

Vice Presidents of the United States

J. Danforth Quayle (1989-1993)

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Introduction by Mark O. Hatfield.

The essence of the vice presidency is preparedness.

—Vice President Dan Quayle

New Orleans' Spanish Plaza, on a hot August day in 1988, teemed with people waiting for the *SS Natchez* to steam down the Mississippi River. On board the riverboat was Vice President George Bush, soon to become the Republican nominee for president of the United States. Frantically pushing their way through the mob on the plaza were Indiana Senator Dan Quayle and his wife Marilyn. Those who had been standing in the broiling sun for hours understandably were not anxious to make way for the late arrivals. Only the Quayles knew that he was to join Bush on deck to be announced as the vice-presidential candidate. Bush had insisted that the choice remain secret to add drama to the event. "This was not the best-planned episode in political history," Quayle lamented. The Quayles waved vainly at Bush's staff members on the boat but went unnoticed until South Carolina Senator Strom Thurmond and a few others on board pointed them out in the crowd, and the Secret Service parted the way for the Quayles to board. Barbara Bush later commented that "Dan and Marilyn had trouble getting to the platform because they looked too young and no one realized why they needed to be up there."¹

More of a problem for Quayle than reaching the boat was being taken seriously once he got there. Bush's tactic of not revealing his vice-presidential choice until the last moment added suspense to an otherwise predictable convention but did a disservice to Quayle. Little known to the national media and to the public outside of his own state, the forty-one-year-old senator found his public identity shaped by some unfortunate first impressions. Jacketless on the sweltering deck, Quayle grabbed Bush's arm and shouted "Let's go get 'em!" He reminded reporters less of a vice-presidential candidate than an elated game show contestant who had just won a car. Even Bush's own staff had to order speedy background research to find out about their nominee. When keen observers like journalists David Broder and Bob Woodward and political scientist Richard Fenno examined his background and positions closely, Quayle appeared fairly substantial. Yet his initial image as a lightweight made his selection seem so inappropriate that the entire vice-presidency, in the metaphor of journalist Jules Witcover, appeared to be a "crapshoot."²

The media legitimately wanted to know what credentials Quayle possessed for the nation's second-highest job. Could he confirm reports that he had been a poor student? What was his family's financial standing? Had he dodged the Vietnam War? Quayle did not handle these initial inquiries well. He seemed tongue-tied and flustered, wearing a stunned expression that Bush's media adviser Roger Ailes described as "that deer-in-the-headlights look." Campaign managers made things worse by staging Quayle's first formal news conference in his home town of

Huntington, Indiana, among a crowd of supporters so protective of their candidate and hostile to the reporters that the event soured Quayle's relations with the press from the start.³

A Problem of Perception

Quayle perceived himself quite differently from the image he saw in the general media. The press pictured him as wealthy, because his grandfather Eugene Pulliam owned radio stations and such newspapers as the *Indianapolis Star* and the *Arizona Republic*. But Quayle argued that his own family had lived a much more modest, middle-class life. His grandfather had actually left his money in a series of trusts designed to protect the financial security of his newspapers rather than to enrich his family.

Born on February 4, 1947, in Indianapolis, the son of Corrine Pulliam Quayle and James C. Quayle, he was named James Danforth Quayle after a college friend of his father who was killed in World War II. James Quayle, a manager for the Pulliam newspapers, moved the family to Scottsdale, Arizona, in the mid-1950s and then back to Huntington, Indiana, in 1963, where he published the *Huntington Herald-Press*. Dan Quayle grew up in a Republican family—he recalled once walking behind his grandfather and his golfing partner Dwight Eisenhower—and the family newspapers were staunchly conservative. But Dan Quayle "was never much of a student government type," and at DePauw University his prime interests were golf and the Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity. He described himself as a "late bloomer," and admitted that he enjoyed the movie *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* because it reminded him of his own lackadaisical schooldays.⁴

Intending to go to law school, Quayle realized that his draft deferment would expire when he graduated from DePauw in 1969. He therefore chose to join the Indiana National Guard, which would most likely keep him out of the Vietnam War. Countless other young men of his generation were making similar decisions, but this act would have serious consequences when Quayle was selected to run for vice president. Grilled by Bush's staff regarding whether he had any regrets about going into the Guard rather than to Vietnam, he replied, "I did not know in 1969 that I would be in this room today, I'll confess." A related question was whether Quayle's family pulled any strings to get him into the Guard. Interviewed during the convention, Quayle could not recall any special connections but speculated that "phone calls were made." Identification with his family's newspaper had further helped gain him assignment as an information officer with the Guard's public relations unit.⁵

