

President George Herbert Walker Bush

Eulogy & Media Tribute Collection

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Table of Contents (*Location / Publication, Author, Date*)

Washington National Cathedral, George W. Bush, 12.05.2018	1
Washington National Cathedral, Jon Meacham, 12.05.2018.....	6
Washington National Cathedral, Brian Mulroney, 12.05.2018	10
Washington National Cathedral, Alan Simpson, 12.05.2018	14
St. Martin’s Episcopal Church (Houston, TX), James A. Baker III, 12.06.2018	18
St. Martin’s Episcopal Church (Houston, TX), George P. Bush, 12.06.2018	22
The Washington Post, Jeb Bush & James A. Baker III, 12.04.2018	25
The New York Times, Frank Bruni, 12.01.2018	28
Council on Foreign Relations, Richard N. Haass, 12.01.2018	31
Dallas Morning News, Editorial Staff, 12.01.2018	34
The Washington Post, Bill Clinton, 12.01.2018.....	37
The Globe and Mail, David Shribman, 12.01.2018.....	40
The Inquirer, Dava Guerin, 12.01.2018.....	43
The Guardian, John S. Gardner, 12.02.2018.....	46
The Hill, Richard Benedetto, 12.01.2018	48
The Wall Street Journal, Dan Quayle, 12.01.2018	51
The New York Times, Peter Baker, 12.01.2018.....	54
TIME, Jon Meacham, 12.02.2018	58
The Washington Post, John H. Sununu, 12.02.2018	62
Star Tribune, Judy Keen, 12.01.2018	65
City Journal (the Manhattan Institute), Tevi Troy, 12.01.2018.....	68
The Chronicle of Higher Education, Chronicle Staff, 12.02.2018	70
Fox News, Dr. Marc Siegel, 12.02.2018.....	72
The Washington Post, Kristin C. Taylor, 12.01.2018.....	74
The New York Times, Maureen Dowd, 12.02.2018.....	79
The Washington Post, Thomas Boswell, 12.01.2018.....	89
CNN, Michelle Nunn, 12.02.2018	93
CNN, Aaron D. Miller, 12.02.2018	96
The San Francisco Chronicle, Rita Beamish, 12.02.2018	99
Fox News, Robert Gearty, 12.03.2018	102
Fox News, Raymond Siller, 12.03.2018.....	104

People, Susan Keating, 12.02.2018	108
The Washington Post, Felicia Sonmez & Paige Cunningham, 12.02.2018.....	111
Today, Eun Kyung Kim, 12.03.2018.....	115
The Philadelphia Citizen, Joseph Torsella, 12.04.2018.....	117
Denver Post, Walker Stapleton, 12.03.2018.....	121
Foundation for Defense of Democracies, John Hannah, 12.02.2018	123
The Eagle, Charles F. Hermann.....	126
Fox News, Janet Cawley, 12.03.2018.....	128
The Detroit News, Tim McBride, 12.02.2018	130
The Daily Beast, Tim McBride, 06.12.2009 (REPRINT)	132
Golf Digest, Jim Nantz, 12.01.2018	135
The Hill, Michael Burke, 12.02.2018	137
Fox News, Kaitlyn Schallhorn, 12.04.2018.....	138
New York Post, Peter Robinson, 12.03.2018	139
Atlantic Council, Damon Wilson, 12.02.2018.....	142
Atlantic Council, Daniel Fried, 12.02.2018.....	145
Atlantic Council, Frederick Kempe, 12.04.2018	148
ABC News, Mark K. Updegrove.....	151
Dallas Morning News, Editorial, 12.05.2018	153
Dallas Morning News, Todd Gillman and Tom Benning, 12.06.2018.....	155
Texas Monthly, Dave Montgomery, 12.10.2018.....	163
The New York Times, Dana Carvey, 12.07.2018.....	166

Remarks by President George W. Bush at the State Funeral of President George Herbert Walker Bush

Washington National Cathedral, George W. Bush, 12.05.2018

Distinguished Guests, including our Presidents and First Ladies, government officials, foreign dignitaries, and friends: Jeb, Neil, Marvin, Doro, and I, and our families, thank you all for being here.

I once heard it said of man that “The idea is to die young as late as possible.”

At age 85, a favorite pastime of George H. W. Bush was firing up his boat, the Fidelity, and opening up the three-300 horsepower engines to fly – joyfully fly – across the Atlantic, with Secret Service boats straining to keep up.

At 90, George H. W. Bush parachuted out of an aircraft and landed on the grounds of St. Ann’s by the Sea in Kennebunkport, Maine – the church where his mom was married and where he’d worshipped often. Mother liked to say he chose the location just in case the chute didn’t open.

In his 90’s, he took great delight when his closest pal, James A. Baker, smuggled a bottle of Grey Goose vodka into his hospital room. Apparently, it paired well with the steak Baker had delivered from Morton’s.

To his very last days, Dad’s life was instructive. As he aged, he taught us how to grow old with dignity, humor, and kindness – and, when the Good Lord finally called, how to meet Him with courage and with joy in the promise of what lies ahead.

One reason Dad knew how to die young is that he almost did it – twice. When he was a teenager, a staph infection nearly took his life. A few years later he was alone in the Pacific on a life raft, praying that his rescuers would find him before the enemy did.

God answered those prayers. It turned out He had other plans for George H.W. Bush. For Dad’s

part, I think those brushes with death made him cherish the gift of life. And he vowed to live every day to the fullest.

Dad was always busy – a man in constant motion – but never too busy to share his love of life with those around him. He taught us to love the outdoors. He loved watching dogs flush a covey. He loved landing the elusive striper. And once confined to a wheelchair, he seemed happiest sitting in his favorite perch on the back porch at Walker’s Point contemplating the majesty of the Atlantic. The horizons he saw were bright and hopeful. He was a genuinely optimistic man. And that optimism guided his children and made each of us believe that anything was possible.

He continually broadened his horizons with daring decisions. He was a patriot. After high school, he put college on hold and became a Navy fighter pilot as World War II broke out. Like many of his generation, he never talked about his service until his time as a public figure forced his hand. We learned of the attack on Chichi Jima, the mission completed, the shoot-down. We learned of the death of his crewmates, whom he thought about throughout his entire life. And we learned of his rescue.

And then, another audacious decision; he moved his young family from the comforts of the East Coast to Odessa, Texas. He and mom adjusted to their arid surroundings quickly. He was a tolerant man. After all, he was kind and neighborly to the women with whom he, mom and I shared a bathroom in our small duplex – even after he learned their profession – ladies of the night.

Dad could relate to people from all walks of life. He was an empathetic man. He valued character over pedigree. And he was no cynic. He looked for the good in each person – and usually found it.

Dad taught us that public service is noble and necessary; that one can serve with integrity and hold true to the important values, like faith and family. He strongly believed that it was important

to give back to the community and country in which one lived. He recognized that serving others enriched the giver's soul. To us, his was the brightest of a thousand points of light.

In victory, he shared credit. When he lost, he shouldered the blame. He accepted that failure is part of living a full life, but taught us never to be defined by failure. He showed us how setbacks can strengthen.

None of his disappointments could compare with one of life's greatest tragedies, the loss of a young child. Jeb and I were too young to remember the pain and agony he and mom felt when our three-year-old sister died. We only learned later that Dad, a man of quiet faith, prayed for her daily. He was sustained by the love of the Almighty and the real and enduring love of our mom. Dad always believed that one day he would hug his precious Robin again.

He loved to laugh, especially at himself. He could tease and needle, but never out of malice. He placed great value on a good joke. That's why he chose Simpson to speak. On email, he had a circle of friends with whom he shared or received the latest jokes. His grading system for the quality of the joke was classic George Bush. The rare 7s and 8s were considered huge winners – most of them off-color.

George Bush knew how to be a true and loyal friend. He honored and nurtured his many friendships with his generous and giving soul. There exist thousands of handwritten notes encouraging, or sympathizing, or thanking his friends and acquaintances.

He had an enormous capacity to give of himself. Many a person would tell you that dad became a mentor and a father figure in their life. He listened and he consoled. He was their friend. I think of Don Rhodes, Taylor Blanton, Jim Nantz, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and perhaps the unlikeliest of all, the man who defeated him, Bill Clinton. My siblings and I refer to the guys in this group as “brothers from other mothers.”

He taught us that a day was not meant to be wasted. He played golf at a legendary pace. I always

wondered why he insisted on speed golf. He was a good golfer.

Well, here's my conclusion: he played fast so that he could move on to the next event, to enjoy the rest of the day, to expend his enormous energy, to live it all. He was born with just two settings: full throttle, then sleep.

He taught us what it means to be a wonderful father, grandfather, and great grand-father. He was firm in his principles and supportive as we began to seek our own ways. He encouraged and comforted, but never steered. We tested his patience – I know I did – but he always responded with the great gift of unconditional love.

Last Friday, when I was told he had minutes to live, I called him. The guy who answered the phone said, "I think he can hear you, but hasn't said anything most of the day. I said, "Dad, I love you, and you've been a wonderful father." And the last words he would ever say on earth were, "I love you, too."

To us, he was close to perfect. But, not totally perfect. His short game was lousy. He wasn't exactly Fred Astaire on the dance floor. The man couldn't stomach vegetables, especially broccoli. And by the way, he passed these genetic defects along to us.

Finally, every day of his 73 years of marriage, Dad taught us all what it means to be a great husband. He married his sweetheart. He adored her. He laughed and cried with her. He was dedicated to her totally.

In his old age, dad enjoyed watching police show reruns, volume on high, all the while holding mom's hand. After mom died, Dad was strong, but all he really wanted to do was to hold mom's hand, again.

Of course, Dad taught me another special lesson. He showed me what it means to be a President who serves with integrity, leads with courage, and acts with love in his heart for the citizens of

our country. When the history books are written, they will say that George H.W. Bush was a great President of the United States – a diplomat of unmatched skill, a Commander in Chief of formidable accomplishment, and a gentleman who executed the duties of his office with dignity and honor.

In his Inaugural Address, the 41st President of the United States said this: “We cannot hope only to leave our children a bigger car, a bigger bank account. We must hope to give them a sense of what it means to be a loyal friend, a loving parent, a citizen who leaves his home, his neighborhood and town better than he found it. What do we want the men and women who work with us to say when we are no longer there? That we were more driven to succeed than anyone around us? Or that we stopped to ask if a sick child had gotten better, and stayed a moment there to trade a word of friendship?”

Well, Dad – we’re going remember you for exactly that and so much more.

And we’re going to miss you. Your decency, sincerity, and kind soul will stay with us forever. So, through our tears, let us see the blessings of knowing and loving you – a great and noble man, and the best father a son or daughter could have.

And in our grief, let us smile knowing that Dad is hugging Robin and holding mom’s hand again.

Remarks by Jon Meacham at the State Funeral of President George Herbert Walker Bush

Washington National Cathedral, Jon Meacham, 12.05.2018

The story was almost over even before it had fully begun. Shortly after dawn on Saturday, September 2, 1944, Lieutenant Junior Grade George Herbert Walker Bush joined by two crewmates took off from the USS San Jacinto to attack a radio tower on Chichijima. As they approached the target, the air was heavy with flack. The plane was hit. Smoke filled the cockpit. Flames raced across the wings. "My God," Lieutenant Bush thought, "This thing's going to go down." Yet he kept the plane in its 35-degree dive, dropped his bombs, and then roared off out to sea telling his crewmates to hit the silk.

Following protocol, Lieutenant Bush turned the plane so they could bail out. Only then did Bush parachute from the cockpit. The wind propelled him backward and he gashed his head on the tail of the plane as he flew through the sky. He plunged deep into the ocean, bobbed to the surface, and flopped onto a tiny raft. His head bleeding, his eyes burning, his mouth and throat raw from saltwater, the future 41st President of the United States was alone. Sensing that his men had not made it, he was overcome. He felt the weight of responsibility as a nearly physical burden and he wept.

Then, at four minutes shy of noon, a submarine emerged to rescue the downed pilot. George Herbert Walker Bush was safe. The story, his story and ours, would go on by God's grace. Through the ensuing decades, President Bush would frequently ask, nearly daily, he'd ask himself why me? Why was I spared? And in a sense, the rest of his life was a perennial effort to prove himself worthy of his salvation on that distant morning.

To him, his life was no longer his own. There were always more missions to undertake more lives to touch, and more love to give. And what a headlong grace he made of it all. He never slowed down. On the primary campaign trail in New Hampshire once, he grabbed the hand of a department store mannequin asking for votes.

When he realized his mistake, he said, "Never know. Got to ask." You can hear the voice, can't you? As Dana Carvey said, the key to a Bush 41 impersonation is Mr. Rogers trying to be John Wayne.

George Herbert Walker Bush was America's last great soldier statesman, a 20th-century founding father. He governed with virtues that most closely resembled those of Washington and of Adams, of TR and of FDR, of Truman and Eisenhower, of men who believed in causes larger than themselves. Six foot two, handsome, dominant in person, President Bush spoke with those big strong hands making fists to underscore points.

A master of what Franklin Roosevelt called the science of human relationships, he believed that to whom much is given, much is expected. And because life gave him so much, he gave back again and again and again. He stood in the breach in the Cold War against totalitarianism. He stood in the breach in Washington against unthinking partisanship. He stood in the breach against tyranny and discrimination and on his watch a wall fell in Berlin, a dictator's aggression did not stand, and doors across America opened to those with disabilities.

And in his personal life, he stood in the breach against heartbreak and hurt, always offering an outstretched hand, a warm word, a sympathetic tear. If you were down, he would rush to lift you up and if you were soaring, he would rush to savor your success. Strong and gracious, comforting and charming, loving and loyal, he was our shield in dangers hour.

Now, of course there was ambition too. Loads of that. To serve, he had to succeed, to preside he had to prevail. Politics, he once admitted, isn't a pure undertaking, not if you want to win it's not. An imperfect man, he left us a more perfect union. It must be said that for a keenly intelligent statesman of stirring almost unparalleled private eloquence, public speaking was not exactly a strong suit. "Fluency in English," President Bush once remarked, "Is something that I'm often not accused of." Looking ahead to the '88 election, he observed, "Inarguably it's no exaggeration to say that the undecideds could go one way or the other."

And late in his presidency, he allowed that, "We're enjoying sluggish times, but we're not enjoying them very much."

His tongue may have run amok at moments, but his heart was steadfast. His life code, as he said, was tell the truth, don't blame people. Be strong, do your best, try hard, forgive, stay the course. And that was and is the most American of creeds. Abraham Lincoln's Better Angels of Our Nature and George H.W. Bush's Thousand Points of Light are companion verses in America's national hymn, for Lincoln and Bush both called on us to choose the right over the convenient, to hope rather than to fear, and to heed not our worst impulses, but our best instincts.

In this work, he had the most wonderful of allies in Barbara Pierce Bush, his wife of 73 years. He called her Barb, the silver fox, and when the situation warranted, the enforcer. He was the only boy she ever kissed. Her children, Mrs. Bush liked to say, always wanted to throw up when they heard that. In a letter to Barbara during the war, young George H.W. Bush had written, "I love you, precious, with all my heart and to know that you love me means my life. How lucky our children will be to have a mother like you." And as they will tell you, they surely were.

As Vice President, Bush once visited a children's leukemia ward in Krakow. 35 years before, he and Barbara had lost a daughter, Robin, to the disease. In Krakow, a small boy he wanted to greet the American vice president. Learning that the child was sick with the cancer that had taken Robin, Bush began to cry. To his diary later that day, the vice president said this. "My eyes flooded with tears and behind me was a bank of television cameras and I thought I can't turn around. I can't dissolve because of personal tragedy in the face of the nurses that give of themselves every day. So I stood there looking at this little guy tears running down my cheek hoping he wouldn't see. But if he did, hoping he'd feel that I loved him."

That was the real George H.W. Bush, a loving man with a big, vibrant, all-enveloping heart. And so we ask as we commend his soul to God, and has he did, why him? Why was he spared? The workings of Providence are mysterious but this much is clear, that George Herbert Walker Bush, who survived that fiery fall into the waters of the Pacific three quarters of a century ago, made our lives and the lives of nations freer, better, warmer, and nobler. That was his mission. That

was his heartbeat. And if we listen closely enough, we can hear that heartbeat even now, for it's the heartbeat of a lion, a lion who not only led us, but who loved us. That's why him. That's why he was spared.

Remarks by Former Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney at the State Funeral of President George Herbert Walker Bush

Washington National Cathedral, Brian Mulroney, 12.05.2018

Do you remember where you were the summer you left your teenage years behind and turned 20? Well, I was working as a laborer in my hometown in Northern Quebec trying to make enough money to get back into law school. It was a tough job, but I was safe and secure and had the added benefit of my mother's home cooking every night.

On September 2nd, 1944, as we have just heard so eloquently from Jon [Meacham], 20-year-old Lieutenant George Bush was preparing to attack Japanese war installations in the Pacific. He was part of a courageous generation of young Americans who led the charge against overwhelming odds in the historic and bloody battle for supremacy in the Pacific against the colossal military might of Imperial Japan. That's what George Bush did the summer he turned 20.

Many men of differing talents and skills have served as president, and many more will do so as the decades unfold, bringing new strength and glory to these United States of America. And 50 or 100 years from now, as historians review the accomplishments and the context of all who have served as president, I believe it will be said that in the life of this country, the United States, which is, in my judgment, the greatest democratic republic that God has ever placed on the face of this earth, I believe it will be said that no occupant of the Oval Office was more courageous, more principled, and more honorable than George Herbert Walker Bush.

