

Washington Whispers

By Paul Bedard

Almost Like Dining With the President

Eager to attend one of President Bush's exclusive state dinners, but unable to snag a ticket? Here's the next best thing. Thanks to the untimely departure from the East Wing kitchen, former White House chef **Walter Scheib** is fast building a successful new business that brings state dinners to homes and corporate HQs. Everything but the prez himself is included. Scheib calls it "dinner and a conversation": menu selections from his days feeding the Bushes and Clintons and colorful insider tales. "It's a cross between **Emeril [Lagasse]** and **Garrison Keillor**," says Scheib.

"The American Chef" was developed after **Laura Bush** unexpectedly pushed Scheib out after 11 years. He kindly chalks it up to Mrs. Bush's bid to put her own stamp on the East Wing by naming the first woman, his deputy **Cristeta Comerford**, to the top post. Scheib says job offers came in but he had better ideas, namely re-creating a White House experience in homes and executive offices for top dollar. Hosts get a menu from 7,000 first-family recipes (Laura Bush's minted fresh pea soup, **Hillary Rodham Clinton's** veggies and hummus), a cooking class, and hours of stories. Some of his tales puncture the myth of first-family snacking—**Bill Clinton** didn't eat McDonald's, and the Bushes dig leftovers; both like healthful, organic chow. "After being locked in the White House basement for 11 years," says Scheib, "it's great to meet people."



The Guv Shows a Little Leg

Here's the latest indication that Arkansas Gov. **Mike Huckabee** is running for president. A fatty turned jogger, he's planning a repeat in this year's Little Rock Marathon. Because he's the governor, he can request a number, and last year he chose No. 1. Not too subtle there. This year, we're told, a staffer requested 2008.

McCain's Turn for a Little Early Help

The White House, which has recently shown hints of support for conservative Vir-

ginia Sen. **George Allen's** 2008 presidential plans, is also winking at Sen. **John McCain**, the early-on fave for the GOP nomination. Insiders tell us that Bushies have talked him up in private chats with Republican strategists and have even tried to steer people to the Arizonan's effort. Why? The Bushies say they appreciate his support for the president's 2004 re-election campaign and think he could slay Sen. **Hillary Rodham Clinton**. And for doubters, here's another indication the Vietnam War hero is running: In April, he'll be in Iowa, host

of the first presidential caucus, raising money for GOP gubernatorial candidate Rep. **Jim Nussle**, the latest presidential hopeful to lend him a hand—and maybe win his support.

Hillary's Turn to Shake Off the Dogs

Look for **Judicial Watch**, the conservative legal watchdog group, to be first in line now that many Clinton documents can be subjected to the Freedom of Information Act. But **Bill** is not the target, says **Judicial Watch**

President **Tom Fitton**. "The Clinton scandals are fair game as they relate to *Mrs. Clinton*," he tells us. In other words, the campaign against **Hillary** has begun, and the group that dogged her and her hubby most is ready to play. "We understood **Hillary** to be the copresident," says **Fitton**. "These papers could tell us how she would govern and specifically about her own ethics."

Professor Bubba Via C-SPAN 101

Add "Professor" **Bill Clinton** to a star-studded list of political and media bigwigs flocking to a new Internet

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