

The Cindy Sheehan revolution

I RECENTLY returned from seven days of back country camping out of the media's reach. It's always a good exercise to clear out my head – to focus on the environment immediately around me and nothing else. But it's also always a crap shoot as to what kind of world I return to. This time around, I returned to the world of Cindy Sheehan, the Gold Star mother of a slain American soldier who has quickly become a global media phenomenon, igniting an anti-war uprising in America's heartland.

The most amazing aspect of the Cindy Sheehan "phenomenon" is that after trying for a year, she managed to break through the corporate media's blackout on covering dissent. Perhaps what we're witnessing is a perfect storm for the Bush administration. George W. is once again on an extended Crawford vacation, as he was in the weeks leading up to the 9/11 attacks when the FBI and CIA posted numerous warnings about an impending terrorist attack. And public opinion polls show that the majority of Americans have decidedly turned against Bush's Mideast war, with slightly more than a third of the country supporting his handling of the situation in Iraq.

Or maybe it's just the humanity of a grieving mom demanding that W not pimp her son's death as a "noble" sacrifice worthy of endless repetition. Perhaps the image of this heartbroken but determined mother camping out in the 100 degree heat of a Texas summer demanding some face-to-face time with the Commander-in-Chief causes cognitive dissonance even amongst the cold blooded reptilian gatekeepers of the

THE CINDY SHEEHAN REVOLUTION / 2

corporate media. Perhaps they could no longer act as “Good Germans” and hence, let this one compelling saga slip through into the nation’s zeitgeist.

In any event, I came back from the woods to find the news filled with reports about a shriveling presidency and an omnipotent grieving mom with the indignation of Mother Jones and the righteous aura of Mother Teresa.

Sheehan’s story is simple and by now familiar to most readers. Shortly after her son’s heroic death in Iraq, Bush’s handlers orchestrated a long-overdue photo-op with her and a few other parents who lost children in Iraq. But he brushed her off, strangely calling her “mom” while not knowing her dead son’s name. She left the White House and went off to start Gold Star Families for Peace – an organization composed of American parents who lost children in Iraq.

Two weeks ago, just as I was heading off to the woods, Bush invoked the image of soldiers killed in Iraq while giving a pro-war speech in Texas, explaining that they “died in a noble and selfless cause.” Sheehan couldn’t stand by while her dead son’s image was being used to justify the death of other people’s children – so she headed off to Crawford, Texas to ask Bush to explain exactly “why did my son die? What was the noble cause he died for?” She explained to the press, “I don’t want [George W. Bush] to use my son’s name or my family to justify any more killing, or to exploit my son’s name, my son’s sacrifice or my son’s honor to justify more killing.”

The Sheehan family’s all-American saga is cyanide in Bush’s proverbial cool Texas summer lemonade. Cindy Sheehan was a Church youth minister who passed her strong Christian faith on to her son Casey, who was born on Memorial Day. He was an Eagle Scout, an altar boy, a church youth group leader and finally a college student before enlisting in the military in 2000. He re-enlisted after the “War on Terror” began, but long before the Downing Street memos revealed the Iraq invasion was based on a Bush administration orchestrated hoax. He eventually died after volunteering for a mission to rescue wounded American troops.

The standard Bush administration response to political threats such as the one now posed by Cindy Sheehan is to follow Karl Rove’s game book plan of relentless nasty vicious full frontal assaults – no matter how wholesome the victim or how selfless their sacrifice. Toward this end, the dung beetles in the Republican propaganda machine have been fully mobilized.

First there was Fox News’ Bill O’Reilly, who accused Cindy Sheehan of being “in bed with the radical left.” It’s a tired old O’Reilly formula – when in doubt, red-bait, no matter how quaint and antiquated the tactic has become. But this wasn’t enough. O’Reilly dug his mandibles deep into the brown matter and spewed forth an accusation that Sheehan, the

THE CINDY SHEEHAN REVOLUTION / 3

grieving mom, was exhibiting the "kind of behavior [that] borders on treasonous," explaining that she was one of those people who "hate their country."

Rush Limbaugh dutifully followed suit, explaining that Sheehan was "trying to pull a little bit of a swindle," exhibiting "the whole Michael Moore leftist mentality," even though Sheehan hasn't made any political statements that could be construed as either left or right. Fred Barnes, editor of *The Weekly Standard* simply dismissed her as a crackpot – as if no sane mom would be spurred to action after the senseless death of a child.

Then there was the headline that seemed to appear across the pro-Bush media spectrum, reading "Family of Fallen Soldier Pleads: Please Stop, Cindy." This story, spread by the Drudge Report is based on a supposed letter signed by the Sheehan family speaking out against Cindy Sheehan's anti-war stance. It's signed: "Casey Sheehan's grandparents, aunts, uncles and numerous cousins," but in actuality it bears no signatures. Sheehan's real family, however, including her husband from whom she's separated, and her three other children, have all gone on record supporting her activism.

All the dung beetle attacks against Cindy Sheehan have managed to do is to expose the gaggle of shameless lying whores of the Bush propaganda machine for what they are. And in doing so, in turn, they expose the Bush administration, even to its own former supporters, for what it is. Cindy Sheehan isn't a revolutionary and she's not purposefully leading an insurrection. She's just a grieving mom standing defiantly out in the desert, making history as she witnesses the Bush administration self-destruct before her relentless dignified presence.