

*Oh Dad, Poor Dad,
Sonny's Hung You
in the Closet and I'm
Feelin' So Sad*

It had become well established over the years that there are few limits to how low a man will stoop to become president of the United States.

But on the evening of January 6, 2000, in a debate at the Johnson Theater of the University of New Hampshire in Durham, this view was shown to be incorrect. There are no limits.

Republican candidate Steve Forbes made this clear when asked how he stood on the question of homosexuals in the military. He answered:

“Open gays should not be in the military. The military is not an agency for social experimentation. They have a real mission and they should be allowed to carry it out.”

From any of the other candidates this would have been a routine pander to the gay-bashing family values crowd. From this candidate it was something much nastier.

The only reason Mr. Forbes was on the platform at all is that he inherited a magazine and a huge fortune from his father, Malcolm. This has allowed the son to buy so much television time that attention must be paid to his otherwise absurd candidacy. One would think that Mr. Forbes would be grateful to dad, and respectful of his memory. One would be wrong, though.

The candidate's father, Malcolm Forbes, enlisted in the army after Pearl Harbor. To pass the vision test he wore contact lenses, then so unfamiliar that the army doctors didn't catch on. He was therefore cleared to engage in the military's real mission, which ended for him while he was searching for a missing unit in Germany. His leg was shattered by machine gun bullets, hospitalizing him for nine months. The army awarded him the Purple Heart, and a Bronze Star for valor.

The relevance of all this to the candidate's manly stand in New Hampshire 55 years later is that Malcolm Forbes was gay. His son, of course, is not: nothing queer about Smedley. Nor does the would-be commander-in-chief share his father's enthusiasm for real military missions. Like most rich kids his age, he ducked service in Vietnam.

January, 2000