After his six months in the National Guard, Quayle applied to Indiana University Law School. His poor college grades kept him out of the main law school in Bloomington, but he was admitted to the night school in Indianapolis. Quayle studied harder in law school, finding time also to work as a research assistant for the state attorney general, as an administrative assistant in the governor's office, and as director of inheritance taxes for the state department of revenue. A joint project on a capital punishment brief introduced him to fellow law student Marilyn Tucker, and a short courtship led to their marriage ten weeks later in 1972. Two years later, after they both passed the bar exam on the same day (and in the same month that their first child was born) the Quayles moved back to Huntington. They set up a law practice, Quayle and Quayle, in the

building that housed his father's newspaper. Marilyn handled most of the legal business, while Dan spent his time as an associate publisher of the paper. His real career objective, however, was politics rather than journalism. They chose a house in a district represented in the state legislature by a Democrat, whom Quayle planned to challenge in 1976.⁶

Upset Victories

Unexpectedly, in February 1976, Republican county chairman Orvas Beers approached the twenty-nine-year-old Quayle and asked him to run for Congress. "You mean now?" the astonished Quayle asked, thinking of his plan to start in the state legislature. Beers explained that no one else wanted to run for the House seat against eight-term Democrat Ed Roush. After consulting with his wife and his father, and obtaining promises from Beers to provide enough money to mount a creditable campaign, Quayle announced his candidacy. Copying Jimmy Carter's style, Quayle ran as a Washington "outsider," attacking the Democratic Congress and Roush's liberal voting record. While he went out campaigning, Marilyn Quayle set up a headquarters in a back room of Mother's Restaurant in Fort Wayne, where she "met with the county chairmen and stroked everybody and made everybody fall into place." Rather than rely on the party organization, Quayle developed his own cadre of volunteers, drawn especially, as he noted, from "the Christian community." Roush failed to take his challenger seriously and agreed to a series of debates that gave the newcomer much-needed exposure. Election day provided ample Republican coattails, as Indianans cast their votes for Republicans Gerald Ford for president, Otis Bowen for governor, and Richard Lugar for senator. Dan Quayle upset Ed Roush with 54 percent of the vote. In the wake of the victory, both Dan and Marilyn Quayle suspended their law practice.⁷

Congressman Quayle began his term by introducing a term-limit bill that would restrict himself and his colleagues to no more than twelve years' service. He identified himself as a critic of "the old ways" and as an opponent of pork barrel politics, congressional pay raises, and government bureaucracy. Yet Quayle had a lackluster attendance record in the House, often skipping committee meetings and missing votes to play golf. People referred to him as a "wet head," because he always seemed to be coming from the House gymnasium. The House never engaged his interest. "Almost as soon as I was in, I wanted out—or up," he admitted. Since, as a freshman member of the minority party, Quayle would have little influence over legislation, he devoted most of his attention to constituent services and building a strong base back home, spending most of his second year running for reelection. For years Quayle's district had been considered marginal, with only a few percentage points dividing the two parties. But in 1978 he won reelection by a smashing two-to-one margin, causing people to talk about him challenging Birch Bayh for the Senate.⁸

Quayle approached "Doc" Bowen, the popular governor of Indiana, offering to support Bowen for the Senate in 1980 but stating that, if Bowen chose not to run, then Quayle would declare his own candidacy. He repeated that message to Republican leaders across the state. Bowen's decision in 1979 not to make the Senate race cleared the way for Quayle. As a thirty-three-year-old challenger, Quayle reversed the tables on the veteran Bayh, who himself had challenged and upset a three-term incumbent while still in his thirties. It was a classic race of a liberal versus a

conservative, with the two men differing on every issue from abortion to welfare. The political scientist Richard Fenno joined Quayle on the campaign trail while the candidate was still the decided underdog. "He struck me as a remarkably handsome kid, but more kid even than handsome," Fenno noted. "As a campaigner, he was a natural—vigorous (but not polished) in speech, attentive in personal contact, open in dialogue and undaunted by potentially unfriendly audiences." The National Conservative Political Action Committee (NCPAC) and the Moral Majority ran ads attacking Bayh, but, even more significantly, double-digit inflation and unemployment in the state undermined the incumbent. Ronald Reagan's 1980 challenge to Jimmy Carter provided a further boost to Republican senatorial candidates. Carter dragged down to defeat with him such senior Democratic senators as George McGovern, Frank Church, Warren Magnuson, and Birch Bayh. For the first time since 1952, Republicans won control of the Senate.⁹