George Bush was a man of high accomplishment, but he also had a delightful sense of humor and was a lot of fun. At his first NATO meeting in Brussels as the new American president, he sat opposite me, actually, that day. George was taking copious notes as the heads of government spoke. We were all limited in time. But, you know, it's very flattering to have the president of the United States take notes as you speak, and even someone as modest as me throw in a few more adjectives here and there to extend the pleasure of the experience.

After President Mitterrand, Prime Minister Thatcher, and Chancellor Kohl had spoken, it was the turn of the prime minister of Iceland who, as President Bush continued to write, went on and on and on and on, ending only when the secretary general of NATO firmly decreed a coffee break. George put down his pen, walked over to me and said, "Brian, I've just learned the fundamental principle of international affairs." I said, "What's that, George?" He said, "The smaller the country, the longer the speech."

In the second year of the Bush presidency, responding to implacable pressures from the Reagan and Bush administrations, the Soviet Union imploded. This was, in my judgment, the most epic event, political event, of the 20th century. An ominous situation that could have become extremely menacing to world security was instead deftly challenged by the leadership of President Bush into the broad and powerful currents of freedom, providing the Russian people with the opportunity to build an embryonic democracy in a country that had been ruled by tsars and tyrants for over a thousand years.

And then as the Berlin Wall collapsed soon thereafter and calls for freedom cascaded across Central and Eastern Europe, leaving dictators and dogma in the trashcan of history, no challenge, no challenge assumed greater importance for Western solidarity than the unification of Germany within an unswerving NATO. But old fears in Western Europe and unrelenting hostility by the military establishment in the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact rendered this initiative among the most complex and sensitive ever undertaken. One serious misstep and this entire process could have been compromised, perhaps irretrievably.

There is obviously no more knowledgeable or competent judge of what really happened at this most vital juncture of the 20th century than Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany. In a speech to a parliamentary commission of the Bundestag, Chancellor Kohl said categorically that this historic initiative of German reunification could never, ever have succeeded without the brilliant leadership of President Bush. Much has been written about the first Gulf War. Simply put, the coalition of 29 disparate nations assembled under the aegis of the United Nations, including for the first time many influential Arab countries, and led by the United States will rank with the most spectacular and successful international initiatives ever undertaken in modern history.

Designed to punish an aggressor, defend the cause of freedom, and ensure order in a region that had seen too much of the opposite for far too long, this was President Bush's initiative from beginning to end.

President Bush was also responsible for the North American Free Trade Agreement, recently modernized and improved by new administrations, which created the largest and richest free trade area in the history of the world, while also signing into law the Americans with Disabilities Act, which transformed the lives of millions and millions of Americans forever. President Bush's decision to go forward with strong environmental legislation, including the Clean Air Act that resulted in the acid rain accord with Canada, is a splendid gift to future generations of Americans and Canadians to savor in the air they breathe and the water they drink, in the forests they enjoy and the lakes, rivers, and streams they cherish.

There's a word for this. It's called leadership. And let me tell you that when George Bush was president of the United States of America, every single head of government in the world knew that they were dealing with a gentleman, a genuine leader, one who was distinguished, resolute, and brave.

I don't keep a diary, but occasionally I write private notes after important personal or professional events. One occurred at Walker's Point in Kennebunkport, Maine on September 2nd, 2001. Mila and I had been spending our traditional Labor Day weekend with George and Barbara. And towards the end, he and I had a long private conversation. My notes capture the moment.

I told George how I thought his mood had shifted over the last eight years, from a series of frustrations and moments of despondency in 1993 to the high enthusiasm that I felt at the Houston launch of the Presidential Library and George W's election as governor in November of that year, to the delight following Jeb's election in 1998, followed by their great pride and pleasure with George W's election to the presidency and, perhaps most importantly, to the serenity we found today in both Barbara and George. They are truly at peace with themselves, joyous in what they and the children have achieved, gratified by the goodness that God has

bestowed upon them all and genuinely content with the thrill and promise of each passing day. And at that, George, with tears in his eyes as I spoke, said, "You know, Brian, you've got us pegged just right and the rollercoaster of emotions we've experienced since 1992. Come with me."

He led me down the porch at Walker's Point to the side of the house that fronts the ocean and pointed to a small, simple plaque that had been unobtrusively installed just some days earlier. It read C-A-V-U. George said, "Brian, this stands for ceiling and visibility unlimited. When I was a terrified 18 to 19-year-old pilot in the Pacific, those, those were the words we hoped to hear before takeoff. It meant perfect flying. And that's the way I feel about our life today, C-A-V-U. Everything is perfect. Bar and I could not have asked for better lives. We are truly happy and truly at peace."

As I looked over the waters of Walker's Point on that golden September afternoon in Maine, I was reminded of the lines, simple and true, that speak to the real nature of George Bush and his love of his wonderful family and precious surroundings. There are wooden ships, there are sailing ships, there are ships that sail the sea. But the best ships are friendships, and may they always be.

Remarks by Former Senator Alan Simpson at the State Funeral of President George Herbert Walker Bush

Washington National Cathedral, Alan Simpson, 12.05.2018

Relax. George told me I only had 10 minutes. He was very direct about it. It wasn't even funny.

Now, I first met my friend, my dear friend, George Bush, in 1962 when my father, Milward Simpson, was a member of the United States Senate, just elected, and I came back to Washington with dad to settle on his new office being vacated by one Senator Prescott Bush, George's father. Well then, we met again when my parents left Washington and sold their home to a brand spanking new congressman from Texas named George Herbert Walker Bush. So George and Barbara, mom and pop did that sale on a handshake. Sound familiar?

Then I came to the Senate in 1978 and soon after that Ronald Reagan cornered me and asked me to support him for president. I said I would — not knowing that my friend George would enter the fray. Hearing that, I called and I said, "George, I want to tell you I'd love to help but I already committed to Ronald Reagan." George's response, "Well Al, I'm sorry about that. I probably should've let you know sooner." And actually, a guy doesn't get very many calls my friend who says they can't support him. Sound familiar?

Of course it does because in George Bush's theme of life during all the highs and lows, there was a simple credo: What would we do without family and friends? And when he became vice president, our friendship, our enjoyable friendship was refreshed and the four of us had many, many pleasant times together. And my life in Washington was rather tumultuous. I went from the A social list to the Z. And never came back to the A.

In one dark period I was feeling awful low and all my wounds were self-inflicted, all of them. And George called me early one morning, always early in the morning, country music playing in the background and he said, "Ah, I see that media is shooting you pretty full of holes." Actually, he said it a bit more pungently than that. And he said, "Why don't we go up to Camp David? You and Ann come over and we'll have a weekend together. At that time, his popularity rating was 93 percent. Mine was .93 percent. And so off we went. The media of course all gathered as we

headed to Marine One and George said, "Now wave to your pals over there in the media, Al." And they didn't wave back.

So the next morning, he's rattling through all the papers in the U.S. and he looks up and he says, "Aha, here's the one I've been looking for." The picture of Barbara and Ann and George with his arm and hand on my back and later we're having the sauna and I said, "George, I am not unmindful as to what you are doing. You are propping up your old wounded duck pal. While you're at the top of your game you reach out to me while I'm tangled in rich controversy and taking my lumps." And he said, "Yep."

"There were staff members, Al, who told me not to do this, but Al, this is about friendship and loyalty." Sound familiar? Well we had an awful lot of fun too. Always a delight to be in the president's box at the Kennedy Center, off to play at the National Theater or the Warner with the Bush's. And outside of the president's box that one evening, there was a massive 6-foot vase with an extraordinary glaze. I hope you know the difference between a vase and a vase – thirty-five dollars.

Now George walked up to it and he said, "Al, wait, I think that's Etruscan. I noticed that," he said, "This blue grayish glaze from that period, a clay that could only be found during that era." And I said, "No, no George, the patina there gives me the perception it was possibly older, perhaps of Greek origin with that particular horrible paste before firing." Of course people gathered around mumbling about these expert observers and Barbara and Ann finally came by and said, "Get out of here!" "Both of you get back in that box." Well, we did.

Well it was impressive for a while and then of course one night the four of us went to see a Michael Crawford singing the songs of Andrew Lloyd Webber. All four of us were singing as we went back to the White House. "Don't cry for me Argentina." And tidbits from Phantom of the Opera and other magic of Webber. And a few days later he's getting hammered by the press for some extraordinarily petty bit of trivia and suddenly he sings out, "Don't cry for me Argentina."

The press then wrote that he was finally losing his marbles. Now, these honored guests right here before us - who have held this noble post - know well of the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. He was a class act. From birth to death he housed the strong sinews in mind and body gained from that extraordinary mother. We compared our mothers as velvet hammers, of course, and most certainly awesome fathers. The history books will and are treating him most fairly.

While uncovering some other powerful traits, his great competitiveness, his raw courage and his self-discipline, recall the Andrews air base conclave where congressional participants drafted a remarkable bill that dealt with two-year budgeting, entitlement reform, comprehensive and catastrophic healthcare, Social Security solvency, and much more. But required a critical ingredient called revenue. Translated into the word "taxes." Translated into the words, "read my lips."

And the group went to George and said, "Look, we can get this package done, but we must have some revenue." And he said, I'll never forget, he said, "What I've said on that subject sure puts a hell of a lot of heat on me."

And then they all said yes, but we can get it done and it will be bipartisan. And George said, "Okay, go for it - but it will be a real punch in the gut." Bob Dole, then a loyal warrior for George, took it back to the Senate and we won a very strong bipartisan vote. And went over to the House where his own party turned on him, surely one of the main factors ensuring his return to private life. But he often said, "When the really tough choices come, it's the country - not me. It's not about Democrats or Republicans, it's for our country that I fought for." And he was a man of such grace, humility - those who travel the high road of humility in Washington, D.C. are not bothered by heavy traffic - and he had a very serious flaw known by all close to him. He loved a good joke. The richer the better, and he threw his head back and give that great laugh, but he never ever could remember a punch line. And I mean never.

So the punch line for George Herbert Walker Bush is this. You would have wanted him on your side. He never lost his sense of humor. Humor is the universal solvent against the abrasive elements of life. That's what humor is. He never hated anyone. He knew what his mother and my mother always knew. Hatred corrodes the container it's carried on.

The most decent and honorable person I ever met was my friend George Bush, one of nature's noble men. His epitaph perhaps just a single letter, the L for loyalty. It coursed through his blood, loyalty to his country, loyalty to his family, loyalty to his friends, loyalty to the institutions of government and always, always, always a friend to his friends.

None of us were ready for this day. We mourn his loss from our own lives and what he was to each of us. That is so personal, so intimate, so down inside. It would have been so much easier to celebrate his life with him here but he's gone, irrevocably gone. So now we have loosed our grip upon him but we shall always retain his memory and are part hearts. God has come now to take them back. We all knew on one unknown day he would return to his God. Now we give him up, we commend him to your loving hands. Thank you for him. God rest his soul.

Remarks by Former Secretary of State James A. Baker III at the Funeral of President George Herbert Walker Bush

St. Martin's Episcopal Church (Houston, TX), James A. Baker III, 12.06.2018

My friends, we're here today in the house of the Lord to say goodbye to a man of great faith and great integrity, a truly beautiful human being; and to honor his noble character, his life of service, and the sweet memories he leaves for his friends, his family, and for our grateful nation.

For more than 60 years, George Herbert Walker Bush has been my friend, and he's been my role model. Today, as we entrust his soul to heaven, his name to history, and his memory to our hearts, I must begin with an apology. Jefe, I'm about to do something you always hated, and that your mother always told you not to do: brag about yourself. I will do this because it must be done; and because, as a lawyer, I see that thing beloved by all lawyers -- a loophole.

Now, don't brag -- "don't brag about yourself," you once wrote. "Let others point out your virtues, your good points." Well, today, Mr. President, I am that "other," with the special privilege and joy of sharing your good points.

As we have heard and as we know, George Bush was a charter member of the Greatest Generation. As we gather here to salute him, his incredible service to our nation and the world are already etched in the marble of time.

After becoming the youngest naval aviator, he served in increasingly responsible positions on behalf of his country: Congressman, Ambassador to China, and to the United Nations. Director of the CIA, and Vice President.

Then, as history will faithfully record, he became one of our nation's finest Presidents; and beyond any doubt, our nation's very best one-term President. For millions and millions across the globe, the world became a better place because George Bush occupied the White House for four years.

He was not considered a skilled speaker, but his deeds were quite eloquent; and he demonstrated their eloquence by carving them into the hard granite of history. They expressed his moral

character, and they reflected his decency, his boundless kindness and consideration of others, his determination always to do the right thing, and always to do that to the very best of his ability.

They testify to a life nobly lived.

He possessed the classic virtues of our civilization and of his faith -- the same virtues that express what is really best about this country. These same ideals were known to and they were shared by our Founding Fathers. George Bush was temperate in thought, in word, and in deed. He considered his choices and then he chose wisely.

The Berlin Wall fell in November 1989, less than one year into his presidency. It was a remarkable triumph for American foreign policy. As joyous East and West Germans danced on the remains of that hated wall, George Bush could have joined them metaphorically and claimed victory for the West, for America, and frankly, for himself.

But he did not. He knew better. He understood that humility toward -- and not humiliation of -- a fallen adversary was the very best path to peace and reconciliation; and so he was able to unify Germany as a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, notwithstanding the initial reservations of France, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union. Thus, the Cold War ended, not with a bang but with the sound of a halyard rattling through a pulley over the Kremlin on a cool night in December 1991, as the flag of the Soviet Union was lowered for the very last time.

Need we ask about George Bush's courage during World War II? He risked his life in defense of something greater than himself.

Decades later, when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait in August 1990 and began to brutalize Kuwaitis, George Bush never wavered. "This will not stand," he said, and he got the rest of the world to join him in reversing that aggression.

Yes, he had the courage of a warrior.

But when the time came for prudence, he always maintained the greater courage of a peacemaker. He ended the wars in Central America; he signed two nuclear arms reduction

treaties; and he brought Israel and all of its Arab neighbors together face-to-face for the first time to talk peace.

His deeds for his fellow man always spoke for him.

“Give someone else a hand,” he would say -- and he did.

“When a friend is hurting, show that you care,” he would say -- and he did.

“Be kind to people,” he would say -- and he was.

To the parents of a young son who lost -- of a young son lost to cancer, he wrote, "I hope you will live the rest of your lives with only happy memories of that wonderful son who is now safely tucked in, God's loving arms around him." His wish for a "kinder...gentler nation"³ was not a cynical political slogan. It came honest and unguarded from his soul.

After they left the White House, George and Barbara Bush continued to display their compassion for others. Their dedication to the Points of Light, the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, and countless other charities, is a model for all former first families past, present, and future.

To these virtues, we can add one more source of his character: his family. As a friend once put it, George Bush believed that family is a source of both personal strength and the values one needs to face life. And of course, history has shown that few families have accomplished as much as his has.

Barbara wrote the book on how to be a great First Lady. His legacy lives on with his children, who have contributed so very much to making our nation great. And who knows what the future will bring for his grandchildren and their children.

I've always been proud that George Bush used to describe our relationship as one of "big brother and little brother." He used to say that one of the things he liked best about me was that I would always tell him what I thought, even when I knew he didn't want to hear it. Then we would have a spirited discussion about that issue.

But he had a very effective way of letting me know when the discussion was over. He would look at me and he'd say, "Baker, if you're so smart, why am I President and you're not?"

He was -- He was a leader, and he knew it. My hope is that in remembering the life of George Herbert Walker Bush, and in honoring his accomplishments, we will see that we are really praising what is best about our nation -- the nation he dearly loved and whose values he embodied.

There is more to say than time permits, and anyway, when measured against the eloquence of George Bush's character and life, our words are very inadequate. And so I conclude these remarks with his words, written some years ago to his old tennis buddy.

"We have known each other a long time," he wrote to me.

"We have shared joy and sadness. and time has indeed gone swiftly by. Now it races on even faster, and that makes me treasure even more this line of William Butler Yates about where man's glory begins and ends, namely with friends. My glory is I have you as such a friend."

To which I reply on behalf of his friends here today, across America, and throughout the world: We rejoice, Mr. President, that you are safely tucked in now and through the ages, with God's loving arms around you. Because our glory, George, was to have had you as our President and as such a friend.

Remarks by Texas Land Commissioner George P. Bush at the Funeral of President George Herbert Walker Bush

St. Martin's Episcopal Church (Houston, TX), George P. Bush, 12.06.2018

Good morning. Today I stand before you as the oldest grandson of the man I simply knew as "Gampy." George Herbert Walker Bush was the most gracious, most decent, most humble man that I will ever know. We are here to give thanks for his extraordinary life, but I would like to talk about some of the things that he was thankful for. The things that to him mattered most.

My grandfather was thankful for his family. When he began running for president in 1988, my grandfather released a campaign book outlining his views for the future. The book opened with a letter to a grandson. It was addressed to me and recounted some of our recent experiences together in Maine.

"P.," the letter read, I have been thinking about it a lot. The most fun was the big rock boat, climbing out on it, watching you and the well playing on it. Near the end of summer when the moon was full, the tides were high, there was that special day when it almost seemed like the boat was real.

