

Gore champions education, health care

By Elizabeth Bland
Old Gold and Black Reporter

Karl Bren hasn't seen much of Al Gore since a few childhood pick-up games of kickball, but he still identifies with the presidential candidate.

"It's kind of funny, but my most vivid memory is of Al wearing shorts," said Bren, now a resident of Richmond, Va. "I'd never seen anyone wear shorts before and it stuck in my mind. We grew up near each other in Tennessee and occasionally I'd see him at the farm across from mine. I was probably 13 years old and a bunch of us would kick a ball around the front yard and have a good time. Little Al was just another one of the kids.

"I feel a close affinity with him because we come from similar backgrounds," Bren said.

"We share a common visceral understanding of certain societal mores and values. Everything he says rings true."

"Little Al" probably doesn't get a chance to play kickball too often on the campaign trail, but his childhood in Tennessee undoubtedly

contributed to making him the man he is today.

As a child, Albert Arnold Gore, Jr. divided his time between Carthage, Tenn. and the family farm, and Washington, D.C. when his father was a senator. He learned about political life while in the nation's

capital, but also worked shoveling hog manure and plowing fields during the summers in Carthage.

Working on the farm led to his environmental awareness which has become a large part of Gore's platform. "For me, a commitment to the environment has always run deeper than politics," Gore has said. "We have to do what's right for our environment, because it involves all of our lives."

When not working at the farm, Gore attended St. Albans prep school in Washington, D.C. and later graduated from Harvard with honors in 1969. He married his high school sweetheart, Mary Elizabeth "Tipper" Aitcheson in May of 1970. That December he left for Vietnam where he served as a military journalist. After he was honorably discharged, he and

1973. Soon after, Gore decided to run for Congress and won the 1976 election with over 90 percent of the vote. Kristin, the Gore's second child, was born in 1977 and Gore began his campaign for greater environmental awareness.

In 1978 Gore chaired a committee hearing on toxic waste and examined the dangerous effects of hazardous wastes at Love Canal in New York and Toone, Tenn. In 1979 Sarah, his third daughter, was born and Gore sponsored legislation creating the Department of Education. In 1982, he came up with a plan to help reduce the threat of nuclear war and another addition to the Gore family, Albert III, was born.

Gore established the National Organ Transplant Act in May of 1984 and solidified an agreement with tobacco companies

to place more emphatic warning labels on cigarette packages. That same year, Gore was elected to the United States Senate.

Gore again asserted his environmental consciousness with legislation to re-introduce Earth Day in 1990. He wrote *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit*

in 1992, moved up the political ladder and was elected vice president under Bill Clinton in November of '92.

In the wake of an eight-year vice presidency, Gore is attempting to reach the pinnacle of political power. This was not his first presidential bid, however. In 1988 he lost the Democratic candidacy to Michael Dukakis. The second time around has proved to be more successful. Gore succeeded in defeating opponent Bill Bradley and is locked in a virtual dead heat with George W. Bush, the Republican candidate.

Gore aims to lead a presidential life different from his predecessors'. Compared to Clinton's notoriously gossip-ridden terms, Gore has remained relatively scandal-free. He took quite a bit of flak for claiming to be one of the founders of the internet and unethical cam-



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Vice President Al Gore is noted for his dedication to the environment. His emphasis on environmental issues has brought praise and criticism.

Tipper lived in Nashville and he attended the Vanderbilt University Graduate School of Religion. Later, he worked as a reporter for the Nashville *Tennessean* and went to law school at Vanderbilt.

Meanwhile, Tipper and Al had their first child, Kareenna, in



Photo courtesy of <http://gwu.edu/~action>

Gore has made a conscious effort to distance himself from the scandals that have marked the Clinton administration.



Photo courtesy of <http://webcrawler-sports.excite.com/photo>

Gore's plans to improve health care for U.S. citizens include securing prescription drug benefits for seniors and a patients' bill of rights.

campaign fundraising in 1996. Pictures of Gore in a Buddhist temple and his possible misuse of White House telephone lines led to Senate committee investigations, but nothing has yet been done to substantially affect his campaign.

Education is another important issue to Al Gore's campaign. On his official Web site www.algore2000.com, Gore says, "There is no greater test of our national responsibility than the quality of the education we provide." Education is on many college student-voter minds and, if elected, Gore plans to spend \$36 billion on income tax credits to help pay their tuition. In other words, a family could receive as much as \$2,800 in tax credits each year.

Senior Heath Bumgardner, the president of the College Democrats, strongly endorses Gore's environmental policies. "Al Gore is a champion of the environment, and his record as a legislator should speak for itself," Bumgardner said. "The Sierra Club and the League of Conservation Voters, the two most prominent environmental lobbies, have both endorsed Al Gore over Bush and Green Party nominee Ralph Nader.

Without being negative, please take a look at Houston, which has now taken over for Los Angeles as the most polluted city in America. That may say it all."

In a recent interview with *Newsweek*, Gore outlined his plans for the first few months of his presidency.

"I will fight for an increase in the minimum wage, for prescription-drug benefits for seniors, for a patients' bill of rights, for health care for all children and step-by-step progress toward universal health insurance," he said. "More community police on the streets, a crime victims' bill of rights and a constitutional amendment to make sure that victims and not just criminals have guaranteed rights. I will fight for the next stage of welfare reform to make fathers accountable and I will fight to create more good new jobs."

Gore has come a long way from his youthful kickball games in rural Tennessee, but he has shown no slackening in his fight to win. If this bid for the presidency fails, it won't be because he doesn't have the support of those who've known him.

Just ask Karl Bren.