


SALON PREMIUM
[find out more](#) | [login](#)



salon.com


Site Pass
 sponsored by:
 


[NEWS & POLITICS](#)
[OPINION](#)
[TECH & BUSINESS](#)
[A & E](#)
[BOOKS](#)
[LIFE](#)
[COMICS](#)
[AUDIO](#)
[DIALOGUE](#)

ARTICLE FINDER

NEWS & POLITICS**Search Salon**

OK

Directory**Hot Topics**

- [War Room](#)
- [The Daou Report](#)
- [Iraq War](#)
- [Terrorism](#)
- [King Kaufman's Sports Daily](#)

Articles by date

- [All of Salon.com](#)
- [By department](#)

SALON

- ▶ [News & Politics](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Tech & Business](#)
- [Arts & Entertainment](#)
- [Books](#)
- [Life](#)
- [Comics](#)
- [Dialogue](#)
- [Letters](#)
- [Columnists](#)
- [Corrections](#)

PARTICIPATE

Table Talk

[Spirited
Salon forums]

[What has Wal-Mart done to your town?](#)

[What's at the intersection of religion and public life?](#)

- [Posts of the week](#)

The Well

[Pioneering members-only discussions]

[What's a hamster doing up my sleeve?](#)



Wearing a hat with supporting messages from friends, Cindy Sheehan of Vacaville, Calif., chats with a reporter in Crawford, Texas, on Wednesday.

Smearing Cindy Sheehan

Conservatives are attacking her as a dupe of the left who's exploiting her dead son. Some relatives have piled on too. But the grieving mother says her well-timed Crawford visit is "my idea, my mission, my vision."

By Farhad Manjoo



Aug. 13, 2005 | August was supposed to have been a quiet month for George W. Bush. Last year, the president cut short his customary weeklong vacation in order to campaign for reelection, so this year, unencumbered, he'd planned to spend more than a month in the sweltering heat of his ranch in Crawford, Texas. Then, last week, Cindy Sheehan, a grieving Northern California woman whose son was killed in Baghdad, Iraq in April 2004, showed up on Bush's vacation doorstep. She refuses to leave until Bush meets her in person. Nothing's been quiet in Crawford ever since.

Sound Off

- [Letter to the Editor](#)
- [Salon Blogs](#)

SALON PREMIUM

- [Join today](#)
- [Gift memberships](#)
- [Upgrade your membership](#)
- [Premium help](#)
- [Mobile edition](#)
- [Refer a Friend](#)
- [Institutional Subs](#)

SALON SERVICES

- [Personals](#)
- [Newsletter](#)
- [Unsubscribe](#)
- [Salon's RSS Feeds](#)
- [Salon Publications](#)
- [Salon Store](#)

CONTACT SALON

- [Customer Service](#)
- [About Salon](#)
- [Advertise in Salon](#)
- [Investor Relations](#)

It wouldn't be quite right to say that Sheehan's stand has vaulted the war back to the forefront of the national consciousness. Fresh horrors in Iraq daily are enough for that. But Sheehan is clearly forcing Bush to personally and publicly confront the consequences of his choices. And she's forcing reporters to pay attention, too. On Thursday, Bush was asked to respond to Sheehan's protest. "I sympathize with Mrs. Sheehan," Bush said. "She feels strongly about her position. She has every right in the world to say what she believes. This is America." But Bush also said that he disagrees with those Americans, like Sheehan, who want U.S. troops to pull out from Iraq. And he didn't suggest he'd be meeting with Sheehan anytime soon, either.

Sheehan insists that she's prepared to wait until Bush changes his mind. Sheehan, a founder of [Gold Star Families for Peace](#), an antiwar group composed of families of troops killed in Iraq, has always been vocal in her opposition to the war. She participated in many rallies during the election last year, and even starred in an anti-Bush ad for [MoveOn.org](#). She says that her late son Casey, a 24-year-old Army specialist who was killed in a rocket attack just two weeks after getting to the battlefield, felt the same way. And just as Casey went to Iraq to do his duty, Cindy Sheehan says she's got to take a stand in Crawford to do hers.