In those few words, my grandfather said more about his life than I could ever tell you this morning. Here's a man gearing up for the role of a lifetime, and yet his mind went back to his family. This is a book about policy issues, and yet he still found time to write about an imaginary boat that he built with his grandson. And in a typical day, he would wake up around 5:00 a.m. to review security briefings and grab his first coffee of the day.

And when the coast was clear, had the grandkids would try to snag a spot on the bed and nestle up between him and Ganny when they read the paper. We all grew up with my grandfather who would we catch fly fishing off the rocks of Maine, talking up where the blue fish were running. He would be the first to host an intense horseshoe matchup among family, secret service, or any willing head of state, while encouraging trash talk like "power outage" if your horseshoe was short, or "Woodrow Wilson" if you're long and your shoe hit the wooden backstop.

His typical spread included barbecue, tacos, tamales, pork rinds with hot sauce, with a healthy complement of blue bell ice cream and Klondike bars. Always the competitor, each night Gampy

challenged all of the grandkids to the coveted "first to sleep" award. In classic Gampy fashion, he would write letters of encouragement to us all, whether one of semester at school, whether one of us and for the record, not me, drove his Fidelity onto the rocks. or one of us, definitely not me, ended up in Ganny's crosshairs. I knew too much.

At the close of one summer, after he left public service, Gampy wrote an e-mail to us all saying, "The only thing wrong with the last five months is that none of you were here enough. Next year, promise this old Gampster you'll spend more time with us, here by the sea. As you know, I've had to give up fly fishing off the rocks in Maine, but there are plenty of wonderful things to do. I think of you all an awful lot. I just wonder how each of you is doing in school and in life. If you need me, I'm here for you because I love you very much."

In the Psalms god makes his promise. With long life, I will satisfy him and show him my salvation. Today, we know that my Gampy did enjoy a long and extraordinary life and we know he's enjoying the beginning of his next life, rejoining those whom he lost but now by grace has found again.

My grandfather was thankful for his country. He was grateful to lead a country where people can go as far and as fast as their dreams can take them, a place where individuals working alone or in groups can help the condition of their fellow man on a voluntary basis, a bright hope for America he evoked so brilliantly when he spoke of 1,000 points of light.

He often spoke about the timeless creed of duty, honor, country, the values that have sustained the republic for its over 240 years. But this wasn't something he just talked about, this was something he lived.

Having flown 58 combat missions in the pacific and having been shot down and rescued at sea, he never saw his own heroism as being any greater than anyone else who has worn the uniform. I know this because I have experienced it personally. He was proud when Walker joined the Marine Corps, when I joined the Navy. And even prouder when we served overseas. Our service never compared to his, yet we could never convince him of that.

In our times together, our big, wonderful, and competitive family saw the personal goodness that lead to his historical greatness. He left a simple yet profound legacy to his children, to his grandchildren, and to this country. Service. Undoubtedly, when the last words are written on him, they will certainly include this, that the fulfillment of a complete life cannot be achieved without service to others.

You should know that my grandfather was thankful for his god. He once told his grandkids, "God is good, but his love has a cost. We must be good to one another." It was his faith, his love for others, that fulfilled him, that drove him, that led him to a life of public service.

Here in Houston at a prayer breakfast, he once reflected on his time on the deck of the submarine Finback, which rescued him after he was shot down in World War II.

To get some fresh air, he went on the deck, stood the watch, looked out in the dark. He said the sky was clear. The stars were brilliant like a blizzard of fireflies in the night. There was a calm inner peace, halfway around the world in a war zone, a calm inner peace, god's therapy.

Today, after 94 years, the heavy hand of time has claimed the life of my Gamps, but in death as in life, my grandfather has won, for he has exchanged his earthly burdens for a heavenly home and is at peace.

Yes, George Herbert Walker Bush is the most gracious, most decent, most humble man that I will ever know, and it's the honor of a lifetime to share his name. God bless you, Gampy. Until we meet again. Maybe out on the rock boat we built together.

We never met a man as remarkable as George H.W. Bush – and we never will again

The Washington Post, Jeb Bush & James A. Baker III, 12.04.2018

The two of us never met a man as remarkable as George Herbert Walker Bush. We never will again. As both public figure and private individual, he set a standard of excellence astonishing in its scope.

As a leader, he deftly guided the world through a peaceful ending to the Cold War after it had stood on the brink of nuclear destruction for four decades. He did so with the wisdom of a man well-schooled in foreign affairs who selflessly put his country above himself and partisan politics. The world — enemies and allies alike — respected him as a leader of modest demeanor but steely resolve. He was proud of our nation’s ideals and pragmatic in advancing our interests. Above all, he understood our country’s unique place in world affairs and nurtured international institutions and coalitions that supported it.

As a politician, George H.W. Bush bridged partisan divides and built consensus for far-ranging laws that continue to help our citizens today. The Americans With Disabilities Act and legislation that largely ended acid rain are just two examples. He remains the model for the shrinking band of bipartisan officials who represent the responsible middle of our polity, where deals are struck that last longer than a presidential term.

As a public servant, he first answered the call of duty in World War II, flying 58 combat missions and being shot down over the Pacific. After military service, he accepted positions of increasing responsibility on behalf of his country, as U.N. ambassador, ambassador to China, director of the Central Intelligence Agency and vice president. He daily followed the mantra prescribed by John F. Kennedy: “Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.”

As a friend, George H.W. Bush was without peer, always there in good times and bad. When Jim Baker’s first wife died of cancer at 38, George and Barbara Bush helped pull their friend out of despair. He routinely quoted the verse of William Butler Yeats: “Think where man’s glory most

begins and ends, and say my glory was I had such friends.” Those words were more than poetry to him. They were a way of life.

And as a husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather, he savored the responsibilities and joys of family. After being elected vice president, he said his greatest accomplishment was the fact that his kids still enjoyed coming home. They cherished those moments together because Dad or Gampy, as he was called, dispensed love rather than orders. The most important lessons for his family were already manifest in the exemplary life that he and Barbara lived during their 73 years together.

George H.W. Bush was a fierce competitor — in sports, in politics and in life. His kindness and civility cloaked a competitiveness that inspired his friend and son. He wouldn’t have been as successful without it.

At the same time, he also saw the good in people, even his adversaries, and hope in the face of adversity. “No problem of human making,” he once said, “is too great to be overcome by human ingenuity, human energy, and the untiring hope of the human spirit.” We need similar optimism today, at a time when cooperative problem solving too often gives way to a rancorous blame game.

George H.W. Bush lived a life of astonishing fullness as leader, politician, public servant, hero, friend and family man. He did almost everything a person could do in their lifetime — including jumping from an airplane at age 90. And he excelled at most.

He reached the pinnacle of power by living the virtues that make for a good Boy Scout: loyalty, trustworthiness, humility, reverence.

In today’s cynical world, such concepts may seem old-fashioned to some and easy to dismiss. But the cynics are wrong. They are not old-fashioned. They are time-tested. More than 2,300 years ago, Aristotle believed that the virtues of prudence, temperance, courage and justice were vital to mankind. George H.W. Bush embodied them all. And he made the world a better place because of his adherence to them.

George H.W. Bush was a wonderful human being who possessed a strong faith in God and believed there is greatness in each of us. The occasion of his passing should serve as a reminder that we can — by living life to the fullest, keeping our eye on the common good and working together — build a more perfect union here at home and a more peaceful world abroad.

George H.W. Bush's Uncommon Grace

The New York Times, Frank Bruni, 12.01.2018

Kinder. Gentler. Those were words that George H.W. Bush famously used in his inaugural speech, when he was sworn in as the 41st president of the United States. I say “famously” not because the verbiage was particularly visionary, but because it evolved, over the years, into a shorthand for his philosophy, for his character, for what the Republican Party needed to be and for what he wanted to make it.

The words fell into a passage of the speech that, in relation to the “American carnage” of the current president’s oratory, seems both quaint and exotic — and makes you yearn for an earlier time. “America is never wholly herself unless she is engaged in high moral principle,” Bush told the crowd arrayed in front of the Capitol on Jan. 20, 1989. “We as a people have such purpose today. It is to make kinder the face of the nation and gentler the face of the world.”

Kinder. Gentler. How often those of us who write about politics subsequently riffed off those adjectives — so often that editors would strike them from our copy, telling us that they had been utterly played out, that they had tumbled from the realm of the descriptive into the dustbin of the clichéd. They were our ignoble way to mock the dissonance between his and other Republicans’ gooey rhetorical flourishes and their actual actions. They were our yardstick for measuring the party’s shortfall. They were our rod for flogging it.

But in reality and in retrospect, Bush was a kinder and gentler breed of leader. He believed in courtesy, as any lawmaker who dealt with him and any journalist who repeatedly crossed paths with him can attest. He believed in manners, not merely as an outgrowth of his patrician background and not principally in a fussy way, but because he saw them as an expression of respect. To read his voluminous letters is to encounter a man who cared deeply about that — about precedent, propriety, tradition. And, yes, about kindness.

There was the letter that he left for Bill Clinton, who beat him in the 1992 presidential election and would soon be replacing him at the Resolute Desk. It was a note, really, handwritten on White House stationery and dated Jan. 20, 1993, the day of Clinton’s inauguration.

“When I walked into this office just now I felt the same sense of wonder and respect that I felt four years ago,” it said. “I know you will feel that, too.”

“I’m not a very good one to give advice,” it later continued, capturing a strain of humility, so rare among presidents, that Bush genuinely possessed. “Don’t let the critics discourage you or push you off course,” he wrote, and ended by saying, “Your success now is our country’s success. I am rooting hard for you.” I don’t think there’s any doubt that he was.

Of course he could be partisan, but not like today’s hellcats. In fact, an act of political compromise — a 1990 deficit-reduction bill that raised taxes, in defiance of a 1988 campaign pledge — had some hand in his failure to win a second term.

Of course he could be ruthless. He employed one of the nastiest tacticians in politics, Lee Atwater. And that 1988 campaign, against Michael Dukakis, sired the despicably racist Willie Horton ad.

But much more remarkable — and much more sustained — was his thoughtfulness.

I saw and experienced it many times myself when I covered the 2000 presidential campaign. I remember sitting with him and Barbara Bush in the living room of their summer compound in Kennebunkport, Me. It was shortly before the Republican National Convention, at which George W. Bush would receive his formal nomination as the party’s candidate, and as his parents mused about the odd turns of history, Barbara Bush kept making little digs about the scandals of Clinton, whose presidency was winding down.

Stop it, her husband kept saying. No, no, no. He told her that he’d eject her from the interview, and while that threat was mostly playful, it did reflect the kinds of relationships that he preferred. Cordial. Nurturing. And, yes, gentle.

He and Clinton would go on to become such good friends that Barbara later changed her tune, speaking of how Clinton was almost a surrogate son of the president who preceded him, the one he vanquished.

Look anew at that extraordinary photograph from Barbara Bush's funeral last April — the one from which President Trump was conspicuously missing, because he knew he wasn't wanted at the ceremony and skipped it. In Bush's body language and in the body language of the people around him, you can see the affection that he had for his successors and the affection that they had for him. Four former or current first ladies — Hillary Clinton, Laura Bush, Michelle Obama and Melania Trump — are there. So are four former presidents: Clinton, George W. Bush, Barack Obama and, of course, George H.W. Bush, who is in the foreground and the center.

He's not just the oldest in the crowd. He's not just the only one in a wheelchair. He's the group's center of gravity. Also its point of light, if you will. He's mustering a smile even though he's living through perhaps the saddest passage of his fading days, and I can theorize why. He's reminded, in that tableau, of the continuum of American history and the honor of belonging to it. He's reveling in a shared set of values that transcend the rancor of this era. He's surrounded, in that moment, by kindness, a diminishing currency that mattered as much to him as any other.

Another of his letters, one that he sent to one of his granddaughters, Jenna Hager Bush, two decades ago:

“I believe I was right when I said, as president, there can be no definition of a successful life that does not include service to others,” he wrote. “So I do that now, and I gain happiness. I do not seek a Pulitzer Prize. I do not want press attention. I don't crave sitting at the head table or winning one of the many coveted awards offered by the many organizations across the land. I have found happiness. I no longer pursue it, for it is mine.”

That softness and soulfulness at times earned him derision, as when Newsweek published a cover story about his 1988 presidential campaign that was titled “Bush Battles the Wimp Factor.” For decades afterward, everyone in the Bush family seethed about it.

I look back now and wonder if it was really an unintended compliment. We could use more wimps like him.

George H.W. Bush: An Appreciation

Subtitle: President George H.W. Bush's many significant foreign policy achievements left the country and world better off

Council on Foreign Relations, Richard N. Haass, 12.01.2018

Little of what we call history is inevitable. What happens in this world is the result of what people choose to do or not do when presented with challenges and opportunities.

George H.W. Bush, the forty-first president of the United States, was presented with more than his share of challenges and opportunities, and the record is clear: he left the country and the world considerably better off than he found them.

I am writing as someone who worked for and often with the forty-first president for all four years of his presidency. I was a special assistant and the senior director for Near East and South Asian Affairs on the staff of the National Security Council. What this meant in practice is that I oversaw the development and execution of policy toward the Middle East and the Persian Gulf, as well as Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan. I was also brought into many other policy deliberations. It was the busiest of times, but it was also an extraordinary professional and personal experience.

I am biased. George Bush was kind, decent, fair, open-minded, considerate, lacking in prejudice, modest, principled, and loyal. He valued public service and saw himself as simply the latest in the long line of American presidents, another temporary occupant of the Oval Office and custodian of American democracy, a post that would one day be filled by others.

His foreign policy achievements were many and significant, starting with the ending of the Cold War. To be sure, that it ended when it did had a great deal to do with four decades of concerted Western efforts in every region of the world, the defeat of the Soviets in Afghanistan, the deep-seated flaws within the Soviet system and communism, and the words and deeds of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

But none of this meant the Cold War had to end quickly or peacefully. Bush was sensitive to the predicament of Gorbachev and later Boris Yeltsin, and he avoided making a difficult situation humiliating for Russia. He was careful not to gloat or to indulge in the rhetoric of triumphalism.

He was widely criticized for this restraint, but he managed not to trigger just the sort of nationalist reaction that we are now seeing in Russia.

He also got what he wanted. No one should confuse Bush's carefulness with timidity. He overcame the reluctance and, at times, objections of his European counterparts and fostered Germany's unification—and brought it about within NATO. This was statecraft as its finest.

Forty-one's other great foreign policy achievement was the Gulf War. He viewed Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein's invasion and conquest of Kuwait as a threat, not just to the region's critical oil supplies, but also to the emerging post-Cold War world. Bush feared that if this act of war were allowed to stand, it would encourage additional mayhem. Days into the crisis, on the South Lawn of the White House he declared this aggression would not stand, cobbled together an unprecedented international coalition that backed sanctions and the threat of force, sent half a million American troops halfway around the world, and—when diplomacy failed to bring about a complete and unconditional Iraqi withdrawal—liberated Kuwait in a matter of weeks with remarkably few U.S. and coalition casualties. It was a textbook case as to how multilateralism and the national interest could overlap.

Two other things are worth pointing out here. First, Congress was reluctant to act. The vote in the Senate authorizing military action nearly failed. Bush, however, was prepared to order what became Operation Desert Storm even without congressional approval, given that he already had international law and the United Nations on his side. He was that determined and that principled.

Second, Bush refused to allow himself to get caught up in the unfolding drama. The mission was to liberate Kuwait, not Baghdad. Fully aware of what happened when the United States expanded its war aims in Korea and tried to unify the peninsula by force, Bush resisted pressures to expand U.S. aims. He worried about losing the trust of world leaders he had brought along and the potential loss of life. He also wanted to keep the Arab governments on his side to improve prospects for the Middle East peace effort that was to come. Again, he was strong enough to stand up to the mood of the moment.

None of this is to say the forty-first president always got it right. The end of the Gulf War, in early 1991, was messy, as Saddam Hussein managed to hang onto power. A year later, the Bush

administration was slow to respond to violence in the Balkans. It might have done more to help Russia in its early post-Soviet days. But as Congressman Steve Solarz, then a senior Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, told me at the time, “You guys didn’t hit a home run. You got a triple. And triples aren’t bad.”

On the domestic front, Bush could point to the Americans with Disabilities Act, a major piece of civil rights legislation. He negotiated and set the stage for the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Reversing his pledge not to introduce new taxes, Bush put the country on a path to a balanced budget and sustainable growth. My own view is that he was right to do so but erred in not explaining to the American people why he had gone back on his word. In politics, it is rarely enough to do the right thing, as Bush had done here; it is essential, too, to make the case for it.

One crucial last point: Bush assembled what is arguably the best national security team this country has ever had. Brent Scowcroft was the gold standard of national security advisors. James Baker was arguably the most successful secretary of state since Henry Kissinger. And with them were Colin Powell, Dick Cheney, Bob Gates, Larry Eagleburger, Bill Webster, and others of standing and experience.

This turned out to be the foreign policy dream team, not because of the presence of so many talented hands, but because the whole was made to work better than the sum of its parts. Good people alone are not enough. It takes good process as well. Good process doesn’t guarantee good policy, but it increases the likelihood it will emerge, just as bad process almost certainly leads to policy failure.

All of which brings us back to George H.W. Bush. He chose the people. He set the tone and the expectations. He listened. But he also led. If, as the saying goes, the fish rots from the head, it also flourishes because of the head. The United States flourished as a result of the many contributions of our forty-first president. We owe him our collective thanks. May his well-deserved rest be peaceful.

