

Begging no pardon

by The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

"Truth matters."

That's what prosecutor Patrick Fitzgerald said, arguing Tuesday for a stiff sentence for I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, the vice president's former chief of staff. Yes, it does. Libby deserves every second of the 2 1/2 years in prison to which he was sentenced in the case involving his role in leaking the identity of covert CIA operative Valerie Plame. He lied to a grand jury and to FBI agents. What's unclear, however, is whether the public ever will get the complete truth in the matter.

As the successful conviction of Libby essentially demonstrated, there was a concerted effort to discredit Plame's husband, Joseph Wilson. To those involved, Plame and her career were apparently just collateral damage.

Wilson was the former ambassador who went public in refuting administration claims that Iraq had sought yellowcake uranium to build a nuclear weapon. Libby could not have worked alone in this discrediting effort. But he is the only one charged in the three-year investigation on who leaked Plame's name to reporters. On Tuesday, Fitzgerald said Libby's obstruction may have helped shield another administration official.

Who? Yes, the truth matters. For that and other reasons, the president should resist any temptation to pardon Libby.

Reprinted from The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.

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