Quayle found it both a curse and a blessing to be so constantly underestimated. Like Roush, Bayh had agreed to a series of debates, assuming that he could easily outshine his opponent. By the end of the campaign, Bayh regretted the decision. Although not particularly articulate as a debater, Quayle exuded confidence and demonstrated his highly competitive nature. Even after this second impressive upset, however, Quayle arrived in the Senate identified as a "golden boy" who had led a "charmed life." Reinforcing this image, his name surfaced in a scandal in March 1981, when it was revealed that he and two representatives on a golfing weekend in Florida had shared a cottage with an attractive female lobbyist. Both representatives lost their seats in the next election, while Quayle lost face. He also found the transition to the Senate difficult, especially missing the afternoon basketball games in the House gym. "There aren't many senators under thirty-five with children under six," he observed (the Quayles by then had three small children). Sessions in the Senate ran late into the nights. Good advice, however, came from Senator Mark Hatfield, who took Quayle aside and said, "Look, you're young and you've got a family. Make time for them." Marilyn Quayle later commented that there was probably not another U.S. senator who rearranged his schedule to coach his sons' basketball teams.¹⁰

Building a Record in the Senate

In choosing committees, Quayle had hoped for Foreign Relations and Finance. Instead he was assigned to Armed Services, Budget, and Labor and Human Resources. Initially, Quayle showed no interest in the Labor Committee but took it when he determined that he could achieve seniority there faster than on any other committee. In the past, freshman senators had to bide their time before they could chair a committee, but Senate reforms in the 1970s had ensured that most new senators of the majority party would chair a subcommittee. Quayle had sought to chair the Labor Committee's subcommittee on Health, but committee chairman Orrin Hatch chose that spot for himself. Instead, Quayle chaired the Employment and Productivity Subcommittee, which would handle the reauthorization of the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA). During his campaign, Quayle had criticized CETA as one of the worst examples of big government programs, yet he recognized that any jobs program would impact on the high unemployment in Indiana.¹¹

President Ronald Reagan was leading a concerted effort to trim government spending on domestic programs, particularly those identified with the welfare state. Quayle also wanted to cut government, but he had stepped up from representing a single, fairly prosperous district to serving a state with a severe unemployment crisis. "The scale of problems Gary has is so much greater than Fort Wayne," he commented. If CETA were abolished, who would help poor and unskilled workers retrain? Since the members of the slim Republican majority might not be united on this issue, Quayle sought to build a bipartisan coalition. He sidestepped the subcommittee's cantankerous ranking Democrat, Ohio Senator Howard Metzenbaum, and forged an alliance instead with Massachusetts Senator Edward M. Kennedy. When reporters asked about this pragmatic union, which flew in the face of ideological differences, Quayle replied: They don't know who Dan Quayle is in Massachusetts. But they do know who Ted Kennedy is in Indiana. I don't think there will be any recall. Actually, the fact that the two of us would get together underscores the seriousness of the problem of unemployment, and it emphasizes our commitment.¹²

The Quayle-Kennedy alliance caught the Reagan administration off guard and disrupted its plan to let CETA expire. The administration countered with an alternative bill, but Quayle's bipartisan approach enabled him to negotiate between Kennedy, Hatch, and the Reagan administration. The eventual Quayle-Kennedy bill resulted in creation of the Jobs Training Partnership Act of 1982. Senator Kennedy congratulated Quayle for having worked hard to develop a common consensus while remaining consistent with his own principles. Both congressional Democrats and the Reagan administration claimed credit for the act, and to Quayle's dismay the White House scheduled the signing ceremony for a day when he would be out of town. Still, his success won considerable attention, gave him credibility as an effective senator, and provided him with ammunition for his Senate reelection campaign.¹³

In foreign affairs, Quayle was eclipsed by Indiana's senior senator, Richard Lugar, who chaired the Foreign Relations Committee. Yet Quayle involved himself in foreign policy issues through the Armed Services Committee. As a freshman, he took the lead in persuading other freshmen Republicans to reach a compromise on a Reagan administration plan to sell AWACS surveillance planes to Saudi Arabia. Quayle arranged for Reagan to sign a "letter of certification" that satisfied enough otherwise doubtful senators to win approval for the sale. Quayle was also willing to take positions independent of the administration. In 1987, as the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty moved toward completion, Quayle joined a group of conservative Republican senators in opposition. When President Reagan accused them of accepting the inevitability of war, Quayle denounced the president's comments as "totally irresponsible." A question arose over whether the treaty covered such "futuristic" weapons as lasers, particle beams and microwaves. Both the State Department and the Soviets agreed they were covered, but Quayle insisted they were not. (Later it became evident that the economic deterioration of the Soviet Union severely hampered its ability to compete with the United States in developing such sophisticated space weapons.) "Senator Quayle came at me repeatedly with complaints about this issue," Secretary of State George Shultz recalled. At last the secretary begged, "Dan, you have to shut down! We can't have the president's achievement wrecked by Republicans!" The treaty was finally approved by a vote of 93 to 5, with Quayle voting in favor.¹⁴

