

(Note: photo from the interview is attached)

September 8, 2004

**BEN BARNES TELLS DAN RATHER THAT HE REGRETS THE "LIFE OR DEATH"  
DECISION HE MADE TO HELP GEORGE W. BUSH GET INTO THE NATIONAL GUARD  
- WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 8 ON CBS**

Former Texas House speaker and Lt. Governor Ben Barnes tells 60 MINUTES Correspondent Dan Rather that he regrets what he calls the "life or death" decision he made to help George W. Bush get into the Texas Air National Guard. Rather's report, which will include new information about Bush's military service, will be broadcast on 60 MINUTES (8:00-9:00 PM, ET/PT) tonight (8) on the CBS Television Network.

Following are quotes from Rather's interview with Barnes. You must credit: 60 MINUTES.

*Barnes on His Decision to Help George W. Bush and Others Get Into the National Guard:*

"I've thought about it an awful lot and you walk through the Vietnam memorial, particularly at night like I did a few months ago and, I tell you, you'll think about it a long time....I don't think that I had any right to have the power that I had to choose who was going to Vietnam and who was not going to Vietnam. That's power. In some instances, when I looked at those names, I was maybe determining life or death and that's not a power that I want to have...."

*Barnes on his Feelings of Regret:*

"It would be very easy for me to sit here and tell you, Dan, that I had wrestled with this and lost a lot of sleep at night, but I wouldn't be telling you the truth. I...not eagerly, but readily, was willing to call and get those young men into the National Guard that were friends of mine and supporters of mine....Reflecting back, I'm very sorry about it, but you know, it happened and it was because of my ambition, my youth and my lack of understanding. But it happened and it's not...something I'm necessarily proud of."

Josh Howard is the executive producer of 60 MINUTES and Mary Mapes is the producer.

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THIS SCRIPT IS EMBARGOED UNTIL 9PM, ET

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GET INTO THE NATIONAL GUARD - WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 8 ON CBS**

Former Texas House speaker and Lt. Governor Ben Barnes tells 60 MINUTES Correspondent Dan Rather that he regrets what he calls the "life or death" decision he made to help George W. Bush get into the Texas Air National Guard. Rather's report, which will include new information about Bush's military service, will be broadcast on 60 MINUTES (8:00-9:00 PM, ET/PT) tonight (8) on the CBS Television Network.

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THE MILITARY RECORDS OF THE TWO MEN RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT HAVE BECOME PART OF THE POLITICAL ARSENAL IN THIS CAMPAIGN. A TOOL FOR BUILDING UP, OR BLOWING UP EACH CANDIDATES' CREDIBILITY AS AMERICA'S NEXT COMMANDER IN CHIEF.

WHILE SENATOR KERRY HAS BEEN TARGETED FOR WHAT HE DID IN VIETNAM, PRESIDENT BUSH HAS BEEN CRITICIZED FOR AVOIDING VIETNAM BY LANDING A MUCH SOUGHT AFTER SPOT IN THE TEXAS AIR NATIONAL GUARD AND THEN FAILING TO MEET SOME OF HIS OBLIGATIONS.

DID THEN-LT. BUSH FULFILL ALL HIS MILITARY OBLIGATIONS? AND JUST HOW DID HE LAND THAT SPOT IN THE GUARD IN THE FIRST PLACE?

TONIGHT, WE HAVE NEW INFORMATION ON THE PRESIDENT'S MILITARY SERVICE AND THE FIRST-EVER INTERVIEW WITH THE MAN WHO SAYS HE PULLED STRINGS TO GET YOUNG GEORGE W. BUSH INTO THE TEXAS AIR NATIONAL GUARD.

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IT WAS MAY 1968 AND VIETNAM WAS IN FLAMES. IN THAT ONE MONTH ALONE, MORE THAN TWO THOUSAND AMERICANS WERE KILLED IN COMBAT. AND THE DRAFT WAS SIPHONING THOUSANDS MORE INTO THE JUNGLE. GEORGE W. BUSH HAD JUST GRADUATED FROM YALE AND FACED THE PROSPECT OF BEFORE DRAFTED HIMSELF.

THIS MAN, BEN BARNES, SAYS HE HELPED KEEP THAT FROM HAPPENING.

RATHER: "TELL ME THE TRUTH, THE WHOLE TRUTH ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED WITH GEORGE W. BUSH AND THE DRAFT AND THE NATIONAL GUARD."

