43rd president. If you're looking for a less scholarly, personal account of Bush's rise to the presidency and his early days, then I recommend Bruni's book.

Cynthia says

I really enjoyed this intimate and honest look into the life and personality of our former governor and president.

Bonnie says

Interesting and informative. I enjoyed it.

Gillian says

This was a fantastic read. I loved it. It should rival Game Change!

Reuben Herfindahl says

One of the strangest political books I've ever read.

The title is just plain wrong, it's basically a book about how it was like to cover a Presidential campaign, but still sorta focusing on the candidate.

The takeaway is that Bush was kinda goofy and trying to be liked. The awkward guy that makes too many jokes.

There is zero politics here, just a prolonged impression of Bush as a person, and the madness of day in day out campaigning.

If I'd read this a decade an a half ago, I'd have been angry about it. Nowadays, I've lost any heat about the Bush era and am just appreciating any unbiased writing I can get as a pure historian. Out of the probably twenty or so books I've read from this (publication) timeframe, this is about as unbiased as it gets.

It's entertaining and insightful about the man, and his campaign. But that is it. If you want some history, or some policy insight. There are hundreds of other option.

Angie says

it kind of reminded me of legally blonde... the male version

Maybama02 Carroll says

This is a great book whether you are or aren't a Bush fan. It is somewhat of a psycho-analysis of Bush from the perspective of a news reporter travelling with him on the campaign bus. There are plenty of Bushisms to laugh at, sincere moments, and many moments where Bush surprises everyone. Its somewhat of a side-note to the Bush we see on television....

Joseph J. says

A colorful and insightful look at Presidential candidate George W. Bush...and his first days in office. Written by New York Times reporter Frank Bruni, the book is often entertaining and always though provoking.

Phyllis says

I picked this up not so much because of an interest in G. W. Bush, but moreso because I've recently discovered Frank Bruni. He's an excellent writer, and in this book, recounts his time on the 2000 presidential campaign trail with then-candidate Bush. His insights and observations concerning Bush, Laura, and the extended family give one food for thought. His 'insider look' at how journalists behave during campaigns, particularly how they create controversy out of thin air just by being a horde of journalists swarming about a candidate is also thought-provoking.

Joseph says

I decided to read this book on a whim. I am (or perhaps was) sorta lukewarm on Frank Bruni as a New York Times op-ed columnist, but I saw this book referred to in another piece and thought, hmmm, I should give it a try. I was fully prepared not to like it. Basically, Bruni was part of the press corps assigned to the first Bush campaign in 2000. In this capacity he followed Bush on the campaign trail even to the extent of being allowed to fly with then Governor Bush as he travelled across the country.

My first observation was that Bruni writes in a very down to earth, readable style and his descriptions of the bag drags, junk food, smoke filled bars, and more left me with the impression that he is honest, humble, and a guy I'd buy a round or two for. Secondly, when Bruni early on in the story characterized things thusly: "Campaigns often have aspects of cult: the leader is all powerful, all-knowing and everyone publicly defers to his or her wisdom" well, I thought yeah, Frank Bruni gets it."

Bruni also offers interesting tidbits that for me helped flesh out the image in my mind of George Bush. For

example, Bush was basically ignorant of pop culture and came from a somewhat sheltered background. He did not know who Leonardo DiCaprio was and had not seen “Titanic.” Nor was he familiar with Michael Moore or Stone Philips, in fact, he thought “Sex in the City” was perhaps an erotic novel and had to be told it was an HBO tv offering. As expected, Frank Bruni does record several gaffes and Bush’s propensity toward malapropisms.

However, in fairness, Bruni also notes that Bush has some serious interpersonal skills. He was almost hypersensitive to peoples’ needs, moods, and concerns. In Bruni’s words: “Bush sensed little disturbances in the atmosphere around him and calibrated his actions accordingly. Politicians are seducers — at least the good ones are — and Bush was practiced in the art of seduction.” That, I think was one of the finer insights that Bruni provided. Over time I have met a few politicians; specifically, Orrin Hatch, Danny Inouye, Carl Levin, John Chafee — each had the capacity to seduce. Perhaps surprisingly, none more so than Orrin Hatch. But, enough digression.

Another observation Bruni makes near the end of the book was, in my view, especially apt, it had to do with spin. Now we had had two great “spin machines” before George Bush’s; namely, those associated with Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton. Bruni discusses the Bush spin machine noting: “Of course there was aggressive spin at work. But the thing about spin was that it had to be tethered at least somewhat to the truth or somewhere down the line, it might be revealed as utterly mendacious and backfire.” We may well be seeing untethered spin in today’s White House.

To close, I think this book is well worth reading. It is not totally unbiased, yet it is remarkably free of bias. And, I think Bruni saw things in Bush that others missed. I come away with a fuller appreciation for both Bush and Bruni.