Senate Republican Leader Howard Baker appointed Quayle in 1984 to chair a special committee to examine procedural chaos in the Senate. Quayle had impressed the leadership, as Alan Ehrenhalt noted, for "asking troublesome questions in a way that might lead to constructive answers." The Quayle Committee argued that too many committees and subcommittees stretched senators' time too thin. It recommended that senators serve on no more than two major committees and one secondary committee and chair no more than two committees or subcommittees. The panel urged that the number of committee slots be reduced and called for no more than five subcommittees per committee. Reviewing floor procedures in the Senate, the committee proposed limiting "nongermane" amendments and other dilatory tactics. None of these rules changes was adopted, but based on the report, seventeen senators gave up their extra committee seats, and one committee reduced its subcommittees. Secretary of the Senate William Hildenbrand, who had followed the process closely, called it remarkable that any senators gave up committee memberships, since they "had staff on those committees, and they didn't want to lose staff." Hildenbrand said Quayle succeeded "beyond my wildest expectations." Quayle, however, considered the achievements more modest than the recommendations. He was especially disappointed when the Democrats reversed several committee cutbacks after they won back control of the Senate in 1987.¹⁵

These accomplishments gave Quayle a strong record on which to campaign in 1986, and he defeated his opponent, Jill Long, by an impressive 61 percent of the vote. His reelection was more notable because, without Ronald Reagan heading the ticket, many other first-term Senate Republicans—including Mark Andrews of North Dakota, Jeremiah Denton of Alabama, Paula Hawkins of Florida, and Mack Mattingly of Georgia—went down to defeat when they ran on their own. As a result, Democrats won enough seats to regain the chamber's majority. Quayle's margin of victory was large enough to give him thoughts of running for president. But when Vice President George Bush survived the Iran-Contra scandal and reestablished himself as the Republican frontrunner, Quayle shifted his attention to the vice-presidency.¹⁶

The Unexpected Vice-Presidential Candidate

No one runs for vice president so much as making oneself strategically available for the selection. Quayle consciously began to give more Senate speeches, particularly on such high-profile issues as the INF Treaty. He issued more press releases and wrote more op-ed pieces to raise his name recognition. He made a point of dropping by George Bush's office at the Capitol for informal chats. He also maintained contact with Bush's campaign aides. He tried "as subtly as I could, to make it clear I was both qualified and available."¹⁷

Although some of Bush's top staff considered Quayle a lightweight, the sixty-four-year-old Bush had compelling reasons for picking the Indiana senator as his running mate. Youthful and photogenic, Quayle would appeal to a younger generation of voters. He had proven his ability to campaign by his upset victories for the House and Senate. He had applied himself seriously as a senator, building a strong conservative voting record and receiving high marks from conservative groups that were suspicious of Bush's moderation. As a midwesterner, Quayle would add regional balance to Bush's Texas-New England background. And especially since Quayle had not yet established a national identity, he would be likely to remain dependent and deferential toward

Bush, in much the same manner that Bush had served Ronald Reagan. To maintain suspense about his choice, Bush kept his decision secret from everyone. Not until they were flying to the convention in New Orleans, did Bush whisper to his wife Barbara that he had chosen Quayle for vice president, because he felt Quayle was respected as a senator, was bright, and "the right age."¹⁸

Neither Bush nor Quayle anticipated the incredulity and negative publicity that the selection would trigger. The press felt blindsided by the choice of Quayle, and reporters scrambled to collect information about him. As the first person named to a national ticket who had been born after World War II and who had come of age during the Vietnam War, Quayle found that his background was scrutinized differently than it had been during his previous campaigns. Initial reports also distorted Quayle's family finances and connections. The candidate himself had trouble perceiving himself the way others did. What seemed to him a normal, middle-class upbringing appeared more affluent to others. Dan Coats, who served on his staff and succeeded him in the House and Senate, observed: "standing back and looking at the surface of his life, almost everyone would say it was fairly sheltered, some would say privileged. Plenty of opportunities to play golf; enough money in the family to live a comfortable lifestyle."¹⁹

Quayle blamed Bush's aides for not making available to the press more background material about his record and for allowing a hostile caricature to develop. With a sickening feeling, Quayle realized that "the stories and the jokes and the contempt were going to keep coming." Bush's aides blamed Quayle's inexperience in dealing with the national press. He had a habit of not reading prepared texts that led him to make offhand remarks, and the resulting incoherent expressions and nonsequiturs fed the monologues of late-night television comedians. Bush's staff took over Quayle's campaign and designed it to avoid drawing any attention away from the presidential candidate. Quayle's "handlers" prevented him from talking directly to the press and arranged his schedule to skirt major cities or other areas where the ticket was in trouble.²⁰

