



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

Frank Bruni

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In many ways George W. Bush did not seem built for the presidency or the paces necessary to win it. He was a laid-back good-time guy with little appetite and limited talent for formal oratory, someone who often projected affability more easily than authority. He was a homebody who seemed to prefer surroundings and situations that were utterly familiar to those that were risky and unpredictable. His interests could be narrow and his efforts to expand them only fitful.

But he got there, and after September 11, 2001, confronted a challenge more daunting than many of his predecessors had faced. In the wake of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Bush was left with the responsibility to lead Americans through a time of unusual anxiety and uncertainty, to inspire and reassure them. Could he do it?

In *Ambling Into History*, Frank Bruni, who covered Bush's presidential campaign and first eight months in the White House for the *New York Times*, mines the countless hours during which he observed and interacted with Bush to explore that question, and to present sides of Bush that readers have never encountered. He looks to small moments for big truths, going behind the scenes and offering fresh insights into Bush's oft-chronicled weaknesses, sometimes overlooked strengths, and his journey—alternately earnest and reluctant—from an innate levity to a newfound gravity.

Bruni also takes readers on his own trip through the strange maze of presidential politics, wryly chronicling life in the insular "bubble" of political reporting and its frequently dispiriting effect on the coverage that politicians get. It is a candid, eloquent, and illuminating adventure that shows why *Newsweek* called Bruni "probably the most influential" reporter on the Bush beat.

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