BARNES: "WELL, FIRST OF ALL I WANNA SAY THAT I'M NOT HERE TO BRING ANY HARM TO GEORGE BUSH'S REPUTATION OR HIS CAREER. I WAS CONTACTED BY PEOPLE FROM THE VERY BEGINNING OF HIS POLITICAL

CAREER WHEN HE RAN FOR GOVERNOR AND THEN WHEN HE RAN FOR PRESIDENT AND NOW HE'S RUNNING FOR RE-ELECTION. I'VE HAD HUNDREDS OF PHONE CALLS FROM PEOPLE WANTING TO KNOW THE STORY. AND I'VE BEEN QUOTED AND MISQUOTED AND THE REASON I AM HERE TODAY IS THAT I REALLY WANT TO TELL THE STORY AND I WANNA TELL IT ONE TIME AND GET IT BEHIND US. AND AGAIN, IT IS NOT ABOUT GEORGE BUSH'S POLITICAL CAREER. THIS IS ABOUT WHAT THE TRUTH IS."

BARNES IS A DEMOCRAT WHO IS NOW ACTIVELY RAISING MONEY FOR JOHN KERRY. BUT HE WAS A DEMOCRAT BACK IN 1968 TOO AND SERVING AS TEXAS SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE. A PROTÉGÉ OF PRESIDENT LYNDON JOHNSON, BARNES WAS ONLY 29 YEARS OLD, BUT IN KEEPING WITH THE TIMES, HE WIELDED CLOUT AND CONNECTIONS TO BUILD A POWERFUL POLITICAL BASE. A FEW MONTHS BEFORE GEORGE W. BUSH WOULD BECOME ELIGIBLE FOR THE DRAFT BARNES SAYS HE HAD A MEETING WITH THE LATE OILMAN SID ADGER, A FRIEND TO BOTH BARNES AND THEN-CONGRESSMAN GEORGE BUSH.

RATHER: "HE CAME HERE TO SEE YOU. DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT HE SAID?"

BARNES: "WELL, IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME AGO. BUT HE SAID BASICALLY WOULD I HELP YOUNG GEORGE BUSH GET IN THE AIR NATIONAL GUARD."

BARNES SAYS HE CONTACTED HIS LONGTIME FRIEND GENERAL JAMES ROSE, THE HEAD OF TEXAS' AIR NATIONAL GUARD.

BARNES: "I WAS A YOUNG AMBITIOUS POLITICIAN DOING WHAT I THOUGHT WAS ACCEPTABLE. IT WAS IMPORTANT TO MAKE FRIENDS AND I RECOMMENDED A LOT OF PEOPLE FOR THE NATIONAL GUARD DURING THE VIETNAM ERA. AS SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE, AND AS LT. GOVERNOR.

RATHER: "AND YOU RECOMMENDED GEORGE W BUSH?"

BARNES: "YES I DID.

RATHER: "YOU SAID THAT YOU DID THIS FOR OTHERS. WHAT WE NORMALLY CALL PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT.

BARNES: "I'M SURE I HAD DONE IT PREVIOUSLY."

RATHER: "WELL, I USED THE PHRASE PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT -- PERHAPS I SHOULDN'T HAVE."

BARNES: "OH, I WOULD DESCRIBE IT AS PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT. THERE WERE HUNDREDS OF NAMES ON THE LIST OF PEOPLE WANTING TO GET INTO THE AIR NATIONAL GUARD OR THE ARMY NATIONAL GUARD. I THINK THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN A PREFERENCE TO ANYBODY THAT DIDN'T WANNA GO TO VIETNAM OR DIDN'T WANNA LEAVE. WE HAD A LOT OF YOUNG MEN THAT LEFT AND WENT TO CANADA IN THE '60S AND FLED THIS COUNTRY. BUT THOSE THAT COULD GET IN THE RESERVES OR

THOSE THAT COULD GET IN THE NATIONAL GUARD. CHANCES ARE THEY WOULD NOT HAVE TO GO TO VIETNAM."

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME BEN BARNES HAS TOLD HIS STORY PUBLICALLY, BUT FOR YEARS, THE PRESIDENT HAS BEEN HOUNDED BY QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW HE GOT IN THE GUARD.

