

Family, friends sustain Cheney's career

Taking advantage of opportunities proves key in Washington, life.

By Thomas Dewell

WASHINGTON—Ask Vice President Dick Cheney why he has been able to work almost 40 years in Washington, D.C., and he points to others.

Inquire how his current job, which has placed him in the center of media crosshairs and roiling world and national affairs, impacts him and his family, and he explains that politics has let his family work and bond together.

"Everybody is in great shape and enjoying what we're doing very much," the vice president said during a Friday interview. Lynne, Cheney's wife is "busy writing books. And we've got five, soon to be six grandchildren — our sixth arrives next week."

Cheney, 66, first started in public service in Washington in 1969 as an intern in the Nixon administration. He served as White House chief of staff under President Ford, as the U.S. Representative for Wyoming and as Secretary of Defense in the first Bush administration. Now, he is a central cog in the second Bush administration.

Sen. Craig Thomas, R-Wyo., said Cheney was the most active and high-profile vice president he had ever seen.

"He does have a tough job and he's taken the heat to a large extent," Thomas said.

For the Cheneys, politics has been a family affair. The eldest daughter, Liz, was born two years before the family moved to the capitol and Mary Cheney was born there. The daughters have been part of state and national campaigns, including the two Bush-Cheney victories.

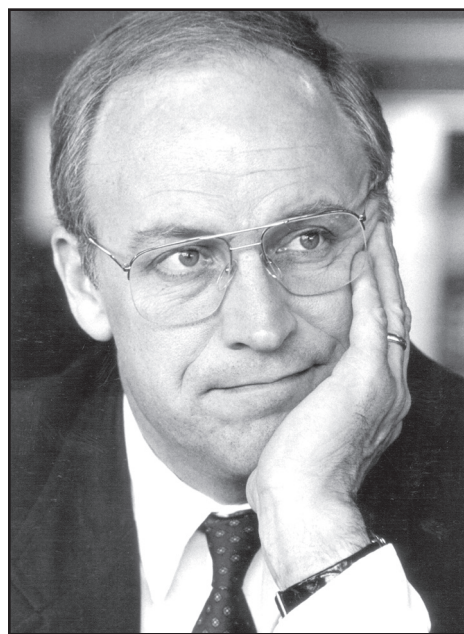
"They've been an integral part of the process and I think they've loved it," Cheney said. "It's been great fun, great family enterprise."

And the pressure?

"Some families, the pressures are enormous and it just doesn't fit," Cheney said. "People don't enjoy it, or don't take pleasure in it. But, for us, it's been an integral part of our lives with family. Lots of times when my wife, Lynne, and I get together with our two daughters, the four of us end up sitting around the table telling old war stories from past campaigns."

In speeches to high school and college graduates, Cheney regularly cites the importance of taking the opportunities life hands you.

The opportunity that helped propel him into the national arena, ironical-



This 1983 photo shows Vice President Cheney when he served as Wyoming's Representative to the U.S. House.

ly arose from political scandal in the Republican Party.

"You know, in one sense, my career was advanced by Watergate...," Cheney said. "President Nixon resigned, Gerry Ford became President and made me, first of all, deputy chief of staff, and then his chief of staff not long after..."

when I was at the Defense Department, for example. I had 4 million working for me. Now it's much more a matter of being a counselor and advisor, troubleshooter, somebody who can take on special assignments and so forth. When I first came to the West Wing, going to work for Don Rumsfeld in the first year of the Nixon administration, 1969, I was one of the youngest people here. Now I think I'm the oldest.

I've worked in four different administrations, watched a fifth, the Reagan administration, up close from the perspective of Congress as a member of the House. And I consider myself extremely fortunate to have had a chance to do all those things. It's been a great tour.

NEWS&GUIDE: ... [I]n Teton County, we sell a wild and scenic experience. ... and currently, gas exploration is creeping towards Teton County, and you have even sportsmen's groups starting to oppose it ... It's not just the greenies opposing it. So are there some places that are inappropriate for development? And, if so, how can people stop this energy juggernaut ...?

"I came here to stay 12 months in 1968, so it's been almost 40 years that I've been involved."

— Dick Cheney

VICE PRESIDENT

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, this has been an issue — it's not the first time it came up. If you go back and you look at the debate we had in the early '80s, the question was putting off-limits some parts of the state for development. When we passed the Wyoming Wilderness Act, I sponsored it in the House, worked on it with Al Simpson and Malcolm Wallop. I think we passed it, as I recall, in the fall of '84. We put nearly an additional 1 million acres into wilderness.

And there had already been the original act passed, I guess in the '70s, and this was a significant add-on to it. And it took a lot of that area in northwestern Wyoming and said it's off-limits to development.

At the same time, you need to have other parts of the state that are available for multiple use. You need both, obviously. But I think, in general, we've made pretty good decisions over the years. I think the way the debate gets pretty heated and pretty intense at times — we need a strong, viable economy; our resource base is a vital part of our economy, our coal and our oil and gas. But we should not sacrifice all parts of the state to that kind of growth and development. There ought to be areas off-limits. There are significant areas off-limits right now in terms of the parks and the wilderness areas and so forth.

And the debate sort of never ends and there's always an opportunity to refight yesterday's fight. For example, we get into the wilderness designation on the rivers — I think Craig has got a good bill — and designate the Snake River a wilderness river. I think that makes good sense. And I do think that part of Wyoming needs to be protected. By the same token,

You can't count on, you have to take advantage of the opportunities."

Cheney cited valley resident Cliff Hansen, a former U.S. senator and Wyoming governor, as a role model. "Great friends like Al Simpson," the former U.S. Senator from Wyoming, also helped his career.