The lowest point of the campaign occurred on October 6, 1988, during his nationally televised vice-presidential debate with the Democratic candidate, Lloyd Bentsen. Quayle had promised the debate would give viewers "a much better impression" of him. Because the press painted him as a juvenile, unseasoned for national office, he had often responded that he had as much experience in Congress as Jack Kennedy had when he sought the presidency. His "handlers" warned that a Kennedy analogy could backfire, but during the debate a nervous Quayle fell back on the line. When he did, Bentsen had a well-prepared response: "Senator, I served with Jack Kennedy. I knew Jack Kennedy. Jack Kennedy was a friend of mine. Senator, you are no Jack Kennedy." The audience laughed and applauded, and the next day Michael Dukakis' campaign ran an ad featuring pictures of Bentsen and Quayle, with the message: "This is the first presidential decision that George Bush and I had to make. Judge us by how we made it and who we chose." But voters rarely cast a ballot for or against a vice-presidential candidate. Despite bad publicity and negative public opinion polls, Quayle was not enough of a liability to prevent George Bush's election. On inauguration day, in January 1989, it was Senator Quayle not Senator Bentsen who took the oath of office as vice president.²¹

Inside the Bush Administration

Bush's staff described his White House as "smaller, more collegial—intimate even" than it had been under Reagan. The informal tone suited Vice President Quayle well, and he enjoyed regular access to the president. Still, Quayle lacked the standing of such strong-minded officials as Secretary of State James A. Baker, Office of Management and Budget director Richard Darman, and White House Chief of Staff John Sununu. The top staff preferred that Quayle keep occupied with "the traditional busywork of the No. 2 job." Marilyn Quayle, always her husband's closest and most candid advisor, complained that the vice president's overcrowded schedule prevented him from focusing on specific issues. Quayle countered by forming a smart, young staff (six of whom held Ph.D.s), headed by William Kristol, known as "the Great Reaganite Hope" in the Bush White House for arguing for conservative positions with Bush's more moderate advisers. His staff—larger than Mondale or Bush's vice-presidential staffs—worked to carve an independent identity for Quayle within the confines of the president's agenda.²²

Several former vice presidents offered Quayle solicitous advice. Richard Nixon emphasized the need for loyalty to the president. Walter Mondale counseled him not accept any "line item authority," meaning responsibility for particular programs, since the vice-presidency did not provide the authority to carry out such tasks and he would only be blocked by cabinet members and other centers of power within the administration. George Bush, who had held the job for the previous eight years, suggested that he travel a lot to get some seasoning. Bush also encouraged Quayle to "say some things that the President cannot say," particularly on ideological themes popular with conservative groups. The president invited his vice president to attend all significant meetings to become fully informed about every aspect of the presidency.²³

Shortly after the election, Quayle asked: "How am I going to spend my day?" He seriously considered taking a more activist role as presiding officer of the Senate. "The gavel is a very important instrument," he insisted, ". . . an instrument of power. An instrument that establishes the agenda." The problem was that the Democrats controlled the Senate, and the rules of the Senate, which allowed any ruling of the chair to be overturned by a majority vote, made presiding more a responsibility than a power. Quayle soon lapsed back into the traditional legislative role of the vice-presidency. He visited Capitol Hill weekly for the regular luncheon meetings of Republican senators and stood ready when needed to break a tie vote (although he never had an opportunity to do so). He argued the administration's case on legislation and unsuccessfully tried to persuade senators to confirm John Tower as secretary of defense. Steadily he felt himself becoming more a part of the executive than the legislative branch. "When I was in the Senate, I thought it was disorganized but manageable," he mused. "From the viewpoint of the Executive Branch, I found the Senate disorganized and unmanageable."²⁴

Marilyn Quayle faced similar problems in defining her new role. The governor of Indiana asked if she would be interested in being appointed to fill Dan's Senate seat. The Quayles briefly considered the office but concluded that it would not work, since the press would pounce upon the slightest disagreement between herself and the Bush administration. She thought of resuming her law career, but concluded that it raised the appearances of conflict of interest. She chose instead to play a more traditional role as hostess and unofficial adviser. On the side, she and her

sister wrote and published *Embrace the Serpent*, a novel about politics, intrigue and a vice president's wife.²⁵

The vice-presidency was, in Quayle's words, an "awkward job," far more confining than his years in the House and Senate when he could determine for himself what he supported and what he would say. Not only did the president set the program, but others in the administration held jurisdiction for carrying it out and jealously guarded their territory. Quayle, who met early each weekday morning with the president and his national security adviser and lunched with the president weekly, felt free to argue his positions in any meeting. Once a decision was made, however, he loyally fell in behind, even if he had opposed it. "Anyone who thinks cheerleading for a policy you don't believe in amounts to hypocrisy doesn't really understand the way government has to work," he insisted.²⁶

