

The Reliable Source

By Ann Gerhart and Annie Groer

Authentically Atwater

"Fixin' to Die: A Visit to the Mind of Lee Atwater" opens tonight at the Church Street Theater. The brilliant, take-no-prisoners Republican strategist, associated with the notorious 1988 Willie Horton ads, died of brain cancer in 1991 at age 40. This one-man show, written by Robert Myers and starring L.A. actor Bruce McIntosh, uses Atwater's own words: some vicious, some funny, showing a zeal to do anything to win. A slew of Democrats are expected tonight: former White House press secretary Dee Dee Myers, political consultants David Doak and Bill Carriack and White House heavies Marcia Hale and Susan Brophy. At least one Republican, former GOP national chairman Frank Fahrenkopf, also RSVP'd. The show was rejected by the University of South Carolina's dean of theater, who "considered it a Hollywood liberal demonization" of a hometown boy, producer Beegie Truesdale told the Source yesterday.

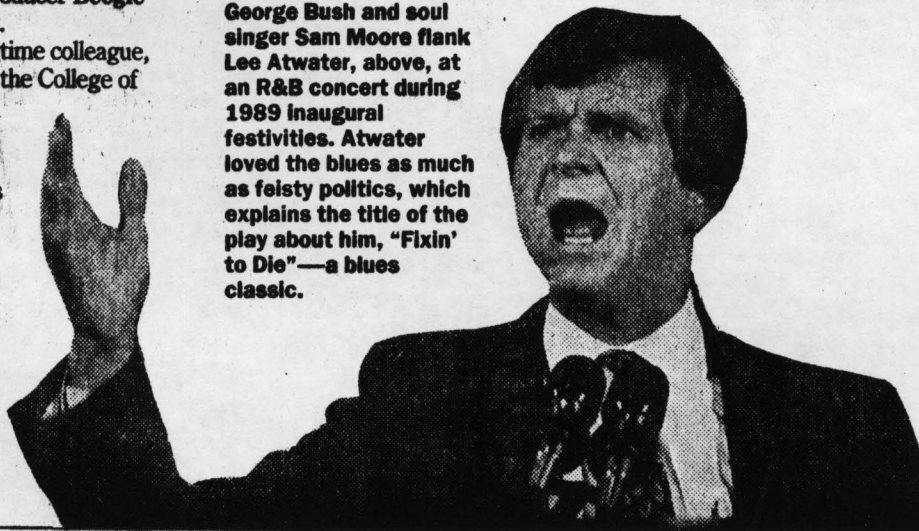
But Charlie Black, Atwater's longtime colleague, said several pals who saw the play at the College of Charleston "thought it was pretty authentic. It didn't show Lee in a bad light."

Atwater protege Ed Rogers wants six tix for the show, which runs through Nov. 5. "Without knowing anything of its substance, I know Lee would definitely love the notion of some weirdo play out there about him." And Atwater's widow, Sally, says she may come by next week because her eldest daughter, Sara, 15, "really wants to see it. I hope it'll be good for kids."



BY RICH LIPSG—THE WASHINGTON POST

George Bush and soul singer Sam Moore flank Lee Atwater, above, at an R&B concert during 1989 Inaugural festivities. Atwater loved the blues as much as feisty politics, which explains the title of the play about him, "Fixin' to Die"—a blues classic.



NOW YOU KNOW ...

■ Rep. Bob Dornan (R-Calif.) didn't want to be the warm-up act for radio host Alan Keyes, a terrific speaker, at the American Conservative Union dinner Tuesday night. No way, no how. Gotta elbow past your opponents when the presidential field's so cluttered. So at the last possible moment, as he was scheduled to take the dais, Dornan approached ACU Chairman David Keene and insisted: "I've got to go to the bathroom right now. It can't wait." Keene rolled his eyes, but let Dornan speak last.

■ Folks at the Make-a-Wish foundation are none too pleased to be dragged into "publicly challenging government leaders to promote commercial enterprises," said a press release, but they'll take the money anyway. A movie company yesterday promised in newspaper ads it would donate \$100,000 to the charity if President Clinton and Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.) made nice together at a screening of "Three Wishes," a PG angel flick opening today.