BUSH: "ANY ALLEGATION THAT MY DAD ASKED FOR SPECIAL FAVORS IS SIMPLY NOT TRUE. AND THE FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES HAS SAID THAT HE IN NO WAY, SHAPE OR FORM HELPED ME GET INTO THE NATIONAL GUARD. I DIDN'T ASK ANYONE TO HELP ME GET INTO THE GUARD EITHER."

IN AN INTERVIEW TODAY WITH SENIOR WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENT JOHN ROBERTS, THE PRESIDENT'S COMMUNICATION DIRECTOR DAN BARTLETT REPEATED THAT DENIAL SAYING THIS WAS ALL PART OF THE KERRY CAMPAIGN.

BARTLETT: "I CHALK IT UP TO THE POLITICS THEY PLAY DOWN IN TEXAS. I'VE BEEN THERE. I 'VE SEEN HOW IT WORKS, BUT THE BOTTOM LINE IS THAT THERE'S NO TRUTH TO THIS.

ROBERTS: "THIS IS DIRTY POLITICS."

BARTLETT: "I THINK IT IS. THE FACT THAT 55 DAYS BEFORE AN ELECTION THAT PARTISAN DEMOCRATS ARE RECYCLING THE VERY SAME CHARGES WE HEAR EVERY PRESIDENT BUSH RUNS FOR REELECTION. IT IS DIRTY POLITICS."

THEN-LT. BUSH WENT TO GEORGIA, COMPLETED A DIFFICULT PILOT TRAINING PROGRAM AND WAS ASSIGNED TO DUTY IN HOUSTON, FLYING F-102s OUT OF ELLINGTON AIR FORCE BASE. TODAY ON THE AIRBASE, A MOTHBALLED F-102 IS EMBLAZONED WITH THE PRESIDENT'S NAME, BUT EVEN IN 1970, THEN-LT. BUSH WAS ALREADY SOMETHING OF A CELEBRITY AT THE AIRFIELD. A PRESS RELEASE ISSUED THAT YEAR BY HIS UNIT AGO POINTS OUT THAT THE YOUNG LIEUTENANT IS THE SON OF THE LOCAL CONGRESSMAN.

MR. BUSH HAD SIGNED A SIX-YEAR COMMITMENT TO FLY FOR THE AIR GUARD AND EARLY ON, THE YOUNG PILOT GOT GLOWING EVALUATIONS FROM HIS SQUADRON COMMANDER, COLONEL JERRY KILLIAN. WHO CALLED LT. BUSH "AN EXCEPTIONALLY FINE YOUNG OFFICER AND PILOT" WHO "PERFORMED IN AN OUTSTANDING MANNER." THAT IS PART OF THE PUBLIC RECORD.

BUT 60 MINUTES HAS OBTAINED A NUMBER OF DOCUMENTS WE ARE TOLD WERE TAKEN FROM COLONEL KILLIAN'S PERSONAL FILE. AMONG THEM, A NEVER BEFORE SEEN MEMORANDUM FROM MAY 1972 WHERE

KILLIAN WRITES THAT LT. BUSH CALLED HIM TO TALK ABOUT "HOW HE CAN GET OUT OF COMING TO DRILL FROM NOW THROUGH NOVEMBER."

BUSH TELLS HIS COMMANDER "HE IS WORKING ON A CAMPAIGN IN ALABAMA AND MAY NOT HAVE TIME TO TAKE HIS PHYSICAL.

KILLIAN ADDS THAT HE THINKS LT. BUSH HAS GONE OVER HIS HEAD AND IS "TALKING TO SOMEONE UPSTAIRS."

COLONEL KILLIAN DIED IN 1984. WE CONSULTED A HANDWRITING ANALYST AND DOCUMENT EXPERT WHO BELIEVES THE MATERIAL IS AUTHENTIC.

ROBERT STRONG WAS A FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE OF JERRY KILLIAN. STRONG RAN THE TEXAS AIR NATIONAL GUARD ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE IN THE VIETNAM ERA. HE IS NOW A COLLEGE PROFESSOR.

RATHER: "WHEN YOU READ THROUGH THESE DOCUMENTS, IS THERE ANY DOUBT IN YOUR MIND THAT THESE ARE GENUINE?"