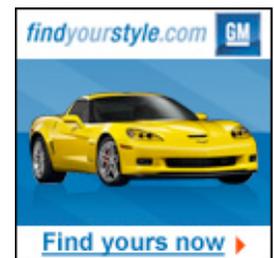
As a matter of politics, Sheehan's stand is brilliant. Bush's chief political asset is his embrace of the troops and their families; the longer he refuses to meet with Sheehan, the more unconcerned -- and even callous -- Bush risks looking to the public. And by providing a genuine news event in the hot, sleepy confines of Crawford, she's gotten far more media attention than she garnered as the star of a MoveOn ad. She's been profiled in dozens of papers and hailed in a New York Times editorial. Consequently, she's also been smeared by the right. Pundits have pointed out Sheehan's apparent inconsistencies -- in the past, she said that she believed Bush cares about the troops who've died, and she spoke warmly of a brief visit with the president after Casey's death that she now recalls as insincere and impersonal. All this week Matt Drudge has hammered on Sheehan, publicizing criticism by some of her family members, who say they support Bush and the war. On the Tuesday edition of his show, Fox host Bill O'Reilly said Sheehan's behavior "borders on treasonous."

Conservatives have assailed Sheehan for her association with Michael Moore (she has been [blogging](#) on Moore's Web site) and the antiwar group Code Pink. Some depict her as the left's dupe, but Sheehan insists she came up with the idea for the Crawford visit on her own. In a telephone conversation with Salon on Friday afternoon, Sheehan explained her inconsistencies and defended her association with Moore and others on the left. Just before the call, Bush's motorcade sped by "Camp Casey," which is what Sheehan calls the protest stand she's erected in her son's memory. The cars didn't even slow down.

So the president just drove by you a few minutes ago?

Well, I think he did, but I didn't see him. A bunch of trucks drove by really fast and there were people in them. I didn't see if any of them was the president, though. Chances are he was in the motorcade.

Site Pass Presented by



Digital music all
over your house

But needless to say he didn't make any signal, meet with you or anything like that?

No. They sped by really fast. And I don't want him to get out and shake my hand and just say, you know, whatever whatever. That's not the kind of meeting I want.

What kind of meeting do you want?

I want the kind of meeting that holds him accountable for the words he's actually said.

Well, do you want to debate with him? What do you mean by that?

What I want to ask is, "What noble cause did my son die for?" And if he says that it was to get rid of Saddam or liberate the Iraqi people, I'm not going to buy it. I want him to know that 62 million Americans oppose the war in Iraq. [During the interview, Sheehan used the number 62 million as well as 62 percent to refer to the strength of the opposition to the war. [Recent polls](#) show that majorities of Americans -- in some surveys more than 60 percent -- disapprove of the way the president is handling the situation in Iraq.]

Yesterday at a press conference the president acknowledged that many people want us to pull the troops from Iraq, and he specifically referred to you. What's your response to what he said?

Why didn't he say what Casey died for? And I've also asked them to quit using my son's name in vain, to stop saying that we have to continue the mission in Iraq to honor the sacrifice of the fallen heroes.

So as far as you're concerned he didn't address your concerns yesterday, and you're still looking for a meeting with him? Will you stay out there until he meets with you?

Yes. I'm going to be out here for the whole month of August unless he meets with me. I think I've said that a billion times.

But, realistically, do you think he's going to meet with you?

Well, I'd say that nothing is impossible. But, you know, probably not.

 **Next page | [Bush walked in and said, "So who are we honorin' here?"](#)**

1, [2](#)

Photograph: AP Photo/Tony Gutierrez



[Salon](#) | [Search](#) | [About Salon](#) | [Table Talk](#) | [Advertise in Salon](#) | [Investor Relations](#) | [Premium log in](#)

[News & Politics](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Tech & Business](#) | [Arts & Entertainment](#)
[Indie film](#) | [Books](#) | [Life](#) | [Comics](#) | [Audio](#) | [Dialogue](#)
[Letters](#) | [Columnists](#) | [Salon Gear](#)

Reproduction of material from any Salon pages without written permission is strictly prohibited
Copyright 2005 Salon.com

Salon Media Group, Inc.
101 Spear Street, Suite 203
San Francisco, CA 94105
Telephone 415 645-9200 | Fax 415 645-9204
[E-mail](#) | [Help](#) | [Salon.com Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#)