George H.W. Bush confronted tyranny and showed us the power of compassion

Dallas Morning News, Editorial Staff, 12.01.2018

Upon hearing that George H.W. Bush passed away, our first thought turned not to his time in the Oval Office but to his daughter Robin. The second child and the elder daughter of George and Barbara Bush, Pauline Robinson Bush died of leukemia before her fourth birthday in 1953. George Bush would later wonder if, when he met her again in heaven, she would be a child or an adult.

If that was part of the mystery that has now been revealed to him, we can know with certainty that it was a reunion filled with a deep and abiding joy.

Referred to as “the quiet man” in a recent book of that title by his one-time chief of staff John H. Sununu, Bush was a leader the country turned to again and again in crisis. He led the Republican National Committee during the collapse of Richard Nixon’s presidency. He took the helm of the Central Intelligence Agency when it was at a low ebb. And he took up the reins as vice president in the Reagan administration at a time when the United States was in retreat abroad and retrenching economically at home.

As president, he saw in the collapse of the Soviet Union a rare opportunity to enable the spread of human liberty on a mass scale. When others might have wished him to go on a world victory tour celebrating the collapse of the evil empire, President Bush refused to gloat.

Instead, through diplomacy, by mentoring officials washing out of power in the former Soviet bloc, and through American foreign policy, he shepherded in a new world. In what was a stunning transition away from tyranny, much of Eastern Europe left communism on the ash heap of history, East and West Germany were peacefully reunited, and even Russia gained the opportunity to turn toward democracy.

None of that was foreordained. And all of it continues to rebound to the benefit of the United States in the grand struggle of liberty vs. tyranny. Consider that a decade after George H.W. Bush left office, Russia had yet to fully turn back toward the darkest impulses of its past and was therefore willing to actively help the United States enter Afghanistan so that our armed forces

could topple the Taliban and hunt down al-Qaeda's leaders. Consider too that as we now must confront Russian aggression abroad, we have a host of new Eastern European allies within NATO and within the European Union.

The example of leadership that Bush left is a mix of personal character, compassion and measured strength.

The future president — after becoming the American ambassador to China — had a famous exchange with Henry Kissinger, who was then at the height of his power and influence. Kissinger told Bush that personal diplomacy was inconsequential. “It doesn't matter if they like you or not,” he said. Bush rejected the notion that nations made decisions based only on realpolitik calculations, and he made building personal relationships a hallmark of his tenure as ambassador and a mark of his leadership.

We can see that throughout his life Bush used personal diplomacy to reshape the arc of history. Internationally, historians will record the role the 41st president personally played in reshaping Europe. Historians will also record the influence he commanded in assembling an overwhelming coalition to eject Saddam Hussein from Kuwait.

At home, his influence extended to stabilizing federal finances and reviving a flagging economy that dipped into recession after a long boom in the 1980s. He pushed for and signed into law the Americans with Disabilities Act, legislation that helped reshape a cultural attitude toward people with disabilities. And he recognized the important role that private compassion plays in a free society, where private charitable endeavors can often marshal more resources more quickly and be more effective than public efforts.

What he called “A Thousand Points of Light” were, in fact, the private armies of compassion that have a long history in America, but decades into the federal War on Poverty were at risk of being discounted. His work helped steer corporate and private philanthropic efforts toward a wide range of social ills. And his sense of service extended past his time in the White House — including in recent decades raising aid for Haiti and other nations after natural disasters — and extended to inculcating an ethos of service in his family. He would see two of his sons, George

W. Bush and Jeb Bush, elected governors of major states and one of his sons win two terms as president of the United States.

What George H.W. Bush left us was an example that in leadership, character and compassion can move the world. He understood the power of unlocking human creativity and the importance of improving the lives of others.

He also knew how to live life to its fullest. Late in life, he took to celebrating his birthday by going parachuting. Throughout much of his life he loved to take his speedboat off the coast of Maine near his home in Kennebunkport. More than one of his guests were a little unnerved at the speed at which he would roar along the coast.

Both are small examples of one of the bigger themes of his life not fully explored by historians. Bush was always willing to jump off and try something new. Whether it was leaving New England behind to make his way in West Texas or running for political office, embracing new policy ideas or believing that meaningful change was possible, George H.W. Bush was a catalyst.

Our parting thought about the 41st president comes to us from historian Jon Meacham. Once when he was approaching 90 years old, Bush was at his home in Kennebunkport when a massive storm rolled in. His chief of staff found him sitting outside watching the ocean as a full gale force wind swirled around him. Why was he out in the mix? The former president simply said: "I don't want to miss anything."

Bill Clinton: George H.W. Bush's Oval Office note to me revealed the heart of who he was

The Washington Post, Bill Clinton, 12.01.2018

On Jan. 20, 1993, I entered the Oval Office for the first time as president. As is the tradition, waiting for me was a note from my predecessor, George Herbert Walker Bush. It read:

Dear Bill,

When I walked into this office just now I felt the same sense of wonder and respect that I felt four years ago. I know you will feel that, too.

I wish you great happiness here. I never felt the loneliness some Presidents have described.

There will be very tough times, made even more difficult by criticism you may not think is fair. I'm not a very good one to give advice; but just don't let the critics discourage you or push you off course.

You will be our President when you read this note. I wish you well. I wish your family well.

Your success now is our country's success. I am rooting hard for you.

Good Luck — George

No words of mine or others can better reveal the heart of who he was than those he wrote himself. He was an honorable, gracious and decent man who believed in the United States, our Constitution, our institutions and our shared future. And he believed in his duty to defend and strengthen them, in victory and defeat. He also had a natural humanity, always hoping with all his heart that others' journeys would include some of the joy that his family, his service and his adventures gave him.

His friendship has been one of the great gifts of my life. From Indonesia to Houston, from the Katrina-ravaged Gulf Coast to Kennebunkport, Maine — where just a few months ago we shared our last visit, as he was surrounded by his family but clearly missing Barbara — I cherished every opportunity I had to learn and laugh with him. I just loved him.

Many people were surprised at our relationship, considering we were once political adversaries. Despite our considerable differences, I had admired many of his accomplishments as president, especially his foreign policy decisions in managing America's response to the end of the Cold War and his willingness to work with governors of both parties to establish national education goals. Even more important, though he could be tough in a political fight, he was in it for the right reasons: People always came before politics, patriotism before partisanship. To the end, we knew we would never agree on everything, and we agreed that was okay. Honest debate strengthens democracy.

While we maintained a respectful, friendly relationship throughout my presidency, it was only when President George W. Bush asked us to jointly spearhead American relief efforts in the wake of the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004 and again after Hurricane Katrina in 2005 that we got to really know each other. When we met with children who lost their parents in the tsunami, he was moved almost to tears when they gave us drawings they'd made to capture their pain and slow recovery in grief counseling. When we were asked to speak together at Tulane's graduation in 2006, I saw his genuine feeling for the students, many of whom had suffered in the flooding of New Orleans, and others who had shown heroism and love in caring for their neighbors. "Each of you here has inspired me," he told them. "When I look at our world, the good I see far outweighs the bad, which maybe explains why I am a real optimist about the future that you all will be facing."

Growing old did not rob him of his optimism or his love of competition and adventure. In his book of letters, there's a wonderful one to his family about getting older, in which he crows about driving his speedboat off the Maine coast. "Still want to compete. I still drive Fidelity II fast — very fast. My best so far — 63 mph in a slight chop with one [Secret Service] agent on board." I took more than one ride in that boat with him over the years. It was fun but not an experience for the faint of heart. It was the same driving spirit, coupled with heartfelt patriotism, which led him to volunteer for the Navy on his 18th birthday instead of attending Yale, becoming one of the youngest American pilots to get his wings. Even when he was later shot out of the sky, the sole survivor of his close-knit crew, he never feared to go up again — famously learning to skydive at 75.

After the war, he took a leap of faith by staking his and his family's future in the Texas oil business and eventually got into politics. Fifty years ago this spring, as a congressman representing Houston, he voted for the Fair Housing Act of 1968, going against his nearly perfect record of conservative votes in Washington. When he returned to Houston, he held a town hall to explain his vote to a hostile crowd who thought he'd lost his mind. He believed that he could convince them it was the right thing to do, as long as they would hear him out. That evening, at least, he was right. When he was finished talking he got a standing ovation.

Given what politics looks like in America and around the world today, it's easy to sigh and say George H.W. Bush belonged to an era that is gone and never coming back — where our opponents are not our enemies, where we are open to different ideas and changing our minds, where facts matter and where our devotion to our children's future leads to honest compromise and shared progress. I know what he would say: "Nonsense. It's your duty to get that America back."

We should all give thanks for George H.W. Bush's long, good life and honor it by searching, as he always did, for the most American way forward.

George H.W. Bush: Casual American giant of the 20th century

The Globe and Mail, David Shribman, 12.01.2018

John F. Kennedy was said to have personified American vigour but in truth was frail. George H.W. Bush was said to have been a wimp – Newsweek actually used the word on its cover – but, with manic golf games, frantic jogs in the Maine woods and a leap from an airplane at age 85, was really the vicar of vigour. Ronald Reagan was said to have won the Cold War, but when he left office, Soviet troops were still in Afghanistan and Communists were still in the Kremlin. It was on Mr. Bush's watch that the edifice of Communism (and the Berlin Wall itself) crumbled – and it was his admonition to U.S. officials not to gloat that assured the transition inside the Warsaw Pact was accomplished with dispatch and grace.

Mr. Bush, who died Friday night at 94, was perhaps the most misunderstood and underestimated president of modern times.

Denied a second term, largely forgotten as a transitional figure between Mr. Reagan and Bill Clinton, often overshadowed in memory by his own son (whose administration has yet to enjoy a spike of revisionism), Mr. Bush nonetheless was the classic American figure of the 20th century and had a cameo or starring role in the great dramas of the era, from the Second World War to the recurrent U.S. military involvement in Iraq; from the green shoots of modern Republican power in the onetime solidly Democratic South to the GOP triumphs of the Reagan years; from Watergate to the Washington battles over taxation that persist to this day.

In those years, he personified the American attributes of optimism (he was the one who, battling to an upset victory over Mr. Reagan in the 1980 Iowa caucuses, proclaimed that he was “up for the eighties”), service (he was elected to the House, the vice-presidency and the presidency, directed the CIA and helped open China to U.S. commercial interests and diplomacy) and sacrifice (he took over the Republican National Committee amid Watergate tensions, a job nobody wanted).

He could have led a life of ease – conversations on the back nine followed by cocktails in the clubhouse – but instead, became the central figure of an American political dynasty, one that spread from his father, a patrician senator from Connecticut, to his two sons, who account for

four terms as governor and two as president – a family impact rivalled only by that of the Adams clan and arguably surpassing that of the Kennedys.

He was intelligent, but not intellectual; perhaps his greatest moment at Yale was meeting Babe Ruth. He was frequently inarticulate but never insensitive; he wrote thousands of personal notes – some of the most revealing ever written by a president – and when he returned to the executive mansion for the unveiling of his official portrait, he said the people he missed most were members of the White House staff.

He was portrayed by his rivals as callous, aloof and isolated, but in truth he may have been the most emotional president since Woodrow Wilson, tearing up as he spoke of his sons and daughters, one of whom, Pauline, died of leukemia at age 3.

Reared in elite circumstances – attending Greenwich Country Day School and Phillips Academy before Yale – his manner could seem more snooty than courtly. But he inspired great loyalty. Years later grown men would refer to the schoolboy Mr. Bush as the “greatest” person they had ever met, and as president signs of an innate informality emerged.

He once exclaimed to Dan Rostenkowski, then the powerful Democratic chairman of the House Committee on Ways and Means: “If you’re so goddamned smart, how come you’re not the president?” Later, when he retired from office, the playful domain name of his e-mail address was “flfw.com.” It stood for “former leader of the free world.” If you wrote him a note, he answered.

The man who assembled an international coalition to free Kuwait, who was targeted for death by Saddam Hussein and who lost his bid for re-election as the economy soured in a bitter 1992 contest against Mr. Clinton became the nation’s kindly grandfather, a sort of Mister Rogers of the political world, and he and Mr. Clinton would form a bond that has only one antecedent in American history: the one between John Adams and the man who defeated him in the 1800 presidential election, Thomas Jefferson.

In retirement he would spend months at his Kennebunkport, Me., home on Walker Point, the sort of weathered grey seaside home that is the summer White House of popular imagination.

Sometimes, he would tool over to Ogunquit, a few miles south, and tie his cigarette boat up at Barnacle Billy's, where on picturesque Perkins Cove he would offer greetings and devour a single hot dog. The lobster roll was too expensive.

And he would write letters that would be cherished by those, including me, who received them. They would be casual and typewritten, even in the computer age, with words x'd out and others added with a caret by felt-tip pen, almost always with a "Forgive my spelling!" added in his own spare script at the end. In these notes he would be sentimental but fiercely protective of his political sons. They would invariably be signed, "All the best." He meant it.

When Nicholas Murray Butler, the distinguished long-time president of Columbia University, died at age 85 in 1947, Herbert Hoover said, "It is a pity that men of his quality could not last longer." Even Mr. Bush's most ardent rivals are thinking that this morning.

Pres. George H.W. Bush taught me how to care about all people, even those I disagree with | Perspective

The Inquirer, Dava Guerin, 12.01.2018

My first encounter with George H.W. Bush, leader of the free world? At a barbecue for press photographers on the South Lawn of the White House in 1989. As we chatted, out came First Dog Millie. He didn't just greet her. He started to roll around on the grass with her. Clearly this man – this president – was different. Bush died on Friday at the age of 94.

Later, I helped organize his appearance before the Congressional Medal of Honor Society in Philadelphia. But then Operation Desert Storm began. We assumed he would cancel. No. He wasn't going to let his fellow veterans down. On Jan. 22, 1991, this commander in chief wrote to me, "I am heartened that so many Americans are praying for our brave service men and women and for their families." He told me later that sending young people into harm's way was the most heart-wrenching decision he ever had to make.

His example of service inspired me to volunteer at Walter Reed, where I met many wounded warriors and the moms who cared for them 24/7. When I next saw President Bush in February 2012, I told him I wanted to write a book about these brave young men and women and their mothers. "I'm so proud of you; go for it," he said. The next thing I knew his chief of staff, Jean Becker, called me to tell me that President Bush wanted to write the foreword to the book, even though he had officially "retired" from doing such projects. "Good luck with The Mighty Moms of Walter Reed," he wrote to me on Nov. 6, 2013. "a truly wonderful tribute to the unsung heroes of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts — our nation's mothers."

Of course he didn't just send me a letter but also, invited 10 wounded warriors and their moms to Maine after the book was released. He was recovering from a fall that left him in a neck brace and was in pain, but still wanted to show his support for these heroes. It was a life-changing visit for all of us, on that beautiful August day at Walker's Point. And, to the group's delight, in addition to 41 and Barbara Bush, George W. and Laura Bush were also on hand to greet us.

President Bush 41 was in a wheelchair, and so were some of the vets, who wheeled right up to this former commander in chief to shake his hand. Others walked over to the president cautiously

on their prosthetic limbs. Barbara Bush was using a walker, but, like Laura Bush, made her way around the group to welcome her guests. George W. made a point of taking each veteran and mom aside to hear their stories and deliver a personal message of support and encouragement. Then all four Bushes patiently posed for pictures with each warrior and his or her mom, as well as a host of group shots.

After about an hour, with just a little bit of encouragement from Bush 43, one young warrior, who had lost both of his legs after stepping on an IED in Afghanistan, slowly, painstakingly, lowered himself down on one prosthetic knee – vets on either side of him to keep him steady – and proposed to his girlfriend. There wasn't a dry eye in the house. Luckily she said "yes," and was cheered on by two former presidents and first ladies. "Every commander in chief before and after me, would agree that working with our military, is the single biggest privilege of being president of the United States," President Bush 41 wrote in the foreword to *Unbreakable Bonds*.

After we left, I was told that 41 loved spending time with our nation's heroes. But the visit wore him out physically, and he spent the rest of the afternoon napping.

And if that weren't enough, thanks to his chief of staff, when our next book came out, 41 and Mrs. Bush insisted that we come to Kennebunkport, Maine again along with a new group of wounded warriors and their service and companion animals. Despite his condition deteriorating, he wanted to be wheeled down his long driveway to personally welcome the new group of veterans along with their service dogs, screech owls and even a pot belly pig. In fact, one of the two owls actually had an accident on 41's pants to which Mrs. Bush replied, "Don't worry, George has plenty of other pants."

I have traded so many notes over the years from this kind and generous man who has touched, mentored and inspired so many. Ironically, this weekend it was my plan to write 41 a letter, letting him know how much he means to me. Here's what I would have said:

"Dear President Bush, the lessons I have learned from you and Mrs. Bush are etched in my soul. They drive me to help others, especially those who, like you, have served our country. I have learned to care about all people, and when I disagree with their views, try to do so with grace and

dignity. You do the right thing, you never give up, and you write the best letters. I love you,
Dava."

‘A different command’: how George H.W. Bush’s war shaped his work for peace

The Guardian, John S. Gardner, 12.02.2018

In 1942, at George Bush’s wartime graduation from his preparatory school, the speaker was Henry Stimson, the secretary of war. Stimson urged the graduates to enroll in college, to give them the skills to become officers. After the speech, Bush’s father asked if anything Stimson said had made him change his mind.