STRONG: "WELL, THEY ARE COMPATIBLE WITH THE WAY BUSINESS WAS DONE AT THE TIME. THEY ARE COMPATIBLE WITH THE MAN THAT I REMEMBER JERRY KILLIAN BEING. I DON'T SEE ANYTHING IN THE DOCUMENTS THAT IS DISCORDANT WITH WHAT WERE THE TIMES, WHAT WAS THE SITUATION AND WHAT WERE THE PEOPLE INVOLVED."

RATHER: "WAS HE IN YOUR JUDGEMENT A STRAIGHT SHOOTER?"

STRONG: "HE WAS A STRAIGHT ARROW GUY. HE REALLY WAS. I WAS VERY FOND OF HIM, LIKED HIM PERSONALLY. VERY PROFESSIONAL MAN. A CAREER PILOT. TOOK HIS RESPONSIBILITIES VERY, VERY SERIOUSLY.

THIS MEMO IS FROM AUGUST 18, 1973. COLONEL KILLIAN TITLED IT.----C-Y-A.

IN IT, KILLIAN SAYS COLONEL BUCK STAUDT, THE MAN IN CHARGE OF THE TEXAS AIR NATIONAL GUARD IS PUTTING ON PRESSURE TO "SUGAR COAT" AN EVALUATION OF LT. BUSH. STAUDT, A LONGTIME SUPPORTER OF THE BUSH FAMILY, WOULD NOT DO AN INTERVIEW FOR THIS BROADCAST. THE MEMO GOES ON WITH KILLIAN SAYING, "I'M HAVING TROUBLE RUNNING INTERFERENCE AND DOING MY JOB."

STRONG: "HE WAS TRYING TO DEAL WITH A VOLATILE POLITICAL SITUATION, IN DEALING WITH THE SON OF AN AMBASSADOR AND FORMER CONGRESSMAN. HE WAS TRYING TO DEAL WITH AT LEAST ONE SUPERIOR OFFICER, GENERAL STAUDT, WHO WAS CLOSELY CONNECTED TO THE HOUSTON POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENT AND I JUST SEE AN IMPOSSIBLE SITUATION. I FEEL VERY, VERY SORRY BECAUSE HE WAS BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE."

ONE OF THE KILLIAN MEMOS IS AN OFFICIAL ORDER TO GEORGE W. BUSH TO REPORT FOR A PHYSICAL. THE PRESIDENT NEVER CARRIED OUT THE ORDER.

ON AUGUST 1ST OF 1972, LIEUTENANT BUSH WAS SUSPENDED FROM FLYING STATUS "FAILURE TO ACCOMPLISH HIS ANNUAL MEDICAL EXAMINATION." THAT DOCUMENT WAS RELEASED YEARS AGO, BUT UNTIL NOW, THIS DOCUMENT HAS NOT BEEN SEEN.

IT IS A MEMO COLONEL JERRY KILLIAN PUT IN HIS OWN FILE THAT SAME DAY.

IT SAYS "ON THIS DATE, I ORDERED THAT 1ST LIEUTENANT BUSH BE SUSPENDED NOT JUST FOR FAILING TO TAKE A PHYSICAL, BUT FOR FAILING TO PERFORM TO U-S AIR FORCE /TEXAS AIR NATIONAL GUARD STANDARDS.

HE GOES ON...

THE "OFFICER, MEANING THEN-LIEUTENANT BUSH, HAS MADE NO ATTEMPT TO MEET HIS TRAINING CERTIFICATION OR FLIGHT PHYSICAL."

CORRESPONDENT JOHN ROBERTS TALKED WITH THE PRESIDENT'S COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR DAN BARTLETT AND ASKED ABOUT THE COLONEL KILLIAN'S ORDER FOR LT. BUSH TO TAKE A PHYSICAL.

ROBERTS: "HE EITHER IGNORED OR DIDN'T FULFILL DIRECT ORDERS. NOT AN OPTION...."

BARTLETT: "WELL IN FACT THE MEMORANDUM IN YOUR POSSESSION SHOW THAT HE SPOKE TO THE COMMANDER WHO MADE THAT ORDER TO TALK ABOUT HIS PERSONAL SITUATION AND THE FACT THAT HE IS GOING TO ALABAMA, SO AT EVERY STEP OF THE WAY, PRESIDENT BUSH WAS MEETING HIS REQUIREMENT. GRANTED PERMISSION TO MEET HIS REQUIREMENT. AND THAT'S WHY PRESIDENT BUSH WAS HONORABLY DISCHARGED."

