

Don King's Very Good Friend, George Bush

Written by Michael Woods

Wednesday, 28 November 2007 19:00

Last Friday night, at 10:07 PM Eastern time, I thought my remote control was playing tricks on me.

I had pressed the "B" for buy, and purchased the Vargas/Mayorga show, and was expecting to see Vladimir Putin lookalike Roman Karmazin kick off the event against Terra Garcia.

But as I came back from the kitchen with a tall glass of Diet Pepsi, I was startled to see my TV had turned, seemingly by itself, to the Fox News Channel.

The President, George W. Bush, was addressing me, in front of a roaring fire. I picked up my remote and confirmed that my TV was tuned to the PPV channel 301, not Fox.

What's going on here, I wondered?

Has Dubya packed it in, waved the white flag of surrender, admitted that he's in over his head, and jetted from the White House? Is Dubya in the boxing promotion business?

Not so much, it turns out. Bush is, though, still in the war promotion business, as around 70% of the nation regards our forces' presence in Iraq to be a folly that has frittered away hundreds of thousands of our most valuable resource, human beings from the US and Iraq, and billions upon billions of dollars.

"Before we get started, I have a very good friend, my friend and your friend," came the unmistakable proclamation from the one and only Don King, co-promoter of the PPV show, and ardent Bush backer, "the President of the United States, George Walker Bush."

Sure, enough, there he was.

Sonofugun, the old man pulled it off.

He got the leader of the free world to appear on his show, and give him a stamp of approval. No matter your politics, or whether you thought it proper for the President to inject this heated political grenade into this presumably non-partisan athletic event, you had to tip your cap to King.

He hung with the Pope a few months back, now he got the President to do an infomercial.

Props to DK.

"Thank you Don," Bush said. "I appreciate your traveling to Iraq to be with our troops and bring them a little reminder of home this Thanksgiving weekend. I thank the USO for helping to make this event possible. I send my regards to General David Petraeus and to the men and women

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serving under his command in Iraq. And I salute all the Americans in uniform around the world who are watching today. Today's fight brings together two tough competitors, but they would be the first to tell you that the real champions are not the boxers in the ring, the real champions are the men and women who have stepped forward to defend our nation. All around our great country your fellow Americans are praying for your safety, and for the strength and comfort of the families who support you. You are keeping America safe, and America will always be grateful. Now I'm pleased to turn it back over to Don. Enjoy this break, you've earned, and have fun watching the fight."

Wow.

What to think?

That maybe the two fighters in the main event would perhaps not want to be used as instruments in the speech that makes a case for the Iraq invasion and occupation as having unfolded to defend our nation, from an increasingly toothless dictator, while the mastermind of the 9/11 blitz giggles in his underground castle?

That maybe it would have been a nice gesture for the Commander in Chief to head to Iraq and chew turkey with the troops as a show of gratitude, rather than boxing's Barnum?

That perhaps the families of the soldiers now on a seemingly indefinite tour would prefer they be allowed home, for a real "break," when their tour finishes, rather than being forced to re-enlist?

A cynic might wonder why King is such a fervent flag waver for the President.

The cynic might ponder, might King be trying to cozy up with a man who could insulate him from being the focus of federal prosecution, as he had been for much of the 80s and 90s?

This is how DK explained his admiration for 43 to NY Magazine in 2004, when he was busy trying to sway voters from Kerry to Bush, even as it became more clear that the buildup to the Iraq invasion and the actual effort were various parts quagmire, fiasco and swindle.

"George Walker Bush—he's tough-minded but he's tender-hearted," King said. "He's trying to reclaim that glory of that American Dream for all Americans. He put African-Americans in top policy positions higher than any president. He took two people, black, and put them in charge of 300 million people for their security. Even the racists and the extremists and all those who are untoward and un-American, we're protecting them, too. This is a devastating blow to the color barrier."

Mind you, this is pre Katrina, when the "tender-hearted" leader sat on his hands as New Orleans nearly drowned. But I guess that debacle hasn't dimmed Don's admiration for POTUS. You must give King points for loyalty, I suppose.

Those same cynics could note that the Feds have by and large let King be since about 1999. By 2001, King was extolling Dubya's virtues on, you guessed it, Fox News. Coincidence, they

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ask?

I'm not quite willing to connect those dots. King has consistently lauded Bush for tapping Colin Powell and Condoleeza Rice as Secretary of State; the non cynic could make a reasonably compelling argument that King is simply showing his thankfulness that Bush saw fit to bestow such important duties on fellow African-Americans.

And what about King's visit with the Pope at Vatican City in March? The Pope doesn't hold much sway with the Feds, I don't think. So maybe King is simply assessing his legacy, and attempting to use his powers of persuasion and superlative dealmaking tactics to rub elbows with a better breed of being than in the swamp of the sweet science.

Either way, getting this extra, extra special guest star to come on his show proves once again that the mold was broken when King was created. This is a creature that one might think could only exist in the fertile mind of a novelist.

I'm just glad my remote isn't on the fritz.

What if my TV was stuck on Fox News? Yikes.