Following the lead of his predecessors, Quayle traveled widely, giving speeches for the administration, raising funds for the Republican party, and introducing himself in foreign capitals. At the White House he chaired the White House Council on Competitiveness, which aimed at reducing burdensome regulations. Quayle received relatively little publicity for his efforts on the council, in part because he thought deregulation could be achieved more easily if the council worked behind the scenes and avoided clashing with Congress. He received more press attention for chairing the National Space Council, which coordinated policy for the space program.²⁷

On Capitol Hill, the vice president played a liaison role with the conservative wing of the Republican party. His services proved most useful in 1990, when a "budget summit" with congressional Democrats led Bush to break his "no-new-taxes" pledge. House Republicans revolted and voted down the initial budget compromise. Georgia Representative Newt Gingrich commented that for several days conservatives in the House were no longer talking to budget director Richard Darman or chief of staff John Sununu, leaving vice president Quayle as "the primary source of information between the most active wing of the House Republican Party" and the Bush administration. "Oddly enough," Quayle concluded, "I came out of the debacle somewhat enhanced within the party and the West Wing." He did not talk down to House Republicans in the manner of Darman and Sununu, and he demonstrated that in private he could play a role as broker and peacemaker. By contrast, his public position of blaming tax increases on the Democrats drove his ratings down further in the opinion polls.²⁸

A similar gap between Quayle's backstage activity and the public perception of him developed in foreign policy matters. In late 1989, when President Bush and Secretary of State Baker were flying to a meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev at Malta, an attempted coup took place in the Philippines. Quayle presided over the White House Situation Room, coordinating American efforts to ensure the survival of Philippine President Corazon Aquino's government. When those in the Situation Room had reached a consensus to provide air power to keep rebel planes from taking off, rather than to bomb them as Aquino had requested, Quayle called Air Force One and had Bush awakened to present their recommendation. Quayle prided himself on his crisis management, but since the activity took place away from public view, and since he could not publicly brag about his role, only "a small spate of welcome stories" appeared.²⁹

In other matters of foreign policy, George Bush remained very much in command, leaving little room for his vice president other than to attend the meetings and offer the president his support. In January 1991, just before "Operation Desert Shield" changed to "Desert Storm," Bush sent Quayle to the Middle East to meet with Saudi Arabian leaders. On his own, Quayle determined to visit American troops. He realized that the gesture might rekindle press ridicule of his National Guard service but decided that he had no other choice. "The fact is I *had* to do it," he later explained. "The essence of the vice-presidency is preparedness, and if I ever had to take over from President Bush—especially at a time like this—I would not be able to function if I felt I couldn't visit the troops who would be under my command."³⁰

The "Dump Quayle" Movement

Victory in the Persian Gulf War lifted President Bush's standing in the public opinion polls to unprecedented heights. As leading Democrats took themselves out of contention, Bush seemed certain of reelection in 1992. Quayle's position on the ticket received a boost from a seven-part series of respectful articles by the prominent journalists David Broder and Bob Woodward that appeared in January 1992 on the front pages of the *Washington Post*. These were later published as a book, *The Man Who Would Be President*. Broder and Woodward argued that "serious assessments of Quayle have taken a back seat to jokes about him." After his "gaffe-ridden performance" in 1988, he had been "saddled with a reputation as a lightweight and treated as a figure of fun." The press had focused on the vice president only when he did something that lived down to their expectations. But Broder and Woodward concluded that "all jokes aside—Dan Quayle has proved himself to be a skillful player of the political game, with a competitive drive that has been underestimated repeatedly by his rivals."³¹

The election, however, turned out differently than expected. A persistent recession held the economy stagnant, and the Bush administration mustered none of the decisiveness on economic issues that it had demonstrated in winning the Gulf War. The president's health also revived worries about Quayle's ability to succeed him. While jogging in May 1991, Bush suffered heart fibrillations, and plans were made for Quayle to take over presidential powers if Bush needed to be anesthetized to regulate his heart beat. This news inspired a tee-shirt featuring the Edvard Munch painting of "The Scream," with the caption: President Quayle?³²

