

And the Clintons did more than talk. In 1995, White House aides prepared a 311-page study entitled "Communication Stream of Conspiracy Commerce," which outlined a complex scheme of Clinton conspiracy theories. The still-young Internet, it said, took scandal stories and "bounced [them] all over the world." The document even singled out a lone website operator, a graduate student at Dartmouth, who posted a body count on his site. The death list was "one of the wackiest examples of the conspiracy theories that pass for news on the Internet and talk radio," wrote the late New York *Daily News* columnist Lars-Erik Nelson in a 1999 article, "Conspiracy Nuts Hit New Low with the Body Count." "It is ignored by the mainstream media as too nutty for serious comment. But it is widely circulated and widely muttered over."

The same might be said of the Bush body count, which is likely being seen by more people than one might imagine. The bible for Bush murder-and-conspiracy aficionados is a book titled *The Immaculate Deception: The Bush Crime Family Exposed*, which promises readers a "shocking" look into "the unsavory past of George Bush and his family." The book, originally published during the first Bush presidency and re-issued for the second, has been invisible in the press, but sells at a steady pace. On Amazon.com recently, it ranked No. 385 in sales — not a best-seller, but well ahead of several other books that appeal to the anti-Bush audience, including *The Bush Dyslexicon: Observations on a National Disorder*, by Mark Crispin Miller, *Rush Limbaugh Is a Big Fat Idiot*, by Al Franken, and *Shrub: The Short but Happy Political Life of George W. Bush*, by Molly Ivins.

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In July 2001, a fictional "study" purporting to show that George W. Bush had the lowest IQ of any recent president spread across the Internet. According to a "press release" on the web, the "Lovenstein Institute" of Scranton, Pa., conducted a "four month study of the intelligence quotient of President George W. Bush" using the "Swanson/Crain system of intelligence ranking." The fictional researchers determined that Bush's IQ was 91 — precisely half that of Bill Clinton's 182, which was said to be the highest of recent presidents.

The hoax should have been easy to spot. A check of any number of databases (and even the phone book) would have shown that the "Lovenstein Institute" did not exist. In addition, the report cited the work of "Dr. Werner R. Lovenstein, world-renowned sociologist," and "Professor Patricia F. Dilliams, world-respected psychiatrist"; a simple check would have shown that both were fictional characters. Nevertheless, the IQ story struck some of the president's critics as so believable that a few of them, including newspapers in Britain and Europe and *Doonesbury* cartoonist Garry Trudeau, reported it as fact. It can still be found on the web today. There, it's just a small part of the wider discussion about George W. Bush's "stupidity." Surfing the web, readers will find dozens of sites devoted in whole or in part to declaring that the president is irredeemably dumb.

There is Toostupidtobepresident.com, the introduction of which reads, "Surely, there have been smug, duplicitous, rich whelps who have served as President of the United States. But, none of them have been quite as dumb as George W. Bush. . . . Perhaps, his brain was damaged by a 20 year alcoholic binge. Maybe it was all the alleged cocaine, or even a combination of both the former and the latter." There is also Presidentmoron.com, which features phony news stories that, instead of referring to "President Bush," refer to "President MORON." And there is Bushisamoron.org, which says that it is "dedicated to preserving the legacy of Bush's idiocy."

There's also Buzzflash.com, a popular leftist news site that regularly refers to the president as