“No, sir,” the younger Bush replied. He had decided to enlist in the navy. Country and duty called and he would not take special treatment over others already in the service.

It was a natural choice for one with a lifetime love of the sea and boats but he also chose to fly, a sign of daring and courage underneath the exterior of someone born to privilege. He enlisted the day after his 18th birthday; for a time he was the youngest aviator in the US navy.

Already deeply in love with the woman who would be his partner for 73 years, he had “Barbara” painted on the fuselage of his Avenger. He flew 58 combat missions. Shot down near Chichi Jima in September 1944, he was rescued by a submarine, sharing the submariners’ life until he could be reunited with his ship – and return to battle. He never forgot that day, remembering two comrades who died, one when his parachute failed to deploy.

George Bush would have been the first to insist that his wartime story was not unique. Joseph Kennedy, scion of the Kennedy Democratic dynasty and the boy his father had marked to become president, was cleared to return home but died after volunteering for one final mission. Duty and honor knew no party.

As with so many others, the war marked Bush. The oil fields of west Texas, where he and Barbara moved to start his career after his delayed graduation from Yale, were far from the sea he loved but the same pluck and courage that propelled him to war led him to this venture rather than to safer, more conventional opportunities back east.

He had a sailor’s sense of duty and propriety. During the Malta summit of 1989, a few weeks after the fall of the Berlin Wall, when he met Mikhail Gorbachev in the midst of a violent

Mediterranean storm, he risked a dangerous helicopter landing on the USS Belknap and happily traveled to Gorbachev's ship for dinner.

Throughout his life, he maintained a deep kinship with veterans and the families of those serving. Early in his administration, on 19 April 1989, on the battleship Iowa – the ship that carried FDR to Casablanca – a turret exploded, killing 47 sailors. For many, the sight of George and Barbara Bush hugging and speaking with the family members after the memorial service was a moment that put a man who had promised a “kinder, gentler nation” into the national consciousness.

“They came to the navy as strangers, served the navy as shipmates and friends, and left the navy as brothers in eternity ... You've always been strong for the sake of love. You must be heroically strong now, but you will find that love endures. It endures in the lingering memory of time together, in the embrace of a friend, in the bright, questioning eyes of a child.

And as for the children of the lost, throughout your lives you must never forget, your father was America's pride. Your mothers and grandmothers, aunts and uncles are entrusted with the memory of this day. In the years to come, they must pass along to you the legacy of the men behind the guns. And to all who mourn ... I can only offer you the gratitude of a nation, for your loved one served his country with distinction and honor. I hope that the sympathy and appreciation of all the American people provide some comfort. The true comfort comes from prayer and faith. And your men are under a different command now, one that knows no rank, only love, knows no danger, only peace. May God bless them all.”

George Bush now serves under that “different command”, one in which he gladly served in life through a deep faith that informed his coolness and steadiness even in the most challenging circumstances.

“Any definition of a successful life must include service to others,” Bush said. Beginning in his 18th year and for three-quarters of a century, his did.

I covered George H.W. Bush: He was the nicest politician I ever met

The Hill, Richard Benedetto, 12.01.2018

President George H. W. Bush was the nicest politician I ever met. I say that after having covered a slew of politicians from mayors, to governors, to presidents for more than 40 years. There was something about him that made you feel you knew him even before you met him. I can use words such as “friendly,” “warm,” “sincere” and “humble,” but they are inadequate and never get to the essence of the man that he really was.

As a reporter who covered two of his presidential campaigns and his four years in the White House, I got to know him beyond his public façade. When he was spending August at his beloved seaside home in Kennebunkport, Me. – which he called his “anchor to windward” – he invited me to join him on his crack-of-dawn morning jogs. The protocol was that I could not ask him political or policy questions because it gave me an advantage over other reporters who didn’t jog. So, we talked about the weather, the previous night’s baseball games – he was then a Mets fan – which local restaurants I visited, what I ate there and whether the food was good or not. I found out later he was passing along my restaurant reviews to friends.

He jogged and waved to neighbors along the sandy-edged back roads near his home. Once he stopped, handed me a camera and had me take a picture of him and some neighbors. As he ran, he was followed by a flashing-lights police car and flanked on foot by jogging Secret Service agents with assault rifles strapped to their chests. Millie, the First Dog, also trotted along, sometimes straying onto neighbors’ lawns, only to be whistled back. The president’s aerobic regimen was 20 minutes – no more, no less. He was 65 at the time.

After his jog, Bush would dash over to the Cape Arundel Golf Club for a quick 18 holes which he would complete in 90 minutes. Reporters assigned to cover called it “aerobic golf.” The drill was that the press pool could view him on the first tee, see who his golfing partners were and ask questions. However, questions while anyone was teeing up and ready to swing were forbidden. One female reporter new to the beat and unaware of the protocol asked the president a question just as he swung. He winced as his left-handed shot sliced far to the left. Rather than take a mulligan or admonish the reporter, he just muttered, “Oh, Lord.”

That was about as angry an outburst as you were likely to get from him. His somewhat embarrassed reaction when someone once told him he made a tough speech was, “Yes, we broke a little china.”

But it was that same calm reserve and astute diplomatic skill, combined with a humility ingrained in him by his mother (“Never be a bragger” she ordered) that served the nation so well at a critical time. He presided over the fall of the Berlin Wall, the tricky unification of East and West Germany into NATO, and the demise of the Soviet Union. It all could have gone in a much more dangerous direction.

He was the right man in the right place at the right time.

Never a grandstander, Bush was criticized for not going to the Berlin Wall to celebrate the victory of democracy. He said at the time that going there would look like bragging, and that he didn’t want to embarrass Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev with whom he needed to retain a working relationship.

He also avoided hogging the limelight when the first victorious U.S. troops returned to Andrews Air Force Base after routing Saddam Hussein’s army from Kuwait. And he skipped the ticker-tape parade in New York City. A World War II hero himself, he wanted the troops to have their own moment.

At the time, Bush was asked why he didn’t continue sending the troops to Baghdad, rather than call them home. His response proved prescient. “And then what?” he asked. We all know what happened some 12 year later when son George W. ordered the invasion of Iraq.

In 1998, Bush and his national security adviser Brent Scowcroft wrote “A World Transformed,” a book that gave an inside look at the many critical foreign policy decisions made while he was in office. I went up to Kennebunkport to interview them for a story.

He and Scowcroft had just returned from a morning round of golf. Bush invited me into the kitchen as he prepared coffee and toast. It was bizarre to be standing there as the former president made toast, two slices at a time. He created a teetering stack of crispy whole wheat bread that might have tumbled over if he added one more slice.

His work completed, Bush put the coffee and toast on a tray and carried it into the cavernous living room filled with bookshelves, family pictures, and chintz-covered furniture. A big picture window framed Atlantic waves crashing onto rocks. Bush and Scowcroft exchanged wisecracks about who shot a better round of golf that day.

But Bush was having the most fun. He had a little tin shaker of cinnamon. And like a kid who sneaked into the cookie jar, he sprinkled a thick, reddish coat of the sugary powder on his toast, slice after slice.

“Don’t tell Bar,” he giggled. “She’ll kill me if she sees this.”

I think now of his last week in office. I had been in a downtown Washington bookstore where I saw a book on the discount table titled “Coastal Maine.” I bought it, brought it to the White House, enclosed a farewell note and asked Press Secretary Marlin Fitzwater to give it to the president.

A few days later, I got a handwritten thank-you note from him. It is dated January 19, 1993, his last full day in office. It read in part, “Dear Richard, I stand here in the Oval Office ready to leave, my ‘Coastal Maine’ under my arm... My work here is done.”

George Bush: ‘Be Prepared and Be Loyal’

Subtitle: He came as close to the ideal of the presidential office as anyone in our lifetimes has

The Wall Street Journal, Dan Quayle, 12.01.2018

After the inauguration on Jan. 20, 1989, George Bush and I walked over to the east front of the Capitol to say goodbye to Ronald Reagan. A few moments later, as we watched the helicopter carry off the 40th president, I heard the 41st say quietly: “There goes a man who was very good to me.”

This was the end of Bush’s eight-year partnership with Reagan and the beginning of his partnership with me. And though ours would last for just one term, it could hardly have been more collegial, uncomplicated or free of tension. We were friends who quickly became close friends. We remained so through all the years since, right up until his passing.

Vice presidents don’t always stay on the best terms with the presidents they serve. What starts out as partly a political calculation, the selection of a running mate, is by no means certain to mature into warm friendship. In our case, what made all the difference was a few choices we made early—and the character of Bush himself.

It helped that the president was also my predecessor as vice president. He knew the job and its potential hazards—staff rivalries, unaligned agendas, the usual guessing game about the No. 2 man’s further ambitions. Bush had figured out how to steer clear of those troubles, and also how to make the most of a position with little executive authority. No one in the Reagan administration had more international experience than Vice President Bush. He knew the world, and most of the major players personally. He put all his strengths in the service of the Reagan agenda.

In our conversations after the 1988 election, the new president’s best advice for doing the job was: “Be prepared and be loyal.” Even so, he didn’t press me at all to handle my responsibilities exactly as he had done. He encouraged me to find my own approach to the office—a Quayle model. I told him the Bush model looked pretty good to me, and I would go with that.

I was only 41 when we were sworn in, and naturally I couldn't match my new boss's knowledge and wisdom. But I had been in Congress since I was 29. Any administration needs good contacts on Capitol Hill, direct lines of communication with members, and fresh reports on the legislative lay of the land. Contributing these became a big part of my portfolio.

One challenge in the vice presidency is that you're always on somebody else's turf. Even though you're one of only two constitutional officers in the West Wing, your involvement in this or that matter can draw resentment. Having seen this in his own tenure, Bush helped me avoid internal discord by assigning me well-defined tasks and, even more crucial, by generously expressing confidence.

I was expected at many regular meetings in the Oval Office. He told me at the outset that I was welcome at any other meeting, too. A vice president's obligation is to be prepared, and no one could have asked for better preparation than the sight of George Bush conducting presidential business. Not only the storied Bush résumé suggested that he was one of the best equipped, most knowledgeable and most substantive men ever to hold the office. It looked that way in person, too.

Traveling abroad, I also came to appreciate the reputation Bush had built over many years. Heads of government, even if they didn't know the president personally, knew they were dealing with a serious man with serious purposes. Whatever their angles or agendas, they never doubted the intentions or the word of the American president. The swift end of the Gulf War, the peaceful conclusion of the Cold War, the reunification of Germany, the liberation of Panama and other big events of that era—none followed a predetermined course. What mattered most was a decisive American leader, a man of calm and measured judgment, working steadily—usually quietly—to keep events on track.

Nothing was ever a big show with George Bush. The theatrics of politics ran against his nature and upbringing. He gave the job his best and expected people to notice, and he always did what he thought right. He could have paid more attention to his own speeches, and would doubtless have fared better if he had written more of them himself—his letters reveal a lovely and insightful writer. Politics doesn't always reward modesty, however—one lesson of 1992.

The judgments of history are kinder, and a case could be made that George Bush gave America its most successful one-term presidency. That's not the distinction we were hoping for then, but looking back it's remarkable to count his achievements. Even the economy, which withstood a brief recession that hurt us politically, was growing at a rate of more than 6% by the end of the term. That doesn't look bad in retrospect.

President Bush found a way to get things done with a Congress controlled by the other party. He respected the legislative branch, and lawmakers knew it. He never answered opposition with petulance or heavy-handedness. He worked faithfully with Congress; any president owes at least that much to the country.

For me, loyalty to President Bush was the easiest part. He was the kind of person who inspired loyal friendship even without the title, someone whose good opinion you wanted because of the kind of man he was. Our 41st president was the most honorable, decent and capable of gentlemen—as close to the ideal of the office as anyone in our lifetimes. If you're looking for a role model, I told my children when they were growing up, start with George Bush.

After he put me on the ticket in 1988, so many good things followed that I could never have expected in my own life. The finest of all was more than a quarter-century of close friendship with someone I came to admire more with the years. When I heard the news from Houston, along with many others who knew and loved George Bush, I thought: There goes a man who was very good to me—and to his country.

‘I Love You, Too’: George Bush’s Final Days

The New York Times, Peter Baker, 12.01.2018

George Bush had been fading in the last few days. He had not gotten out of bed, he had stopped eating and he was mostly sleeping. For a man who had defied death multiple times over the years, it seemed that the moment might finally be arriving.

His longtime friend and former secretary of state, James A. Baker III, arrived at his Houston home on Friday morning to check on him.

Mr. Bush suddenly grew alert, his eyes wide open.

“Where are we going, Bake?” he asked.

“We’re going to heaven,” Mr. Baker answered.

“That’s where I want to go,” Mr. Bush said.

Barely 13 hours later, Mr. Bush was dead. The former president died in his home in a gated community in Houston, surrounded by several friends, members of his family, doctors and a minister. As the end neared on Friday night, his son George W. Bush, the former president, who was at his home in Dallas, was put on the speaker phone to say goodbye. He told him that he had been a “wonderful dad” and that he loved him.

“I love you, too,” Mr. Bush told his son.

Those were his last words.

Mr. Bush’s final days, as recounted on Saturday by Mr. Baker, who saw him repeatedly at the end and was in the room when he died, were remarkably peaceful after an eventful 94-year life that took him from the skies of the Pacific during World War II to the Oval Office at the end of the Cold War.

“I can’t even hardly talk about it without welling up,” Mr. Baker said in a telephone interview. “It was as gentle a passing as I think you could ever expect anyone to have. And he was ready.”

In addition to the former secretary and his wife, Susan Baker, others in the room with Mr. Bush were his son Neil Bush and his wife, Maria, and their son, Pierce. Marshall Bush, a granddaughter, was there. So were Jean Becker, the former president's longtime chief of staff, and the Rev. Dr. Russell J. Levenson Jr., rector of St. Martin's Episcopal Church in Houston, as well as two doctors, Clint Doerr and Amy Mynderse, and a couple of caregivers.

In an interview on Saturday, Dr. Levenson, who has been Mr. Bush's pastor for more than 11 years and visited repeatedly in recent weeks, said the former president was comforted that he would soon rejoin Barbara, his wife of 73 years, who died in April, and Robin, their daughter, who died in 1953 of leukemia at the age of 3.

Mr. Bush, part of a new generation of Republicans, was often referred to as the most successful one-term president.

"There was no question he knew where he was going and who he was going to be with," Dr. Levenson said. "He was looking forward to being with Barbara and Robin again."

After Mrs. Bush's death in the spring, Mr. Bush told friends that he was not yet ready to die. He had been suffering for years from a form of Parkinson's disease that made it impossible for him to walk and increasingly made it difficult for him to speak. But after his wife's funeral, he resolved to hang on long enough for one last summer at his family home in Kennebunkport, Me.

When he returned to Houston in the fall, he was somewhat diminished. He and Mr. Baker went out for oysters on the half shell two weeks ago. "Then things sort of went downhill from there," Mr. Baker said.

Mr. Baker visited about 10 days ago and found Mr. Bush sitting in the library of his Houston house. They had a drink.

"Jefe," Mr. Baker said, using his Spanish nickname, "Chief," for Mr. Bush. "You want to live to be 100?"

"Yes, I do," Mr. Bush answered, "but I don't think I'm going to make it."

Theirs was an extraordinary friendship, unique in the annals of the American presidency. They were close long before their political alliance, getting to know each other on the tennis courts of the Houston Country Club some six decades ago and bringing their families together for Sunday barbecues, touch football games and cocktails on Christmas.

Mr. Bush was there when Mr. Baker's first wife died in 1970 and recruited him to help run his Senate campaign to take his mind off his grief. While they lost the race, it began a partnership that would ultimately take them to the top. Mr. Baker, 88, ran all three of Mr. Bush's campaigns for the presidency, in 1980, 1988 and 1992, and served as his secretary of state during the end of the Cold War. Statues of the two men stand across a park from each other in Houston.

Mr. Bush did not get out of bed the last few days. Former President Barack Obama visited on Tuesday while in town for an event with Mr. Baker. By Thursday, Mr. Bush had stopped eating and was losing weight.

He told his medical team that he did not want to go back to the hospital, where several times in recent years he had been treated and seemed close to death, including most recently just after Mrs. Bush's death.

"This is the most competitive man I ever knew in my entire life," Mr. Baker said. "He demonstrated that right up until the very end. He competed with death — although he did say it's time to go. But he kept fighting, he kept coming back."

When Mr. Baker came to the house early on Friday morning, Mr. Bush seemed to rally a bit, and it appeared that he would defy death one more time. He began to eat again. He had three five-minute soft-boiled eggs, a favorite, as well as a bowl of yogurt and two fruit drinks. "Everybody thought this is going to be a great day and he's back and he's bounced back again," Mr. Baker said.

Mr. Baker left around 9:15 a.m. but decided to return in the evening when he and Mrs. Baker were on the way to dinner with some friends. "He was sitting up in bed and was able to converse with people," Mr. Baker said.

But in the car on the way home from dinner, the Bakers received a phone call urging them to come back to Mr. Bush's house. They arrived about 8:15 p.m. "He had slipped considerably," Mr. Baker said.

Ronan Tynan, the Irish tenor, had called earlier in the day to ask if he could drop by, and when he showed up, Ms. Becker asked him to sing to the president. Mr. Tynan sang two songs, the first "Silent Night" and the second a Gaelic song.