The vice president still suffered from gaffes. To his dismay he heard that even Republican members of Congress were telling Quayle jokes, most of them apocryphal, such as his comment that his Latin American travels made him wish he had studied Latin harder in school. The conservative magazine *American Spectator* ran a cover story on "Why Danny Can't Read." In May 1992, Quayle delivered a speech on family values in which he criticized the popular television program *Murphy Brown* for "mocking the importance of fathers, by bearing a child alone." Although even his critics conceded that the rise of single-parent families was a cause for alarm, the vice president's example of a fictional television character seemed to trivialize his issue. The next month brought an even more embarrassing flap when Quayle visited a school in Trenton, New Jersey, for a "little photo op," helping students prepare for a spelling bee. The word was "potato." The student at the blackboard spelled it correctly, but the card Quayle had

been handed read "potatoe." Television pictures of the vice president coaxing the puzzled student to misspell "potato" confirmed everyone's worst suspicions. "Boy, I hope this doesn't hurt his credibility," mocked comedian Jay Leno.³³

During the summer of 1992, the Bush administration seemed increasingly vulnerable, and nervous Republicans urged the president to dump Quayle from the ticket. Public opinion polls showed him to be the least popular vice president in forty years, scoring even lower than Spiro Agnew. The televised Persian Gulf War had also raised public awareness of other players in the Bush administration, among them Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell, who began to be mentioned as replacements for Quayle. However, the White House staff concluded that changing running mates would be a sign of panic, would make Bush appear disloyal, and would serve as an admission that his original choice had been a mistake. Bush made it clear he would stick with Quayle, while Quayle in a television interview said that he had Bush's complete confidence and added, "Believe me, if I thought I was hurting the ticket, I'd be gone."³⁴

Now four years older, slightly grayer, and more seasoned in the job, Quayle hoped that the reelection race would cast him in a more favorable light. This time his own staff ran his campaign. Having been the first member of the postwar generation on a national ticket, Quayle this time faced two more "baby boomers," Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton for president and Tennessee Senator Al Gore for vice president. Quayle and Gore both had come to the House in 1977 and had played basketball together in the House gym. The orderly announcement of the Democratic vice-presidential selection caused Quayle some envy: "It was hard for me to watch Gore's unveiling without thinking back to the chaos of Spanish Plaza in New Orleans and shaking my head." Most of all, he anticipated that a debate with Gore could wipe the slate clean, erasing his faltering performance against Bentsen four years earlier. It was a scrappy debate, with neither vice-presidential candidate conceding any points to the other. This time it was Admiral James Stockdale, running mate of third-party candidate Ross Perot, who seemed clearly out of his depth. Although critics declared the debate a draw, Quayle won by not losing. Columnist Charles Krauthammer described his performance as nervy: "His party facing annihilation, his colleagues deserting, his ammunition gone, Quayle seemed determined to go down fighting. It was a display of frantic combativeness that verged on courage."³⁵

Returning to Huntington, Indiana, to vote on election day, Quayle by chance encountered Ed Roush, the man he had beaten for Congress in his first race. The incident seemed a forewarning that his decade and a half in politics "was coming full circle." That night the Bush-Quayle ticket lost with 38 percent of the vote to Clinton-Gore's 43 percent and Perot-Stockdale's 19 percent. Dan Quayle retired from the vice-presidency to write a popular memoir, *Standing Firm*, to appear in a Frito-Lay potato chip commercial, and to contemplate his own race for president in 1996. Although he moved back to Indiana, he made it clear that he would not run for governor. "If I ever run for public office again," he promised, "it will be for president." His every step seemed to point to a return to the national political arena, but serious illnesses, including blood clots in the lungs and a benign tumor on his appendix, convinced him to withdraw from the race. He announced that he planned to put his family first "and to forgo the disruption to our lives that a third straight national campaign would create."³⁶

"No Vice President took as many shots—unfair shots—as Dan Quayle," declared Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole. "And no Vice President withstood those shots with as much grace, good humor, and commitment to not back down." Barbara Bush similarly saluted Quayle for being "a superb vice president." He was loyal and smart, she insisted. "There is no question that he had a perception problem, and it was politically chic to kick Dan around. It was darned unfair." Admitting that he had been bruised by the experience, the former vice president kept his sense of humor. When asked about his handicap in golf, Quayle quipped: "My handicap is the same as it has been ever since I became vice president: the news media."³⁷

Notes:

1. Dan Quayle, *Standing Firm: A Vice-Presidential Memoir* (New York, 1994), pp. 3-9; Barbara Bush, *Barbara Bush: A Memoir* (New York, 1994), p. 226.
2. David S. Broder and Bob Woodward, *The Man Who Would Be President: Dan Quayle* (New York, 1992), pp. 57, 62; Richard F. Fenno, Jr., *The Making of a Senator: Dan Quayle* (Washington, 1989), pp. vii-viii; Jules Witcover, *Crapshoot: Rolling the Dice on the Vice Presidency* (New York, 1992), pp. 4-11.
3. Witcover, p. 343; Broder and Woodward, p. 65; *New York Times*, August 17, 25, 1988.
4. Broder and Woodward, pp. 37, 84-87; Quayle, p. 43; Maureen Dowd, "The Education of Dan Quayle," *New York Times Magazine*, June 25, 1989, p. 20; *Washington Post*, October 2, 1988.
5. Quayle, pp. 30-41; *New York Times*, August 26, 1988.
6. Quayle, pp. 11-12; Fenno, pp. 3-4.
7. Quayle, pp. 12-14; Broder and Woodward, pp. 33-46.
8. Fenno, pp. 6-12, 30; Quayle, p. 14.
9. Quayle, pp. 14-15; Broder and Woodward, pp. 47-51; Fenno, p. 13.
10. Fenno, pp. 21-22; Quayle, pp. 15-16; *Washington Post*, August 18, 1988.
11. Fenno, pp. 23-24, 35-36.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 35-51, 61; Quayle, pp. 16-17.
13. Fenno, pp. 69-118.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-31; George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York, 1993), pp. 1007, 1084-85.
15. Alan Ehrenhalt, *Politics in America: Members of Congress in Washington and at Home* (Washington, 1985), p. 498; William F. Hildenbrand, *Secretary of the Senate Oral History Interviews, 1985* (U.S. Senate Historical Office, Washington, DC), p. 331; Dan Quayle, "The New Senate: Two Steps Backwards," *Congressional Record*, 100th Cong., 1st sess., January 13, 1987, pp. 1215-17; Temporary Select Committee to Study the Senate Committee System, *Report Together with Proposed Resolutions*, 98th Cong., 2d sess., S. Prt. 98-254.
16. Quayle, *Standing Firm*, p. 18.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19; Broder and Woodward, pp. 15-21.
18. Quayle, *Standing Firm*, p. 18; Bush, pp. 225-26; Bob Schieffer and Gary Paul Gates, *The Acting President* (New York, 1989), pp. 365-67.
19. Broder and Woodward, p. 36.
20. Quayle, *Standing Firm*, pp. 26-58; Schieffer and Gates, p. 366.
21. *Washington Post*, October 2, 1988; Quayle, *Standing Firm*, pp. 59-67; Jack W. Germond and Jules Witcover, *Whose Broad Stripe and Bright Stars? The Trivial Pursuit of the Presidency, 1988* (New York, 1989), pp. 435-44; Fitzhugh Green, *George Bush: An Intimate Portrait* (New York, 1989), p. 238.
22. John Podhoretz, *Hell of a Ride: Backstage at the White House Follies, 1989-1993* (New York, 1993), pp. 165, 219; Broder and Woodward, pp. 18-19, 120; *Roll Call*, September 17, 1992.
23. Quayle, *Standing Firm*, pp. 74-76, 91-92; Dowd, p. 36; Dan Quayle to Mark O. Hatfield, June 1995, Senate Historical Office.
24. *Washington Post* December 3, 1988; Quayle to Hatfield, June 1995.
25. Quayle, *Standing Firm*, pp. 77-78; Broder and Woodward, pp. 155-74; Marilyn T. Quayle and Nancy T. Northcott, *Embrace the Serpent* (New York, 1992).
26. Broder and Woodward, pp. 90-91; Quayle, *Standing Firm*, p. 105.

27. Broder and Woodward, pp. 91-92, 125-52; Quayle, *Standing Firm*, pp. 177-90.
28. Broder and Woodward, p. 101; Quayle, *Standing Firm*, pp. 189-203.
29. Quayle, *Standing Firm*, pp. 145-239; Bob Woodward, *The Commanders* (New York, 1991), pp. 146-53.
30. Quayle, *Standing Firm*, p. 219; see also Paul G. Kengor, "The Role of the Vice President During the Crisis in the Persian Gulf," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 24 (Fall 1994).
31. Broder and Woodward, p. 10.
32. *Washington Post*, May 6, 1991; Quayle, *Standing Firm*, pp. 251-63.
33. Quayle, *Standing Firm*, pp. 131-32, 315-36; Dan Quayle, "Restoring Basic Values," *Vital Speeches of the Day* 58 (June 15, 1992), pp. 517-20.
34. Quayle, *Standing Firm* pp. 255-56; 337-46; *Washington Post*, July 2, August 19, 1992.
35. Quayle, *Standing Firm*, pp. 337-38, 351-53; *Washington Post* October 15, 1992.
36. Quayle, *Standing Firm* p. 356; *Washington Post*, January 13, 1993, February 10, 1995.
37. U.S., Congress, Senate, *Congressional Record*, 103d Cong., 1st sess., January 27, 1993, p. S771; Bush, p. 447.