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AMONG FRIENDS

Leftport, Connecticut

Why I'm taking flight from the Bush-hating 'burbs.

BY ALAN BROMLEY

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These weekend invitations to Westport, Conn.--I've started calling it "Leftport"--are becoming burdensome. I find myself surrounded by people who have moved from Manhattan to homogeneous suburban enclaves encircled by white fences, white neighbors and purer-than-thou philosophies. Never mind that they moved there for better public schools and lower tax rates--and to see Paul Newman at the local grocery store. They are now of one mind: to defeat President Bush!

They hate his swagger, which I find a bit annoying; they hate his born-again religious views, which I find sometimes disconcerting and sometimes comforting (especially when it comes to supporting Israel's right to exist), and they hate his syntax, or lack thereof, which I wish were more refined, while they ignore John Kerry's windiness and vapid vacillations.

So we hold our glasses of mediocre Chardonnay, pick at little watercress, bread-enveloped triangles, while I long for herring filets and vodka. I mean, we're all Jewish, for God's sake!

Then our host chants the liberal mantra: "Bush has alienated us from the rest of the world. Europe hates us. The Muslims hate us. He's taking us into an abyss!"

The crowd raises their goblets, yelling "Kill Bush."

When I was in Leftport in March, the party theme was that Mr. Bush had ruined the economy. They wouldn't hear of the fact that the economy went into a recession during the late Clinton months, or that the attack on America threw us off course, or that the tax cuts had spurred the economy into the best leap in 20 years. Unemployment, they yelled, was horrible.

But employment figures jumped in March, so in April the tune changed back to the war. "We had no evidence of weapons of mass destruction. Bush did this for the oil, or because Saddam was his father's nemesis. This is pay-back."

My wife looks at me, knowing some salvos are forthcoming. I've held my tongue long enough, and suffered through lousy hors d'oeuvres and cheap white wine till I'm beyond myself. I ask:

"Didn't Saddam use weapons of mass destruction against the Kurds in northern Iraq, against the 'marsh people' in southern Iraq, against the Iranians? Didn't he threaten to send poison-tipped missiles into Israel? Didn't Israel destroy his nuclear facilities in the 1980s? Didn't he kill, over 35 years, 1.5 million people or so, or more than 3,000 per month, every month? As offspring of the Holocaust, did you prefer we wait until he has more capabilities for killing? Is it your hope, like our dead brethren in Germany,

that if we try to acquiesce, we will be overlooked? Have you learned nothing?"

And, I continued, "If we wanted the oil, why didn't we take over the oil fields, either during Bush I, or Bush II? And by the way, is there anyone here who has a vision of ending terrorism, or bringing a more egalitarian way of life to the Middle East."

Yells of "Nazi" and "right winger" hit my ears. Not one substantive reply, only personal attacks on my character or intelligence.



Scratch a liberal, I say, and you often end up with a McCarthyite, bent on trying to destroy the character of every conservative, or even a mere questioner.

So in self-preservation, I've torn up my directions to "Leftport," taken the Saw Mill Parkway off my map, and am going to confine myself to the best that Manhattan offers, the good food and hedonism of the Meatpacking district, where I can eat and drink the night away with my wife and be with people of all stripes--and with no more than a hip-thrust or wink on the dance floor I can commune with everyone.

Alan Bromley lives and writes in New York City, thankfully.

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