



The Weldon File

Mac Canter

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Political pros aren't fools when it comes to buying a Senator. They know the same ambition that drives someone to run for the United States Senate causes the would-be candidate to suffer from selective amnesia about dirty little secrets from way back when. That's why the candidate's "exploratory committee" secretly hires a research firm to "get there first with the worst" before the decision is made to launch the campaign and expose the candidate's background to opposition researchers, investigative journalists, and bloggers. There's no point in investing big bucks in a candidate with a ticking time bomb in his or her past.

This peculiar Washington "dark art" is "counter-oppo" research. The researcher in The Weldon File is Morris Jackson Rives, a distant descendant of Andrew Jackson. Morris has been content to live off his trust fund, desultorily work on his doctoral dissertation at an Ivy League university, and carry on an affair with Karen Moore, the trophy wife of the dean of the business school. But Morris's sweet deal turns sour after Karen, following a Scotch soaked tryst, hits and kills a hitchhiker while hurrying home to read bedtime stories to her daughters. Karen keeps going. The law provides a "mandatory minimum" prison term of five years for DWI homicide. Karen tells the police she was stone sober and thought she hit a deer. Morris allows himself to be implicated in the "cover-up," which he increasingly regrets—all the more so after he learns Karen may be trying to set him up as the hit-and-run driver.

So Morris jumps at the chance to return home to Washington when his uncle, Jack Rives, a Washington "power broker," out of the blue telephones to offer Morris a job with Minder Associates, a highly effective—ruthless, in a word—counter-oppo research firm which just landed a plum assignment, on the fast track. Jack explains the purpose of counter-oppo research to Morris: "You sit your boy-o down, stick a stiff drink in his hand, and break it to him gently. You tell him what she's saying nowadays—this being the sweetheart of Thelma Thigh who—he says—liked 'rough fun' thirty years ago...Maybe you hand him the print-out of the server record which shows how many times he's logged onto a porno site...It knocks the wind out of them. Makes some go white and others turn red. But, to a man, they end up thanking you. Better sooner and in private, than later and in public. They shake your hand and walk out, sadder and wiser."

The candidate is the former lieutenant governor of Virginia, Larry Weldon, the "whitest of white hats." After serving two terms, Weldon declined to run for governor even though polls showed him well ahead of the likely Republican candidate. Instead, to considerable acclaim, Weldon returned to the high school in the blue-collar suburb of Richmond where, prior to entering politics, he had been a history teacher and football coach. Weldon is reported to be considering allowing himself to be drafted to run against the incumbent Republican Senator.

Morris follows the trail to Gilead, South Carolina, Weldon's hometown, where for five years Weldon was a highly successful young attorney. He abruptly abandoned the practice of law to start a new life in Virginia. The ostensible reason is Weldon's acceptance of a "calling" to devote his life to helping youth as a high school teacher and football coach. But Morris learns of the possibility of will fraud in which Weldon may be implicated, possibly inadvertently, followed by a death that may have been a murder.

While Morris is pursuing Weldon's past, Morris' past is pursuing him. A collision occurs which shakes the foundations of Morris's cynicism. It suddenly becomes clear why Uncle Jack wanted a rookie for this particular job.

The Weldon File puts on full display the considerable literary talents of Mac Canter, honed to a still sharper edge in this, his second novel.

The Weldon File Details

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Courtney Herbold says

Hope everyone gets a chance to read! An exciting and twisted tale of a young Washingtonian uncovering some dark political secrets. I love the character descriptions along with each location Rives travels to. I appreciate Rives dry and sarcastic sense of humor and all the one-liners that come from this book. Very entertaining!
