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Thursday, April 2, 2009

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Hemphill: The Obama inheritance (as told by B. Obama)

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By Alan Hemphill
April 1, 2009

“There I was walking down the streets of Chicago, going to a community organizer meeting, when my cell phone rang.

“You know how it is when you got that inheritance from your Uncle Willie? Well, mine was that call from the attorney representing my Uncle Sam!

“It was one of those ‘Shazam!’ moments!

“The attorney for Uncle Sam said that my uncle had willed me the White House! It comes with a huge private jet, lots of money and perks and even bodyguards!

“But it also came with two wars, a recession, and I would have to hire my own staff from a bunch of sleazy people I know. I knew all about the recession and the wars — I am, after all, a U.S. Senator and a Harvard law graduate, so none of this came as a shock. Still, the White House! Camp David! Adoring crowds! A life of luxury guaranteed. What’s a little recession and war? I don’t have to participate in either, and I can blame the previous owner of the White House for both!

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“Sweet! Didn’t take much convincing — no, sir.

“Moved right in! Took my kids from private schools in Chicago to private schools in Washington.

“Love it!”

Yes, my friends, the two wars and the recession are accoutrements of the White House, as much as a presidential limousine, the Secret Service and a White House chef. President Obama knew about them and he knew about the two wars and a recession.

It was not “constructive knowledge” either — it was actual knowledge. As a member of the U.S. Senate, he had voted on providing funds for both the troops and the recession.

That means Senator Obama had a senatorial staff working to keep him informed on a daily basis of the facts at a level that few of the people who elected him to office had available to them.

So “inherited” is not a fair term for him to use, except in the sense that he “inherited” a nation of 300 million people, 50 states, infrastructure, crime and culture. It was all known to him, the good and the bad. He also “inherited” a successful Iraq situation — the Bush surge worked so well, President Obama is trying it in Afghanistan.

No president gets a four-year public-paid vacation. Every president “inherits” all the good and the bad of a nation, and accepts it without reservation. After all of the work to arrive in the White House, it just appears unseemly to complain about the problems they “inherit.”

The question is: What has the president done with the problems he has? Certainly the appointments have been spotty, with Clinton on the plus side and Geithner on the down side. More importantly, Geithner has zero assistants on his team of the 17 allotted to him, and Geithner does not seem to be recruiting any help. The president has had more than his share of problems with recruiting his cabinet.

The grade is “C-.”

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