As he sang "Silent Night," Mr. Baker said, "Believe it or not, the president was mouthing the words."

Mr. Baker held Mr. Bush's hand and rubbed his feet for nearly a half-hour. The other children, who live around the country, were called so they could tell their father goodbye.

Dr. Levenson, who arrived at 9:15 p.m., led those in the room in prayer. "We all knelt around him and placed our hands on him and prayed for him and it was a very graceful, gentle death," he said. "It was very evident that that man was so deeply loved."

There was no struggle, no prolonged period of labored breathing. At 10:10 p.m., the former president slipped away.

"If those things could be sweet," Mr. Baker said, "it was sweet."

George H.W. Bush Believed in the Essential Goodness of Americans

TIME, Jon Meacham, 12.02.2018

He wanted to go as soon as he heard.

On the afternoon of Sunday, Dec. 7, 1941, George Herbert Walker Bush—known as “Poppy” to family and friends—was walking on the campus of Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, when word came of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. He was 17-and-a-half years old. He longed to defend his country—right then, right away, no waiting around. Told he would have to turn 18 before he could enlist in the U.S. armed forces, a determined Bush explored the option of going to Canada to join the Royal Air Force. He was that ready to risk everything for a cause larger than himself.

And so there it all was, even in the beginning: a boundless energy and a hunger to serve; a thirst for adventure and a love of country. Six months later, on Friday, June 12, 1942, he marked his 18th birthday, he graduated from Andover, and he drove to Boston to be sworn in as a naval enlistee. From that day until his death more than 75 years later, on Nov. 30, 2018, George H.W. Bush served his country in sundry capacities—including a notable term as president of the United States in an era of what he called “a fascinating time of change in the world itself.”

George H.W. Bush was not a president largely in the tradition of the soldier-statesman Dwight D. Eisenhower, who said that his goal was to take America “down the middle of the road between the unfettered power of concentrated wealth . . . and the unbridled power of statism or partisan interests.”

Moderate in temperament, Eisenhower and Bush were both more traditionally conservative than many of their contemporaries understood, in the sense that they sought above all to conserve what was good about the world as they found it. For them conservatism entailed prudence and pragmatism; they eschewed the sudden and the visionary.

History tends to prefer its heroes on horseback, at least figuratively: presidents who dream big and act boldly, bending the present and the future to their wills. There is, however, another kind of hero—quieter, yes, and less glamorous—whose virtues repay our attention. Hero itself comes

from the Greek word meaning to defend and to protect, and there is greatness in political lives dedicated more to steadiness than to boldness, more to reform than to revolution, more to the management of complexity than to the making of mass movements. So it was for Eisenhower, and so it was with Bush. Eisenhower's favorite motto, inscribed on a paperweight he kept on his desk in the Oval Office, was "Gently in manner—strongly in deed." Bush's life code, as he once put it in a letter to his mother, was "Tell the truth. Don't blame people. Be strong. Do your Best. Try hard. Forgive. Stay the course. All that kind of thing." Simple propositions—deceptively simple, for such sentiments are more easily expressed than embodied in the arena of public life.

Bush believed in the essential goodness of the American people and in the nobility of the American experiment. His understanding of the nation and of the world seems antiquated now; it seemed so in real time, too, at least in the last year or so of his presidency. But there was nothing affected about Bush's vision of politics as a means to public service, of public service as the highest of callings. This vision—of himself engaged in what Oliver Wendell Holmes called the passion and action of the times—was as real and natural to him as the air he breathed. It was his whole world, and had been since his earliest days when he would watch his father come home from a day on Wall Street only to head back out to run the Greenwich Town Meeting. It was as simple—and as complicated—as that.

A formidable physical presence—six-foot-two, handsome, dominant in person—he spoke with his strong, big hands, making fists to underscore a point, waving dismissively to deflect unwelcome subjects or to suggest that someone was, as he would put it, "way out there," beyond the mainstream, beyond reason, beyond Bush. Television conveyed his lankiness, but not his athleticism, his grace, and his sturdiness. Bush was a master of what Franklin Roosevelt once called "the science of human relationships," and his capacity to charm—with a handwritten note, a phone call, a quick email, a wink, a thumbs-up—was crucial to his success in public life and was an essential element of his soul.

A child of one generation's ruling class, the head of another's, and the father of yet a third, Bush led an epic life that ranged from the Gilded Age of railroad barons to the birth of Big Oil, from Skull and Bones to the tennis courts of the Houston Country Club, from Greenwich and Midland to Washington and New York to Baghdad and Beijing. He embodied two competing forces in

American life after World War II: the global responsibilities of a vital atomic power in foreign affairs and the rise of the cultural right wing in domestic politics—forces that fundamentally shaped the second half of the 20th century and the first decades of the 21st.

“How great is this country,” Jeb Bush once said, “that it could elect a man as fine as our dad to be its president?” The remark came in private, without agenda; it so struck Laura Bush that she included the moment in the White House memoir she wrote after she and George W. left Washington in 2009. As the years passed, Jeb’s sentiment became relatively common. The 41st president represented the twilight of a tradition of public service in America—a tradition embodied by FDR, by Eisenhower, and by George H.W. Bush. “My father was the last president of a great generation,” George W. Bush said in accepting the Republican presidential nomination in 2000, eight years after his father’s defeat. “A generation of Americans who stormed beaches, liberated concentration camps and delivered us from evil. Some never came home. Those who did put their medals in drawers, went to work, and built on a heroic scale ... highways and universities, suburbs and factories, great cities and grand alliances—the strong foundations of an American Century.”

It was Bush who quietly but unmistakably laid the foundations for the 21st. He brought the Cold War to a peaceful conclusion, successfully managing the fall of the Berlin Wall, the reunification of Germany, and the end of the Soviet Union without provoking violence from Communist bitter-enders. In the first Gulf War, Bush established that, on his watch, America would not retreat from the world but would intervene, decisively, when the global balance of power was in jeopardy.

On the home front, his 1990 budget agreement controlled spending and created the conditions for the elimination of the federal budget deficit under Bill Clinton. He negotiated the North American Free Trade Agreement; signed the Americans with Disabilities Act; and passed historic clean-air legislation.

His life was spent in the service of his nation, and his spirit of conciliation, common sense, and love of country will stand him in strong stead through the ebbs and flows of posterity’s judgment. On that score—that George H.W. Bush was a uniquely good man in a political

universe where good men were hard to come by—there was bipartisan consensus a quarter century after his White House years.

He was a decent man who did what it took to win, a gentlemanly sportsman who was a relentless competitor, a statesman who believed that campaigning was one thing, governing quite another. Bush was a steward, not a seer, and made no apologies for his preference for action—steady, prudent, and thoughtful—over ideology. Born in the aftermath of the Great War, he fought and nearly died in World War II and spent much of his life living with the reality of the Cold War with the Soviet Union. Unflinching creeds and consuming worldviews could lead to trouble, for devotees of doctrine tended to fall in love with their own sense of certitude and of righteousness, ignoring inconvenient facts. And he believed that if a president were self-absorbed, too focused on his own fortunes, then he would not be the best protector of the fates of others. The best presidents, he believed, put the national interest ahead of self-interest—no matter what the price.

The farther the country moved from his presidency the larger Bush loomed, and the qualities so many voters found to be vices in 1992—his public reticence; his old-fashioned dignity; his tendency to find a middle course between extremes—came to be seen as virtues. He lived long enough to see the shift, and he appreciated that people were taking a more benign view of his record. Amid a conference at his presidential library in his 90th year, a visitor asked him what he made of all the encomiums and positive revision of his legacy. “Hard to believe,” Bush remarked. “It’s ‘kinder and gentler’ all over the place.”

Now he is mourned not because he was perfect, but because he sought to serve the nation in whose defense he first enlisted so long ago at Andover, when he began his long walk into history.

Goodbye, George H.W. Bush. The world will miss a great president – and I will miss a friend

The Washington Post, John H. Sununu, 12.02.2018

President George H.W. Bush always considered Lou Gehrig, the Hall of Fame baseball player for the New York Yankees, to be one of his greatest heroes. No doubt, this admiration stemmed in part from Bush's own baseball career. Like Gehrig, Bush played as a left-handed first baseman, for the Yale baseball team.

But more substantially, Gehrig's career closely mirrored that of Bush. Gehrig played in the shadow of the legendary Babe Ruth, much like Bush did in the shadow of his partner Ronald Reagan. And like Gehrig, Bush operated more comfortably as the soft-spoken member of his partnership. As he said in his 1988 Republican convention acceptance speech: "I am a quiet man, but I hear the quiet people others don't."

Bush, our 41st president of the United States and my friend, died on Nov. 30 at age 94 . Although he would never be comfortable taking credit for the success of his life, most historians now agree that Bush was a great president who accomplished great things. He helped make America safer and the world more stable and more prosperous than ever before in history.

When Bush entered the White House in 1989, he faced many issues that had been lingering for decades: budget deficits, the struggle against communism, instability in Latin America, social inequality, threats to the environment, and struggling schools throughout the country. But he faced them as any former fighter pilot would, telling the American people: "I am a man who sees life in terms of missions — missions defined, and missions completed."

On the international stage, he not only orchestrated one of the largest and most effective military campaigns in history, to drive Saddam Hussein from Kuwait, but he also artfully led the world through the most dramatic and remarkable political transformations of the modern era: the fall of the Berlin Wall, the reunification of Germany, the restoration of democracy in Eastern Europe and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Bush's quiet, skillful and steadfast guidance was exactly the kind of leadership America needed as it stepped onto the stage as the world's lone superpower.

For too long, those international triumphs overshadowed Bush's equally significant and equally great performance on the domestic side. Though he served only a single term, he had an amazing record in terms of legislation proposed and passed. Except for Franklin D. Roosevelt's legislative blitz during the Great Depression, and Lyndon B. Johnson's masterful and opportunistic policymaking run in the aftermath of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, the domestic legislative record of George H.W. Bush is arguably the most prolific, impactful and precedent-setting of all the modern presidencies.

Bush signed into law more than a dozen major pieces of domestic legislation during his single term, including the 1990 budget bill, energy deregulation, the Clean Air Act, the 1990 farm bill, his crime bill, the 1991 Civil Rights Act and the Americans With Disabilities Act. He personally guided his policy team and sweated out the details just as diligently as he did on foreign policy.

He also produced the first set of national performance goals to spur the improvement of education in our K-12 schools, and he passed precedent-setting child-care legislation and led the effort to resuscitate the savings-and-loan industry, including an overhaul of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. after the system's collapse. He also helped to reinvigorate the economies of Latin America under the Brady plan and negotiated the North American Free Trade Agreement. His budget and his policies set the stage for our fiscal prosperity of the 1990s.

And he accomplished all of this despite a heavily partisan, Democratic-controlled Congress. Throughout his term, the opposition dominated the legislative branch, with majorities as high as 260 to 175 in the House and 55 to 45 in the Senate.

His achievements brought forth a new era of global opportunity dramatically different from the one he and Reagan inherited in 1981. But it was that quiet Bush style that helped make such a dramatic transformation possible.

Consider the fall of the Berlin Wall. That day, we quickly arranged a press availability in the Oval Office where the president cautiously expressed appreciation for what had been achieved, but noting there was still a long way to go.

The media and his political opponents immediately criticized him for not being jubilant and declaring total victory over the Soviets. But Bush knew that it was not over yet. He knew that Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev was at risk of being overthrown by hard-liners who would use gloating by Bush to charge Gorbachev with embarrassing Mother Russia. Gorbachev confirmed as much in his memoirs, emphasizing that if Bush had not been humble in triumph, the entire process of transformation could have been undone.

As president, George H.W. Bush laid a solid foundation for his successors to build on. Whether we have the fortitude and discipline to eventually do so remains to be seen.

In any case, the world will miss a great president. And I will miss a great friend.

In covering George H.W. Bush, his gentility, humor and hope were front and center

Subtitle: For someone who covered Bush and got to know him, his death at 94 brought back a flood of memories

Star Tribune, Judy Keen, 12.01.2018

A plaque that says “CAVU” hangs on the wall facing the ocean in Walker’s Point, George H.W. Bush’s summer home in Kennebunkport, Maine.

It was a reminder of his World War II service as a naval aviator, he said in an interview as he was about to turn 80.

During the war, there was no radar on planes, he said, “so what we prayed for at night for the next day was that we’d have Ceiling And Visibility Unlimited. That’s where my life is today.”

A few days later, he parachuted from a plane for the fourth time. The first was when he bailed from his burning bomber over the Pacific in 1944. He kept a promise to himself with a tandem jump in 1997, followed by another in 1999. He wanted to prove that “old guys can still do stuff,” he said. He leapt from a plane again when he was 85 and then at 90.

Bush landed on the grounds of his presidential library at Texas A&M in College Station after that 80th birthday jump. He joked that if things hadn’t turned out well, it would have been a conveniently short trip to his burial site on campus.

The 41st president — he and George W. really did call each other “41” and “43” — will soon be laid to rest in that spot. His death Friday at 94 brought back a flood of memories.

I covered Bush’s presidency and his failed 1992 re-election campaign for USA Today. After his White House days, I interviewed him several more times and visited him at his Maine and Houston homes.

The CAVU plaque is evidence of the commitment to service that defined his life. “Fair winds and following seas, Sir. We have the watch,” the U.S. Navy tweeted Saturday.

Bush's bearing reflected his military background, but he was rarely officious. He could be self-deprecating. Like 43, he was easily moved to tears. He was a guardian of his family.

He invariably sent handwritten notes after each visit. He was a prolific letter-writer and in 1999 published a book of his missives titled with his signature signoff: "All the best."

He could be goofy. In one campaign speech he tried to say "Nitty Gritty Dirt Band," and blurted out "nitty ditty nitty gritty great bird." He wasn't great at "the vision thing," he said, and he wasn't a natural campaigner, maybe because of the starch of his patrician New England upbringing.

He grew convinced during his re-election race that the news media wanted him to lose. The campaign printed caps and bumper stickers that read "Annoy the media: Re-elect Bush" — a precursor to a theme of the 2016 campaign.

During an interview on Air Force One a few days before the 1992 election, it was evident that he would probably lose. He seemed tired and hurt. Later, he would agonize over his sons' campaigns (Jeb was Florida's governor and ran for president in 2016), poring over poll data and fuming at the TV.

After his 1992 loss to Bill Clinton, whom he would later consider almost a surrogate son, Bush for a time resisted the spotlight.

He rejected my interview request in a Feb. 10, 1994, letter. "Do not let your promising career be trivialized by interviewing the unemployed, the retired, the 'used-to-be' types," he wrote. "I do garage cleaning. I do light cooking, but I don't do interviews."

Bush knew the names of the stewards on Air Force One and the butlers in the White House. We once had lunch at Ninfa's, his favorite Mexican restaurant in Houston, and he warmly greeted the staff there.

My mom was hospitalized with atrial fibrillation when he was preparing for his 85th birthday parachute jump. He sent word to her that he had an irregular heartbeat, too, and suggested that she should tough it out and jump from a plane with him. She recovered.

He was often full of mischief. During one visit to Kennebunkport, he decided that I should have a ride in his newest boat. First he decreed that my shoes were inadequate and insisted that I wear a worn pair of Barbara Bush's sneakers.

Bush also suggested that I wear a life jacket, and after Secret Service frogmen checked the bottom of the boat, he slammed it into high gear and roared into the ocean. I was tossed around as he steered in tight circles and the boat bounced off breaking waves. He looked back at me with a wicked grin.

As the years wore on, Bush continued to raise money for natural disaster recovery, but he slowed down. When we talked in his Houston office in 2009 about his partnership with Clinton to collect donations for Hurricane Ike relief, he showed off a bright red motorized scooter. His newly diagnosed vascular Parkinsonism, which affected his mobility, had forced him to use it.

Two years later when I spoke to him for a story about what would have been Ronald Reagan's 100th birthday, he spoke haltingly, searching for the right words — another theft by the disease. It felt like he was fading away.

Bush described a 1996 meeting with Reagan, whom he had served as vice president for eight years. Reagan had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease two years earlier, and Bush described a moment in their conversation when "I could tell he was a little off."

He was uncomfortable with introspection, at least in public, so this is how he answered a question about his place in history in a 1997 interview:

"I don't want anyone to pay attention to me," he said. "I'm confident that historians from one perspective or another are going to write and say what they think and then there'll be a merge of a judgment of our administration." He added with a smile: "I think history's going to be relatively kind."

The Underestimated

City Journal (the Manhattan Institute), Tevi Troy, 12.01.2018

George H. W. Bush was always being underestimated. Though he was successful at almost everything he did—Yale student, baseball team captain, fighter pilot, oil executive, politician, and father—people always seemed to think that he was missing something. Peter Flanigan, the Nixon aide who dangled in front of Bush a senior job in the Nixon White House, seemed to typify this uncharitable and inaccurate view when he told him, “Well, you know, George, you’d have to work hard if you took this job.” Bush, ever gracious, held his tongue at the insult, prompting his impressed wife Barbara to marvel, “How George kept his temper, I’ll never know.” Bush went on to serve in a multitude of high-level positions in the Nixon and Ford administrations, including head of the Republican National Committee, UN ambassador, liaison to China, and CIA director. This array of positions served as a launching pad to the vice presidency and then the presidency. Flanigan tried and failed to become ambassador to Spain. Fooled by his quiet resolve, those who underestimated Bush—from Flanigan to Bob Dole to Michael Dukakis to Saddam Hussein—found themselves astounded when Bush bested them. They shouldn’t have been. Beneath his gracious, even goofy, WASP exterior was a real warrior.

