

RICK REINHARD

"I'VE GOT a better family than I deserve," Reed says. In the high pressure world of Washington, D.C., protecting family time for Julia, 4, and Nelson, 2, requires planning and commitment. Reed's wife, Bonnie LePard (right), is an environmental lawyer.

Bruce Reed is 'an original thinker,' says President Clinton. That's why he sits



Above the

BY HEIDI ERNST

It's 7:30 a.m., and Bruce Reed is sitting in the White House waiting for the daily chiefs-of-staff meeting to begin. But there's some place he'd rather be. "Six to 8 in the morning was the most precious time with the kids," says Reed, 37, appointed last December as head of the Domestic Policy Council, a cabinet-level position in the Clinton administration.

Since his appointment, he leaves his Washington, D.C., house before 2-year-old Nelson and 4-year-old Julia are out of bed. But he tries hard to get home to play with them at night and avoids weekend work. This arrangement—in an administration

Oval Office

renowned for workaholics—is made possible by the vibrating pager Reed wears.

He was paged once during the sermon at his church, Augustana Lutheran, Washington, D.C., by former presidential adviser George Stephanopoulos. “It’s usually bad news if it happens on a Sunday,” Reed says.

As we speak in his home, Reed’s pager goes off again. It’s 9 p.m. He’s just arrived home and already the White House chief of staff is calling. Reed holds Julia in one arm and the telephone in the other. That call completed, Reed picks up Nelson, and the two cherubic kids take turns kissing their dad’s cheek at least 30 times. “They’re crazy about him,” says Reed’s wife, Bonnie LePard, an environmental lawyer.

Reed’s journey to this high pressure balancing act started early. The son of activist parents—Dad’s an environmental lawyer and Mom’s a 12-year Idaho senate veteran—Reed helped on local and state campaigns in Idaho from age 8. At 13 he managed the campaign of a would-be state legislator. He also quickly grew weary of “defending the old [Democratic Party’s] approaches that I had nothing to do with.”

It was the start of a political life that is guided by deep contemplation. You sense it in his careful speech and when you read the State of the Union addresses and others he helped draft.

Reed’s Washington career began 11 years ago when he became Sen. Al Gore’s chief speechwriter, debuting with an address about the future of the Democratic Party after Ronald Reagan’s landslide victory. “I spent a good part of the decade writing speeches about that,” Reed says. “But I got tired of writing speeches without having anything to write about.”

Reed moved on to become policy director of the Democratic Leadership Council, where he coined the term “new Democrat.” This indicated “a different approach to government,” he

DAILY MEETINGS with President Clinton to discuss domestic policy are typical for Bruce Reed (standing). “To hold your head high in politics,” Reed says, “you have to go into it knowing exactly what you think is right. Otherwise, you get consumed by daily compromises all around you.”

says. “The goals are mostly the same, but we wanted to get there by enabling businesses or civic groups to solve problems instead of government.”

Bill Clinton, then governor of Arkansas and chairman of the DLC, took Reed to Little Rock to help draft the 1991 announcement of his presidential candidacy.

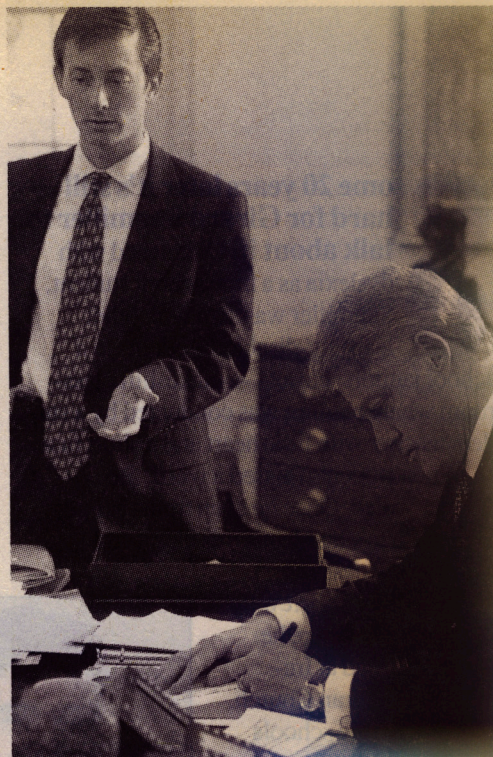
To the White House

“Bruce is an original thinker,” Clinton said when he promoted Reed to his cabinet. “[He] long ago rejected the easy answers from any part of the political spectrum, and no one has a greater impact on the thinking of the administration or the president.”

Two years ago Clinton asked him to fashion the agenda for his second term. Still, most people have never heard of Reed. During Clinton’s first term, he served as the assistant to the president for policy planning, shaping domestic policy from the Old Executive Office Building next to the White House.

Now Reed makes his impact on the president’s thinking from his office in the West Wing, right above the Oval Office. Reed hung two pieces of paper behind his desk there as a reminder of what is most important—a painting by Julia and a page from the Jan. 20, 1993, *Washington Post* with the administration’s promises for its first term.

One pledge was to “end welfare as we know it”—a catch phrase that appeared in a speech Reed penned before the election in 1992. Welfare reform has occupied much of his time during



WHITE HOUSE PHOTO

the past four years. It’s also an issue that provokes intense anger from both ends of the political spectrum.

Reed is especially aware of aspects of the welfare bill that affect children. “I came to the conclusion that more children would be hurt by carrying on the current system, and we should start something new,” he says, “even though we can’t be certain of the new experiment’s success.”

Faith & family

Reed’s decisions affect the lives of many Americans every day, something he doesn’t take lightly. “To hold your head high in politics you have to go into it knowing exactly what you believe and think is right,” Reed says. “Otherwise, you get consumed by daily compromises all around you.”

The Reed-LePard family is active in the ministries of Augustana, joining in 1993 because of its rich worship tradition. “I was raised in a devout Lutheran home, and it gave me a sense of love, security and happiness. I want my kids to feel that,” LePard says.

Reed credits his family with keeping him grounded and calm. “I’m a lucky guy,” he says. “I’ve got a better job than I deserve, a better family than I deserve.” **W**