THE QUESTIONS ABOUT VIETNAM STILL FOLLOW PRESIDENT BUSH AND BEN BARNES AND EVERY AMERICAN WHO REMEMBERS WHERE THEY WERE, AND WHAT THEY DID, DURING VIETNAM. BECAUSE THE WAR WE COULDN'T SEEM GET OUT OF HAS BECOME THE WAR WE CAN'T SEEM TO GET OVER.

RATHER: "BY 1968, CASUALTIES IN VIETNAM WERE RUNNING HIGH. YEAH. DID YOU OR DID YOU NOT THINK AT THAT TIME 'I'M A LITTLE UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THIS'. OR DID YOU HAVE LONG TALKS WITH YOUR CONSCIENCE? DID YOU SAY TO YOURSELF 'I'M A LITTLE UNCOMFORTABLE WITH DOING THIS?'"

BARNES: "IT WOULD BE VERY EASY FOR ME TO SIT HERE AND TELL YOU, DAN THAT I HAD WRESTLED WITH THIS AND LOST A LOT OF SLEEP AT NIGHT, BUT I WOULDN'T BE TELLING YOU THE TRUTH. I VERY... NOT EAGERLY, BUT READILY WAS WILLING TO CALL AND GET THOSE YOUNG MEN INTO THE NATIONAL GUARD THAT WERE FRIENDS OF MINE AND SUPPORTERS OF MINE. AND I -- I DID IT. REFLECTING BACK, I'M VERY SORRY ABOUT IT, BUT YOU KNOW, IT HAPPENED. AND IT WAS BECAUSE OF MY AMBITION, MY YOUTH AND MY LACK OF UNDERSTANDING, BUT IT HAPPENED AND IT'S NOT -- IT'S NOT SOMETHING I'M NECESSARILY PROUD OF."

RATHER: "WHY WOULD THESE MEN DO THIS? DIDN'T CONSCIENCE COME INTO PLAY SOMEWHERE HERE?"

STRONG: "CONSCIENCE COMES INTO PLAY, BUT CONSCIENCE IS A VERY INDIVIDUAL THING. THIS IS THE WAY POWER WORKS. I MEAN, WHAT YOU SAW IS THE WAY POWER WORKS. POWER BEGETS POWER. POWER GOES TO POWER TO GET MORE POWER. IF YOU HAVE A LITTLE BIT OF POWER AND SOMEONE OFFERS WHO AN OPPORTUNITY TO GAIN MORE POWER BY DOING POWER A FAVOR, THEN THIS IS WHAT POWER DOES. IT TRADES ON ITSELF. IT FEEDS ON ITSELF. THIS IS THE WAY THE SYSTEM WORKED. THIS IS THE WAY STATE GOVERNMENT WORKED. THIS IS THE WAY THE GUARD WORKED."

THIRTY YEARS AFTER THE FACT, BEN BARNES SAYS HE IS ONE OF MANY AMERICANS STILL TRYING TO MAKE PEACE WITH WHAT HE DID DURING THE WAR.

RATHER: "YOU'VE THOUGHT ABOUT IT A LOT SINCE THEN?"

BARNES: "I'VE THOUGHT ABOUT IT AN AWFUL LOT AND YOU WALK THROUGH THE VIETNAM MEMORIAL, PARTICULARLY AT NIGHT LIKE I DID A FEW MONTHS AGO. AND I TELL YOU, YOU'LL THINK ABOUT IT A LONG TIME.

RATHER: "HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT IT NOW?"

BARNES: "WELL, I DON'T THINK THAT I HAD ANY RIGHT TO HAVE THE POWER THAT I HAD, TO CHOOSE WHO WAS GONNA GO TO VIETNAM AND WHO WAS NOT GONNA GO TO VIETNAM. THAT'S POWER. IN SOME INSTANCES, WHEN I LOOKED AT THOSE NAMES, I WAS MAYBE DETERMINING LIFE OR DEATH. AND THAT'S NOT A POWER THAT I WANNA HAVE."

RATHER: "TOO STRONG OR NOT TO SAY THAT YOU ARE ASHAMED OF IT NOW?"

BARNES: "OH, I THINK THAT WOULD -- THAT WOULD BE SOMEWHAT OF AN APPROPRIATE THING. I'M VERY, VERY SORRY."

Josh Howard is the executive producer of 60 MINUTES and Mary Mapes is the producer.

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