One of my favorite Bush stories is the time that he took on CBS’s Dan Rather—another underestimator, then at the top of his game as anchor of the most important news show on the most important network (boy, how things have changed.) In January 1988, Bush appeared on a five-minute segment with Rather, who had planned to ambush the vice president regarding how much he knew about the Iran-Contra affair. Bush had denied direct involvement in the scheme to sell arms to Iran in exchange for the release of U.S. hostages and use of the proceeds to pay for aid to the Nicaraguan Contras, whom Congress had forbidden the Reagan administration from helping. Bush’s media tormentors loved the possibilities: either Bush was involved, which would mean he had lied, or he was not involved, which would mean that he was out of the loop as vice president.

Bush, however, had no intention of falling into this trap. With the help of GOP media guru Roger Ailes—still years away from Fox News fame—Bush came up with a plan to trap Rather instead. Ailes, knowing how CBS was notorious for cutting and replaying excerpts of interviews

that painted “bad guys”—Republicans and business executives—in a bad light, insisted on Bush’s behalf that CBS conduct the entire interview live. CBS wasn’t happy, but a live interview was the price for getting Bush into Rather’s interrogation chambers, so the network went along. The concession was important. A live interview prevented CBS from doing its standard chop job, and it had other advantages as well, as Rather would soon find out. The anchor still felt that he had the upper hand, though, and he participated in three one-hour, intensive-preparation sessions in advance of the interview. According to Time, Rather was “coached as if he were a candidate preparing for a debate or a pugilist preparing for a fight, rather than a journalist going into an interview.”

From the start of the interview, Rather pressed Bush on Iran-Contra. He was so intent on tripping up Bush that even Time acknowledged that Rather “crossed the line between objectivity and emotional involvement.” But what Rather did not know was that Bush had done some serious prep as well. Bush, with his coach Ailes in the room with him, hit Rather with a question of his own: “How would you like it if I judged your career by those seven minutes when you walked off the set in New York? Would you like that?” Rather, who had indeed walked off the set to protest a tennis match cutting into his program time, was caught off guard. CBS, having agreed to the live interview, could not avoid showing the whole exchange, including the part embarrassing to Rather. Bush loved it, later saying to the still-open microphone: “The bastard didn’t lay a glove on me.”

The entire exchange was part of a concerted—and successful—effort by the Bush team to shed the “wimp” label that Newsweek had hung on Bush. Bush campaign manager Lee Atwater explained the thinking: “If somebody hits him, Bush is going to try to hit back harder.” The Rather duel was helpful to Bush in several ways. In addition to showing him as a strong leader, it helped him with his right flank—always a weakness with Bush. Conservatives loved that Bush was hitting back against the liberal Rather. And it made Bush more comfortable with the media, as he later claimed to “feel much more relaxed with the press now than I ever have.”

With his humor, his grace, and his ease with people, George H. W. Bush embodied the phrase, “Never let them see you sweat.” But the lack of visible perspiration didn’t mean that Bush wasn’t sweating—or hadn’t worked extraordinarily hard. We shall not see his likes again.

The Higher-Education Legacy of George H.W. Bush

The Chronicle of Higher Education, Chronicle Staff, 12.02.2018

George H.W. Bush, who died on Friday, is not generally regarded as having had a major influence on higher education. But in his single term as the 41st U.S. president, from 1989 to 1993, Bush's role proved significant for the academy. Here are a few of his administration's more noteworthy effects on colleges and students:

- The reauthorization of the Higher Education Act in 1992. Among the key provisions were the creation of a direct-loan pilot program, a toughening of the path for student borrowers seeking to discharge their loans in bankruptcy, and the enactment of the 85/15 rule (which would later become the 90/10 rule), which specified that colleges could receive no more than 85 percent of their revenue from federal student aid. (Efforts by the first Bush administration — spearheaded by the education secretary, Lamar Alexander, now a U.S. senator from Tennessee — to rein in for-profit colleges are largely forgotten in higher-ed lore.)
- The crackdown on the Overlap Group. The Justice Department investigated a group of admissions officers at elite colleges who gathered annually to compare and adjust financial-aid awards for prospective students with the intention of making aid dollars go further.
- Supreme Court nominations. The Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill hearings heralded the #MeToo movement, and David Souter proved to be a key advocate of academic and intellectual freedom.
- The subdued reaction to the Tiananmen Square massacre. China's student-led pro-democracy movement electrified the world. Then came the slaughter of an untold number of protesters. Bush, who had embraced China's people as the chief U.S. envoy in the mid-1970s, made diplomatic overtures to the country even as the rest of the Western world was seeking to isolate it.
- Enactment of the Americans With Disabilities Act. In Bush's most enduring legacy for higher education, he signed legislation expanding protections for college applicants and students with disabilities.

Bush's state funeral will take place on Wednesday at Washington National Cathedral. A graduate of Yale, he will be interred on Thursday at his presidential library, at Texas A&M University at College Station, which is also home to the Bush School of Government and Public Service.

Dr. Marc Siegel on the Presidents Bush: There is only one now, but the legacy of the father lives on

Fox News, Dr. Marc Siegel, 12.02.2018

Back in 2012, when I first told people I was going to Texas to ride mountain bikes with the wounded war fighters and President Bush, I frequently encountered the reply “Which President Bush?” This was when the elder Bush was already close to 90, which gives you an idea how robust and vital he was, even with Parkinson’s Disease already significantly impairing him. The former president inspired us all in later years with his will to live and never giving up.

In fact, this was one of the major themes of the bike ride, with President Bush 43 learning from his beloved father a philosophy of toughness mixed with judiciousness and kindness. It is why the younger Bush has granted me the honor of riding with him and our war heroes every year, once I exhibited the mental toughness that he so highly values. Extreme sports meant a lot to both Bushes. The themes of falling and getting back on the bike and never giving up and attacking an imposing hill one part at a time are themes for life that both President Bushes embraced.

In 2015, after his book “41: A Portrait of my Father” came out, President Bush 43 spoke to me in an interview on his ranch about the strong impression it made on him when he thought his father was about to die only to find him sky diving from a helicopter a few months later. “The will to live is very important for your health,” President Bush 43 said to me. “I think the idea of a guy who can’t walk and near death jumping out of a helicopter at the age of 90 is a pretty clear example of the desire to live to the fullest.”

Mortality wins inevitably, even against the toughest fighter, and now President Bush 41 is gone.

But President Bush 43 continues on, impacted still by the memory of his father, and his mother, whom he lost earlier this year. Pam Jackson, Bush’s bike mechanic, told me that she last rode mountain bikes with him around Thanksgiving. She called him “the distinguished gentleman,” and said that “I stayed at the back and tried to keep him in view.”

Sadly, when I go to Texas next year for the Warrior 100K ride, no one will ask me which President Bush I am joining.

I'm sure he also retains his joie de vivre and famous sense of humor despite losing both parents in one year. When I came back the second time to the W100K bike ride, President Bush 43 quickly ribbed me about all the falls I'd taken the first time. Whenever he thought he'd gone a step too far, he'd quickly whisper "just kidding." This is part of the decency and moral compass that both Bushes have been known for.

There is only one President Bush now, but the legacy of the father lives on. For some he will be remembered most as a war hero, for how as a young navy pilot he overcame a harrowing plane crash in 1944 during WWII and miraculously swam to safety in a life raft and was finally rescued by a submarine. For others it was his efforts as vice president and then president to end the Cold War and his successful 1991 Gulf War against Saddam Hussein.

For me, as a physician, it was his heroic war against the side effects of Vascular Parkinsonism which included frequent bouts of bronchitis and pneumonia, the ignominy of drooling and being bound to a wheelchair. He soldiered on, and became a role model for the chronically ill everywhere.

His will to survive was minted during that plane crash. The narrow miss where others didn't make it clearly caused President Bush 41 to further value life and provided him with the toughness needed for battles later on. He lost the final medical battle as we all do eventually, but he fought with honor and dignity.

Sadly, when I go to Texas next year for the Warrior 100K ride, no one will ask me which President Bush I am joining.

I worked in George H.W. Bush’s press office. He was like a father to me.

The Washington Post, Kristin C. Taylor, 12.01.2018

He was vice president of the United States back then. My son was just under a year old. I’d introduced them for the first time during a staff picnic, in 1987, at the vice presidential residence. Hot dogs, punch and other picnic-type foods were the order of the day — fun, fatty foods that my little boy wasn’t accustomed to, but ate with great gusto.

Seconds later, during a “horsy” ride on the vice president’s shoulders, my boy let loose. He threw up. That it happened to be all over the head of Vice President George H.W. Bush was immaterial.

“Remind me not to hold that kid again,” he said to me with a gentle smile, even in the midst of the mess. He might have been surprised by what had just happened, but he wasn’t angry. He had five kids of his own. He understood that children got sick. That’s how fathers are.

I was a young journalist who’d come to Washington fresh out of college (in 1982) to help launch USA Today. I’d been at the newspaper for five years when a close colleague who sat with me on the editorial board resigned to take a job at the White House. He somehow convinced me to “zip on over to the White House” for an interview — they were preparing to announce Bush’s bid for the presidency and needed to bulk up their communications staff — and before I knew it, I’d been offered a position in the vice-presidential press office. It was 1987.

From the moment I met him, Bush was affable and engaging; a mindful listener with a quick wit and a penchant for corny jokes. I worked for him during his vice presidency (as a press officer) and his presidency (as White House director of media relations), and though so much of the world shifted and so many of the people around him changed, he remained constant.

My parents met him that same year, when he was still the vice president. They’d flown in especially for the occasion (and to celebrate Christmas with their baby girl). Though my mother was quite ill at the time, it was important for her to make the trip.

As we stood outside the office of the vice president of the United States that morning, waiting to be ushered in, my father had a few questions.

“What should we call him? Mr. Vice President? Mr. Bush? Sir?”

My mother sat quietly; she was conserving her energy. She’d remained on her oxygen for most of that morning just to have enough energy to walk unassisted down the long halls of the Old Executive Office Building.

My father was a little nervous, too, but far too cool to show it. The nervousness wasn’t necessary, of course. The moment we walked into his suite, the vice president enveloped each of them into a bear hug as big as the sun. For a moment, I couldn’t even see my mother; she’d disappeared into his large embrace.

Mr. Bush was in fine form, too, showing my parents his family pictures and asking all about our family. He cut me a look when my parents told him I was the youngest of their seven children — wait, should I have told him that when we first met? — then joked easily with my parents that between the two families, we’d have enough for a basketball game.

Mother died several months after that visit, and my pain was paralyzing. I was in the middle of the worst firestorm of my life; a forest fire with flames so intense I just couldn’t catch my breath. It was during this dark time that my friendship with George H.W. Bush began; it sprouted through the parched earth and became a living thing. Without it, I might not have survived my own grief.

He sent a warm condolence note to my father — we read it aloud during my mother’s funeral — and he made a donation to the charity we’d set up in my mother’s name. In the months after her death, during a press briefing or a media interview, he’d study my face carefully, clearly worried by my grief because it fell so heavily over everything I touched. He sent me notes of comfort and even called me a few times, at home. He was my friend.

What he represented — what he and Mrs. Bush represented together — was an era. A way of being. A sense of caring, compassion and human kindness that ran through them like a river and washed over everything and everyone they touched.

Shortly after my mother’s death, I became pregnant with my second child. Mr. Bush had been elected president by then, and the news of my pending arrival had made him very happy. He was

ever the gentleman, too; in the latter stages of my pregnancy, he'd often rise from the chair behind his Oval Office desk to make sure I was comfortably seated. None of the other men in the room ever extended the same courtesy. Only him. When we walked from one part of the White House to another, he'd intentionally shorten his steps so that I could keep up. He didn't make a big deal about it, but I could tell he was making the adjustment for me.

About a year later, we listened as my new daughter's soft cries reverberated off the Oval Office walls. That they were rounded walls, I think, seemed to mute the sound. She wasn't unruly; only a little tentative to meet this man with the wire-rim glasses and the big, warm smile. Somehow, he managed to get her to stop crying. (He'd already mollified my son with M&M's.) All the tears, the fears and the fidgeting had been washed away. He was a comforter.

This is how life stretches out; how it slips and slides so quickly we can barely feel it move: Years later, I'm in New York at the 2004 Republican National Convention with my family. Bush was there too, with his family. A Bush staffer called me at my hotel (I still don't know how he knew where I was staying), to issue an invitation from the former president and first lady for my daughter and me to come by their hotel for tea. His son was due to accept the Republican nomination that very evening but, still, he wanted to see us.

I remember sitting in their sunny hotel suite, watching as he and my daughter bantered easily.

The visit was brief but meaningful. He was just as sharp, just as engaging and active a listener as ever. Even though we were in their hotel suite, it felt like we were in their home, sitting in their living room or maybe even at their kitchen table.

As we were hugging goodbye, for some reason I still can't explain, hot tears sprang to my eyes. Horrified, I tried blinking them back, thankful that they pooled but did not flow. What brought those tears on, I realize now, was the sudden, shocking realization that life marches on almost faster than you can live it. I also know that they were tears of pride. Of happiness. Of the certain comfort that comes from simply sitting with a good friend you hadn't seen in a long time.

I last visited him in Houston, in 2015. He was wheelchair-bound but still filled with verve and vigor. We sat in his office and chatted.

He was wearing khakis, a light blue, V-neck sweater and a bluish-grey sports jacket. On his feet, bright yellow socks: “See the Smiley faces on ‘em?” he asked proudly, lifting his pant leg a little higher so that I could inspect. His hair was longer than I’d ever seen it. He remained engaged and attentive, but after a while seemed slighted winded, which worried me. I’d never seen him winded.

What struck me, during that visit, was how much he remembered. What struck me, also, was how much I’d forgotten. We took a few photos and his energy level seemed to increase. I gave him a gift: A pair of socks — brightly colored blue and red striped socks — and a tiny teddy bear dressed as a skydiver (his love of dropping out of planes worried me deeply).

Before I left his office that day, the lump arrived in my throat and snatched my words. I pushed through, though, because I needed to — had to — thank him for being my friend. My mentor. For being a wonderful teacher and an exacting, expectant First Boss. I thanked him for helping me through the darkest period in my life, and for giving my parents those moments of great pride that day they first met him in the White House.

He accepted my gratitude with gratitude, and I think, a tiny bit of embarrassment. He might have been surprised at such an unexpected outpouring. I hadn’t planned on it, either, but I thank God that I did. It’s important that friends communicate openly, honestly. Say what you need to say, before it’s too late.

As I left his office that day, heading to Houston’s Hobby Airport for the plane ride back to D.C., I heard him holler out for me as I was halfway down the hall. I ran back.

“One more hug!” he said as I returned.

One more hug.

What makes my heart so heavy, as I say goodbye to my friend, is that I am also saying goodbye — all of us are saying goodbye — to an era.

My heart is heavy, yes, but my spirit is glad. My friend is gone and it makes me very sad. He and my father are the finest men I've ever known. But what he left — what they both left — is a legacy, to be kept alive by all of us.

That knowledge alone — that abiding sense of the collective responsibility that still remains — is enough to make me smile through my own tears, too. He was my friend, and now he is gone.

But a friendship such as this never really dies.

The Patrician President and the Reporterette: A Screwball Story

Subtitle: My faithful correspondent, Poppy Bush, scribbling and typing notes through decades of history

The New York Times, Maureen Dowd, 12.02.2018

Nobody understood our relationship — least of all us.

It was, admittedly, odd.

“I like you,” the first President Bush wrote me once, after he was out of office. “Please don’t tell anyone.”

In decades of correspondence, he tried to figure out why we stayed in touch, beginning one note “Darn you Maureen Dowd” and mischievously observing in another, “Sometimes I found it better around my family to go ‘Maureen who?’”

At times, typing on what he called “my little IBM,” he signed off “Con afecto, GB,” or if I was writing critically about his sons, “Con Afecto, still, just barely though! gb.” Or “Love” scratched out and replaced with the handwritten rebuke, “not quite there yet.”

I come from a line of Irish maids who worked for the first families of America, the Mellons and the Gores, wealthy, aristocratic families like the Bushes.

George Herbert Walker Bush, known by his childhood nickname of Poppy, was cared for by maids and chauffeured to kindergarten at Greenwich Country Day School. His idea of cursing like a sailor entailed unleashing a string of epithets like “Golly!” “Darn!” and “Oh, shoot!”

His father was a Wall Street banker turned Connecticut senator who was straight out of central casting: craggy, 6-foot-4, wearing gray worsted suits even in warm weather. My brothers, Michael and Martin, teenage pages at the Capitol in the ’50s, were in awe of him. Michael was in the Senate mail room one day when the young man sorting letters held up one addressed to the Connecticut senator and mused: “You just know a guy with a name like Prescott Bush is not driving a bus.”

If the Clintons are the careless Tom and Daisy Buchanan and Barack Obama is a Camus-like figure of existential estrangement and Donald Trump is a flimflam man out of “Huckleberry Finn,” H.W. was Bertie Wooster, an airy WASP propelled to the top by the old boys’ network.

In another life, I probably would have been serving President Bush his vodka martini, made to perfection with a splash of dry vermouth, two olives and a cocktail onion.

