

WARNING: The following article contains typical Republican bullshit spin.

Let's Have A Big Hand For ...



By JOHN TIERNEY (NYT) 801 words
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Whatever you think of Samuel Alito Jr. for the Supreme Court, you have to give President Bush credit for great timing. Just when Americans couldn't bear one more look at the Wilsons mugging for the camera or Scooter Libby hobbling on crutches, he's given TV viewers a new face and a new battle.

But before we get too deep in the mud of this new fight, we should pay a parting tribute to the veterans of the last one. Only now, after the special prosecutor has revealed how little criminal material they had to work with, can we fully appreciate their achievements. The envelopes, please:

Best dramatic performance before a grand jury: Scooter Libby, for his soliloquy describing his conversation with Tim Russert in July

2003.

By this time, according to the indictment, Libby had discussed with at least seven different people the fact that Joseph Wilson's wife, Valerie, worked for the C.I.A. Russert testified that her name didn't come up, but Libby testified that Russert brought it up -- and that it was news to him:

“And then he [Russert] said, did you know that this -- excuse me, did you know that Ambassador Wilson's wife works at the C.I.A.? And I was a little taken aback by that. I remember being taken aback.”

Best nickname: Judith Miller, for calling herself Miss Run Amok.

Worst nickname: I. Lewis Libby's father, for dubbing him Scooter. Although this may seem an obvious choice, there was strong dissent on our panel from judges who argued that Libby's father, presciently realizing that his son might need to be tough enough to survive in prison, was following the “Boy Named Sue” theory of child development.

Murkiest crimes: Perjury and obstruction of justice. To the special prosecutor, Patrick Fitzgerald, they're serious crimes that are prosecuted “all the time,” but that's not how Washington veterans view them. It all depends on who's accused of the crimes -- Bill Clinton or Scooter Libby -- and whether he's in your party.

To legal scholars, these crimes are like tax evasion: deplorable and widespread but unlikely to be punished, especially when the perpetrators are not celebrities or public officials. “Perjury is extremely common,” said Sam Gross, a professor of law at the University of Michigan. “Perjury prosecutions are incredibly uncommon.”

‘Our Man in Havana’ prize Joseph Wilson, for being even more persistent than the White House in hyping prewar intelligence. While administration officials now admit their pre-war ignorance, on Sunday Wilson sounded as confident as ever on NBC's “Dateline” when he was asked whether his 2002 trip to Niger had

proved that no uranium from that nation had been sold to Iraq.

“Absolutely,” he replied. “After eight days in Niger, I determined that it did not happen and could not have happened without a lot of people knowing, and there was absolutely no evidence that such a transaction had taken place or even had been contemplated.”

How could anyone have known that so definitively after spending a few days in a country and sipping tea with dignitaries? Why would anyone expect officials in Niger to suddenly reveal their secrets to a visiting U.S. ambassador?

What Wilson actually found was very little, according to a bipartisan Senate committee that investigated. The committee said that most of the analysts who heard Wilson's oral report in 2002 concluded that the scant evidence he brought back, if anything, bolstered the theory that Iraq had been seeking uranium.

Austin Powers international person of mystery award: Valerie Wilson. Could a former U.S. ambassador's wife, working at C.I.A. headquarters, really be a deep-cover spy? Then why did she represent the C.I.A. in meetings with other agencies, and why, after her name was printed, did she further out herself by posing for Vanity Fair?

Most thoughtful media analysts: The lawyers who wrote the amicus curiae brief for three dozen media organizations opposed to the special prosecutor's subpoenas of reporters.

The brief, filed seven months ago, said there was “serious doubt as to whether a crime has even been committed” in revealing Valerie Wilson's status. Arguing that the C.I.A. had been “cavalier” about protecting her identity and had been criticized for “ineptitude” in sending her husband to Niger, the brief suggested that “the C.I.A. may have initiated this investigation out of embarrassment over revelations of its own shortcomings.”

Most shocking revelation The “I” in I. Lewis Libby is for Irve.