Don Rumsfeld, who Cheney first met in the Nixon administration and worked under in the Ford administration, and President Ford, both gave him "the opportunity to take on major responsibilities."

"So an awful lot of people contributed to that, making it possible," Cheney said.

As vice president, Cheney does not have direct control over a government agency. He said he tackles the jobs the president requires and serves as an advisor, trouble shooter and someone who is able to take on special assignments.

The most recent assignment sent him half-way around the globe to meet with leaders in the Middle East.

On Friday, he reported that he had caught up on his sleep. The rigors of the job and the travel weren't too great.

"Well, the way I travel now is pretty nice. I mean, it's not coach on United," he said and laughed. "It's a very nice airplane, great staff support. So if you have to do that sort of thing, this is the way to do it."

ENERGY JOBS

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years. Now, that was some time ago — and we had a little problem 65, 70 years later, when we had a civil war — to sort out some of the issues that we didn't get right the first time around. People who want instant success — probably not going to get it. But there's no reason in the world why we can't accomplish this in a reasonable time frame. You want a specific calendar — nobody can give that to you.

But I do think that we've come a long way over that period of time. It's taken longer than we would have hoped. It would be nice if it had all gone smoother than it had after we had completed the original mission, in terms of taking down Saddam Hussein's government. It hasn't, I think in part, because al-Qaida has clearly focused very much their effort and resources and they're doing everything they can to promote conflict between the Sunni and the Shia. The Shia, for a long time, did not retaliate against the Sunni. What changed all that was a little over a year ago, when Abu Musab al Zarqawi, the leader of al-Qaida in Iraq, launched an attack on the mosque at Samarra, blew it up. That was a very special site, in terms of religious worship for the Shia. And they began to retaliate against the Sunni, and that triggered some of the sectarian conflict we've seen since.

But we have seen a falloff in the sectarian conflict since we put our troops into Baghdad. We still have a lot of car bombs going off. We're seeing progress out in Al Anbar province, where the local population is now turning on al-Qaida in that part of Iraq. So I think we need to have patience. We need to support the troops. We need to give them the resources they need to get the job done. But I think it's a doable proposition. I believe that.

NEWS&GUIDE: Much of your life has been devoted to public service. How does this job compare to the other jobs you've had in this town and in Wyoming? And what does — what's it like in this current climate where on one hand, last night they want to blame you for Gonzales, and at the same time, we have immigration reform coming along, and you're able to go out on these trips? What's it like right now to work in this town? What's the climate? And then, how does this compare to your other tours in this —

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That's my life story. It's hard to get that done in five minutes. It's been a great career. I came here to stay 12 months in 1968, so it's been almost 40 years that I've been involved, most of that time, in public service and politics and government.

One of the jobs I loved was being Wyoming's congressman for 10 years. That was a great job, great assignment. And I expected, when I got elected to Congress in 1978, that that's where I was going to spend the rest of my career. I didn't count on being asked to become Secretary of Defense in 1989. That was a great job, especially through Desert Storm.

And then after that I went into private life for eight years, and then, of course, I got drafted to come back when the president asked me to run for vice president. They've all been fascinating assignments, for different reasons, I mean, they're different kinds of jobs.

As the vice president, I don't run anything, like I did

the development that we're seeing over in Sublette County, around Pinedale and Big Piney, is a boon to the state. The Jonah Field is drawing off something like a \$1 million a day in revenue for the state government. A lot of jobs connected with it, a lot of natural gas, which the nation needs.

But we just have to exercise judgment and use the authorities that are available to decide what areas we're going to protect, and which ones are going to be developed. I think we've done a pretty good job. People in New York and San Francisco like to come tell us how to do our business, but —

NEWS&GUIDE: I just think it's interesting for me that you're starting to see the Rock Springs sportsmen come in to play because [of] the Wyoming patrimony, [the] hunting and fishing. ... And they're really afraid to lose that. And that's something I like to do with my kids, too.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Why do you think I have a home in Jackson Hole?

NEWS&GUIDE: We'll stay on energy for a second — during [an April 30] news conference with the German chancellor, the president recognized that we had a problem with greenhouse gases, we have a problem with dependence on oil, and said technology could be one of the solutions to this. So what are your views on climate change? Have they shifted in recent years? And is this really an opportunity for the American people and American industry to address the problem?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Well, I mean, climate change — there's a growing debate here in Washington, obviously around the world, on the question of climate change. ... I can't claim to have any special insight, obviously. I think there is evidence of global warming. I think it's a big question about exactly what's caused it, how much man has contributed to it, how much of it is part of a natural cycle, obviously.

The question that the president has responded to most frequently, and I think he's basically right, is that part of the solution here is technology. He's pushed hard to broaden our research into finding ways to use energy resources in a cleaner fashion. For example, we spend a lot of money on research into reducing pollutants connected with coal-fired plants, and find effective ways to build clean-burning coal-fired plants.

We've spent a lot of time and money on ethanol research and alternative fuels. We have called for an increase in the CAFE standards and a reduction in the percentage of gasoline — percentage reduction in the amount of gasoline that we use over the course of the next several years. So it's a combination of things that move us in the direction of reduced dependence on foreign imports, but at the same time, make sure we've got adequate supplies of energy to run our economy and meet the needs of the American people, while we also try to do it in an environmentally responsible fashion.

And I think to some extent, a lot of this gets solved by technology, as we move forward and we find ways to satisfy all those requirements. You don't get to choose. You don't get to say, well, we're going to just have a clean environment or, we're just going to have plentiful supplies of energy. We need to be able to do both.