Bush gives press 'exit interview'

AP White House Correspondent

WASHINGTON — In a nostalgic final news conference, President George W. Bush defended his record vigorously and at times sentimentally Monday — and admitted mistakes, too, including his

Weather Corner



National Weather Service **Tonight**: Partly cloudy, with a low around 16. Windy, with a north wind 25 to 30 mph becoming west 5 to 10 mph. Winds could gust as high as 40 mph.

a high near 52. West wind between 10 and 15 mph. Tuesday Night: Partly cloudy,

Tuesday: Mostly sunny, with

with a low around 24. West wind between 5 and 15 mph. Wednesday: Mostly sunny,

with a high near 45. Breezy, with a northwest wind between 15 and 20 mph, with gusts as high as 30 mph.

Wednesday Night: Mostly cloudy, with a low around 10. Thursday: Partly sunny, with

a high near 28. Thursday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 14.

Friday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 50. Friday Night: Mostly clear,

with a low around 21. Saturday: Sunny, with a high

Friday: High, 52; Low 11

Saturday: High, 47; Low 11 Sunday: High, 50; Low 28 Precip: Friday 0.00 inches 0.00 inches Saturday Sunday 0.00 inches

0.00 inches Month: Year: 0.00 inches Normal:

0.48 inches (K-State Experiment Station)

optimistic Iraq speech before a giant "Mission Accomplished" ban-

After starting what he called "the ultimate exit interview" with a lengthy and personalized thank-you to the reporters in the room who have covered him over the eight years of his presidency, Bush showed anger at times when criticisms of his time in office.

He particularly became indignant when asked about America's bruised image overseas.

"I disagree with this assessment that, you know, that people view America in a dim light," he said.

Bush said he realizes that some issues such as the prison for suspected terrorists at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, have created controversy at home and around the world. But he defended his actions after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, including approving tough interrogation methods for suspected terrorists and information-gathering efforts at home in the name of protecting the country.

With the Iraq war in its sixth year, he most aggressively defended his decisions on that issue, which will define his presidency like no other. There have been over 4,000 U.S. deaths since the invasion and toppling of Saddam Hussein in 2003.

He said that "not finding weapons of mass destruction was a significant disappointment." The accusation that Saddam had and was pursuing weapons of mass destruction was Bush's main initial justification for going to war.

Bush admitted another miscalculation: Eager to report quick progress after U.S. troops ousted Saddam's government, he claimed less than two months after the war started that "in the battle of Iraq, the United States and our allies have prevailed," a claim made under a "Mission Accomplished" banner that turned out to be wildly optimistic. "Clearly, putting 'Mission Accomplished' on an aircraft carrier was a mistake," he said Monday.

He also defended his decision in 2007 to send an additional 30,000 American troops to Iraq to knock down violence levels and stabilize

"The question is, in the long run, will this democracy survive, and that's going to be a question for future presidents," he said.

On another issue destined to figure prominently in his legacy, Bush said he disagrees with those who say the federal response to Hurricane Katrina was slow.

"Don't tell me the federal response was slow when there were 30,000 people pulled off roofs right after the storm passed. ... Could things been done betpresented with some of the main ter? Absolutely. But when I hear people say the federal response was slow, what are they going to say to those chopper drivers or the 30,000 who got pulled off the roof?" he said.

He called President-elect Barack Obama "a smart, engaging person" and said he wishes his successor all the best. He hinted at the enormous responsibility Obama is about to assume, describing what it might feel like on Jan. 20 when, after taking the oath of office, he enters the Oval Office for the first time as president.

'There'll be a moment when the responsibility of the president lands squarely on his shoulders," Bush said.

He gave his view of the most urgent priority facing the incoming president: an attack on the United States. He chose that risk over the dire economic problems now facing the nation.

"I wish that I could report that's not the case, but there's still an enemy out there that would like to inflict damage on America — on Americans."

He said he would ask Congress to release the remaining \$350 billion in Wall Street bailout money if Obama so desires. But, he said, Obama hasn't made that request of him yet.

If Bush should make the request of Congress, it would take the burden off Obama's shoulders involving a program that is extraordinarily unpopular with many lawmakers and much of the

But, said Bush, "He hasn't asked me to make the request yet and I don't intend to make the request unless he asks me."

The last time the president had taken questions from reporters in a public setting was Dec. 14 in Baghdad, a session that hurtled to the top of the news when Iraqi journalist Muntadhar al-Zeidi threw his shoes at Bush during a question-and-answer session with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-

Gospel group sings



ANDY HEINTZ/Colby Free Press

The Ball Brothers, a southern gospel group, performed at the Colby Berean Church on Sunday. The group drew a crowd that packed the pews at the chuch.

Plants can need water in dry winter

Q: I've noticed that many of my winter drought in the landscape best, which can easily take several evergreen shrubs - mostly junito look off-color, sort of brownish or light green. Should I be wor-

A: An off-cast color can be an evergreen plant's response to cold temperatures and chilling winds. The effect is common during heartland winters, but it tends to be mild and not very long-lasting. We don't see actual foliage loss or twig dieback except during unusually cold weather.

pers and boxwoods – are starting year-round. In turn, they use and lose more water during winter than the deciduous plants do.

> Although evergreens are at greatest risk during cold-weather dry spells, other plants that are likely to suffer from a wintertime moisture shortage include new lawns established the previous fall and any trees or shrubs that are five or fewer years of age.

Fortunately, you can water landscape plants any time the air tem-But, off-color also can result perature is above freezing and the from dry conditions. Evergreens soil isn't so frozen that moisture ticulturist, K-State Research and provide the most obvious clues of can't soak in. A deep soaking is Extension

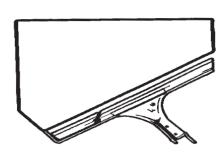
because they retain their leaves hours. If the temperature drops below freezing after that, however, no plants will be harmed.

Just be sure that your water carrying system is detached from its source, drained and stored again for winter when you're through. You won't need to water again until a long-bladed screwdriver or metal rod, pushed into the ground, stops before it reaches 4 to 6 inches deep. That kind of rod only stops when it reaches thirsty, thirsty soil.

-- Source: Dennis Patton, hor-

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