But I came along just as the old world of Ivy League white men running everything was breaking up. My mom had applied for a job as a reporter at The Washington Post in 1926 and had been told by a gruff city editor that it was too rough a trade for a young lady.

But by 1988, I could be The New York Times White House reporter.

And that was a shock to the system for H.W. He was all noblesse oblige and I was all class rage. He was clearly expecting someone with a name like Horatio Farnsworth III, a Harvard man who would bat around the finer points of the North Atlantic alliance over highballs on Air Force One. And he got a newfangled, irreverent “reporterette,” as Rush Limbaugh called us in those days, who was just as focused on character and personality as politics and policy.

At dinner one night, President Bush’s pollster, Bob Teeter, had a couple of martinis and got frank with me: “We just don’t see you as The New York Times White House reporter. We see you more at a newspaper like the New York Daily News or the Chicago Tribune.”

Dumbfounded, I stammered, “You mean because I’m a woman with an ethnic, working-class background?”

Yes, Teeter replied.

And thus began the screwball story, spanning decades, mystifying everyone, of the patrician president and the impertinent reporter.

I wrote a lot about how the preppy with the striped watchband transformed his blue-blooded Yale background to seem more red-blooded Texas, putting Tabasco sauce on his tuna fish sandwiches, wearing cowboy boots emblazoned with “GB,” listening to the Oak Ridge Boys and Reba McEntire, and pretending that pork rinds were his favorite snack rather than popcorn.

He protested that his mesquite side was genuine. “Can I name drop right here?” he wrote me once. “I am mad about Reba and she likes me, too — so there!”

Fortunately, H.W. was too gracious to hold my background and writing style against me for long. He adapted and treated me with utter fairness and kindness, even when I dubbed him “goofy” for bouncing around like Tom Hanks in “Big,” an irrepressible boy in a dignified man’s body. “Ants on a hot pan,” the Chinese christened him, for his frenetic personality.

What other commander in chief wore a bunny tie on Easter and a pumpkin tie on Halloween? Who else would sit in the White House reading women’s magazines with his wife and then look up to ask, “Bar, what’s a bikini wax?” Who else would go to the magic shop near the White House and fill his office with items like a red rope that turned white, a calculator that squirted water and cash on a string so you could yank it back when someone tried to pick it up? He also had a crystal ball with a disembodied voice that gave Delphic answers to questions about tax increases: “The images are cloudy. Have someone else ask.”

Who else would send me a Polaroid of himself wearing a T-shirt that said “Broccoli Lover”? Or a picture of himself and Barbara parodying that famous attenuated Al and Tipper Gore convention kiss?

Who else would jump out of a plane on his 90th birthday, years after he began using a wheelchair? Waiting for her husband on the landing pad of their church in Kennebunkport, Barbara dryly noted that if the parachute didn’t open, at least they wouldn’t have to go far for the funeral.

Poppy wasn’t perfect. I recoiled when he beat Michael Dukakis with the race-baiting Willie Horton campaign designed by Lee Atwater and Roger Ailes. And again when he sent his national security adviser, Brent Scowcroft, to Beijing for a secret midnight champagne toast with the leaders who perpetrated the Tiananmen Square massacre. And again when he didn’t do nearly enough to combat the AIDS epidemic. And again when his White House directed the defense of his Supreme Court nominee, Clarence Thomas, that tried to discredit Anita Hill. Unlike President Trump, who does his own wet work, the Bushes took the more refined route of outsourcing their ends-justify-the-means moves.

But, as politicians go, 41 had many good qualities. Most of the time, he tried to do the right and decent thing, as he saw it, to act for the good of the country and the world. He earned his sobriquet from his biographer Jon Meacham: “The Last Gentleman.”

Covering H.W.’s White House was wildly different than covering Donald Trump’s. A Trump day bursts with a fusillade of huge news stories, often starting at dawn with a crazy tweet and usually involving the amorality, criminality and vulgarity of the president and his circle. I could go for months without getting a juicy story out of 41’s White House. It was often hard to even break into the paper — unless we discovered that the president showered with his dog, Millie, or that Millie was suffering from lead poisoning from licking the White House paint.

In the absence of stories about impeachment, porn stars and white-collar criminal transgressions, I was left writing about Bush-speak, 41’s tangled syntax. At a Knoxville high school, when he was asked about ideas to improve schools, he replied: “Well, I’m going to kick that one right into the end zone of the Secretary of Education.” Sometimes he forgot and read his stage directions, like: “Message: I care.” As Lance Morrow wrote in Time magazine, the president treated words as “perverse, buzzing little demons that need to be brushed away periodically like flies.” This did not help H.W. in debates with Bill Clinton, which is why he was caught impatiently checking his watch.

He once tried to dismiss a reporter who asked about his role in the Iran-contra scandal, chiding: “You’re burning up time. The meter is running through the sand on you, and I am now filibustering.” He went past dialoguing with other world leaders to “trialoguing.” He often quoted some advice from his mother, using it for all occasions: “So tomorrow there’s going to be another tidal wave, so keep your snorkel above the water level.”

He shunned personal pronouns because his beloved mother, Dorothy, always warned him not to gloat or focus on “the big I.” Asked what the Malta summit with Mikhail Gorbachev would mean for the world, Bush replied: “Grandkids. All of that. Very important.” In his State of the Union message, he asked: “Ambitious aims? Of course. Easy to do? Far from it.” Once on his beloved cigarette boat, the Fidelity, he told me, “Can’t act. Just have to be me.”

Dana Carvey mocked the president by standing in front of the Berlin Wall on “Saturday Night Live” and intoning: “Before Bush, wall. With Bush, no wall.” Bush, who loved to laugh and who traded barbershop jokes with his Secretary of State James Baker and his image wizard Sig Rogich, ended up putting a tape of Carvey mimicking him in his presidential library. (His fondness for dirty jokes grew antiquated, colliding in the end with the #MeToo wave, for which he apologized.)

After 43 became president, 41 wrote to Time’s Hugh Sidey with a self-deprecating comparison to John Adams, the only other president whose son also became president: “A prolific reader, he loved the classics, prided himself on his ability to speak Latin, and had a library of extraordinary proportions. I couldn’t wait to stop studying Latin. Big difference there between me and John.”

I wrote about Bush’s grueling schedule, not of governing but of sporting: shooting, casting, jogging, putting, pitching, lobbing, boating, diving and body surfing. I dug up the dirt on his floating backhand, unsteady putting stroke and a basketball shot that his son Marvin called “an ugly air ball.” Many a summer morning at 6 a.m., I could be found on the Kennebunkport golf course, sitting cross-legged and watching Bush play “aerobic golf” or “golf polo.”

He complained in one of his “blue notes” from the Oval to his press secretary, Marlin Fitzwater, that I was sitting in a “hinayanistic” Buddha pose on the first tee, “off meditating in Sri Lanka.” It was giving him the yips. He worried I was trying to figure out “what makes this crazy guy tick.”

Once, to pay him back for all the break-of-day golf games, I thought it would be funny to wear a “Jesse Jackson for President ’88” cap and a “Bob Dole for President ’88” T-shirt on the course. As H.W. came hurtling down in his golf cart toward the ninth hole, I was waiting for him to see my get-up and laugh. But he didn’t look my way. His golf partner, his oldest son, then known as “Junior” and the Roman candle in the family, did look, though, and leveled a fierce glare at me.

“No worries,” I comforted myself. “Jeb’s the comer. Junior’s the black sheep.”

H.W. used sports as a way to do personal diplomacy, playing horseshoes with heads of state at Camp David or driving them maniacally on his motorboat at Kennebunkport. (Francois Mitterrand begged off, saying he'd get mal de mer.)

I was in the press contingent when 41 took Hosni Mubarak to his first baseball game to see the Baltimore Orioles. The crowd cheered as Ted Williams, who was in the stands, was introduced and then reacted in flummoxed silence when the announcer boomed "the president of Egypt — Mubarak."

One of the only things that 41 ever boasted about was when he began hilariously claiming, after he got out of office, that he had coined the phrase "You da man" in the '60s. "He maintains he was inspired to shout it to the Houston Astros' Rusty Staub as he rounded third base following a home run, and it slowly caught on from there," Doro Bush wrote in her book on her dad.

I interviewed President Bush about popular culture and he accused me of doing a "psychoanalytical" piece and trying to put him "on the couch." I found out that Greer Garson was his favorite actress, that he had had a crush on Doris Day as a teenage Navy pilot in World War II, that he loved glee club music, that he was a bust at the fox trot, and that he once dozed off while watching the Ronald Reagan movie "Santa Fe Trail."

I didn't spare the journalistic rod. When I took my mother, who was on crutches, to a White House Christmas party, President Bush kissed her sweetly. On the way home, she said, "I knew he had a cold, but he was so handsome, I just went for it." Then she glowered at me, muttering, "I don't want you to write anything mean about that man ever again."

Somewhere along the way, H.W. and I grew to appreciate each other.

"We have a love-hate relationship," he told me when I ran into him in 2001 at a book party in Georgetown. "I talk to my shrink about it." He knew that I knew he was kidding; he avoided introspection at all costs, often ending debates in the White House by saying "I'm president and you're not."

Like the current occupant of the White House, 41 was obsessed with The New York Times. (Both men's fathers read the Times.) But while he tweaked the liberal press — a 1992 bumper

sticker said “Annoy the media, re-elect Bush” — Poppy understood we are not the Enemy of the People. His critiques were more along the lines of this one in a note he sent me: “Booh!, editorial page.”

When I asked the ex-president if he would like to meet with our editorial board, he replied, “Only after 3 root canal jobs. Thanks anyway.”

He reminisced in one note that Arthur Sulzberger Jr. had covered his campaign a bit in 1980: “We liked him, but then he got to be an editor then top gun — publisher. A lib, yes, but not a mean one.”

H.W. wrote that he was not as anti-press as his sister, Nancy Ellis, who had once excoriated the Taylors, who used to own the Boston Globe. “I am not like my beloved sister, who has re-cancelled her Boston Globe subscription four different times,” he said, “and who took on one of the sacred Taylor family in a letter-to-the-ed as a ‘Droopy Drawers.’”

He would complain when I used the “d word” (dynasty) and when he thought I was making the family sound elitist, telling me to lay off the “legacy crud” and “the Gatsby stuff,” fretting that it could hurt Jeb. He told me to ignore his stationery with the drawing of the posh Kennebunkport compound. He sometimes signed off sardonically, “Sincerely, My Excellency, GHWB, Eastern Elitist.”

Mostly, he agonized about how strange it was that we stayed in touch when I was so hard on W. about the invasion of Iraq. (Even though H.W. and I both believed that ousting Saddam would cause more trouble than containing him.)

“Where do you and I stand,” he pondered. “It is not hate (underlined). How can I feel a warm spot in my heart for someone who day in and day out brutalizes my son? I don’t know but I do. End of Confession — Con Afecto, GB #41.”

Another time, he wrote: “I don’t like it that you don’t like my oldest son; but it’s a bit of a stand off cuz he doesn’t like you either. But then he doesn’t know you as well as I do. Time may heal.”

Jean Becker, 41's lovely chief of staff, joked that the former president and I needed "couples counseling."

Sometimes, H.W. talked about his "madness Richter scale" or declared himself "double dip angry" with me after a tough column on W.

"You see, I like this exchange with you, but, as confessed before, I get angry with you!" he wrote. Another time, he teased: "Now I am off to the clinic to take a little Prozac, stretch out, and get some shrinkster to figure out this love/hate thing about you that plagues me." At one point, he pleaded: "Do not prescribe shock therapy."

He said he preferred to keep his advice to his eldest son private, noting: "I am even very careful around close friends having learned that the propensity to leak is stronger than the sex drive."

Once, in return for being on a panel at the Bush Library — we had to wait until Barbara was out of town because she was peeved about my W. columns — 41 gave me a copy of a book which was the closest he got to a memoir, "A World Transformed," written with Scowcroft. The inscription said it was "better than Sominex if you ever need a tranquilizer." And he trepidatiously gave me a quirky, raffish, 11-page typed parody of my Bush parodies portraying W. as a Boy Emperor being controlled by his malevolent regents, Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld.

His satire was laced with "forsooths," "lyres," "nobles and peasants," "courtiers," "verilys" and other Old English touches. It was funny, bringing alive the fantasy court of Bushland with Poppy as "the old warrior king"; "Queen Bar"; "King Prescott of Greenwich, now in heaven"; "Princess Doro"; "Earl Jeb of Tallahassee"; "Lady Dowd, charming princess of Op-ed land"; "Queen Hillary of Chappaqua"; "Sir Algore"; "Maid Monica" frolicking with "King Bill" in the Oval Office, ushering in "a new permissiveness, a new standard that confuses the old man." And there was George of Crawford, "the new King" who took the throne after "the Battle of Chads in November."

But an even funnier thing that happened in the course of this unique relationship came after the ascension of W. — whom 41 sometimes referred to in his notes as "my boy, Quincy." In 2006,

43 made a rare trip to Kennebunkport one weekend for a wedding, a christening and a funeral, and I went with the press corps. I was surprised when Karl Rove called me to tell me he was involved in a cloak-and-dagger plot with Bush senior, who wanted to meet me for coffee but didn't want his son to find out because it would irritate him.

The former C.I.A. director who liked to sign his notes at the agency, "Head Spook," still had some tricks up his sleeve. I loved the idea of one president with a Secret Service detail sneaking around behind the back of another president with a Secret Service detail, when they were both staying in the same family compound in the small Maine town.

Talk about Skull and Bones skulduggery. We didn't pull it off, but I liked the derring-do of it, recalling the days when President Bush used to try to lose his security detail when he was careering around in his speedboat in Maine.

After he was out of office, I sent H.W. and Barbara books and small Christmas mementos. Once, I told my assistant, Ashley Parker — now a Washington Post White House reporter — to send him a glasses case embroidered with a lobster. She got distracted and sent him some cheap drugstore hand warmers that you put inside gloves.

Naturally, since we're talking about the most polite man who ever lived, I soon got a thank-you note for the 50-cent present: "I shall use the handwarmers as Pres. Obama comes in and we Bushes leave town," he said.

When my mom died at 97 in 2005, he sent me a kind email that made me cry.

"It hurts to lose a parent," he wrote. "It hurts an awful lot. When my own Mom died I went up to Greenwich to check on her. She was close to death and her breathing was so labored that I literally prayed to God, as I knelt right there by her bed, that she would go on to heaven. She was prepared to do just that.

"I hope your own Mom had a peaceful passing; and that she felt joyous about going on to heaven. Heck with politics. Heck with the NYT and all my hang ups about" it.

I flew down to Houston to have lunch with H.W. in 2011.

“Did you come because you think I’m going to die?” the then 87-year-old in a wheelchair asked me as we dined at his favorite pizza dive.

No, I replied. I told him I was enlisting to go with him on his ninetieth birthday parachute jump.

He spoke fondly of Bill Clinton and respectfully of President Obama. Then I asked him about Donald Trump, who was leading the birther charge against Obama. Neither of us could have imagined then that Trump would dispatch H.W.’s long-nurtured dreams of his son Jeb becoming president with two words: “low energy.”

At the mere mention of Trump’s name, 41 made a face. “He’s an ass,” he snapped.

When Trump began plowing his way through Republican rivals, H.W. was known to throw his shoe at the television set.

The narcissistic, amoral, vulgar reality-TV president and the modest, principled, classy, old-world president could not be more different.

With Poppy, there was decency and sweetness.

“Put it this way,” he wrote me once. “I reserve the right to whine, to not read, to use profanity, but if you ever get really hurt or if you ever get really down and need a shoulder to cry on or just need a friend — give me a call. I’ll be there for you. I’ll not let you down.

“Now, go on out and knock my knickers off. When you do, I might just cancel my subscription.”

George H.W. Bush had a love of sports and an affinity for at least one sportswriter

The Washington Post, Thomas Boswell, 12.01.2018

One day nearly 30 years ago, I got a call at home from the sports department of The Washington Post.

“You said not to give your home phone number to anybody,” a young news aide said. “But can I give it to the president?”

“The president of what?” I said.

“The United States.”

“Okay.”

A few minutes later, President George H.W. Bush called. We had chatted a bit at All-Star Games and baseball functions when he was vice president for eight years. Now he was president. While fishing in the South, he had heard, to his delight, that there was decent bass fishing near the White House. Was it true?

“Where are you, Mr. President?” I asked.

“In the Oval Office,” he said.

I told him that, if he looked over his shoulder, he could almost see that fishing spot. I would get The Post’s outdoors writer, Angus Phillips, to call him with the details.

Not long after, my wife got a call at home from a chilling-voiced government man with an ominous job title who said, “We’re looking for Thomas Boswell.”

“What’s he done?” she answered, worried.

“The president has the yips,” the voice said. “He’s playing in a tournament this week. Does your husband know anybody who could help fix his putting?”

“Where are you, Mr. President?” I asked when he called.

“In Houston.”

“The best short-game teacher in the world lives in Houston — Dave Pelz.”

Soon, the yips were cured.

If any man, certainly any president, believed in reciprocity, it was this gracious gentleman for whom I was suddenly glad that I had voted. Over time, my wife and I were invited to a horseshoe-pitching contest at the White House and other sports-themed events, including a mixed-doubles tennis match with “the boys” — that would be Marvin and Jeb — who played a spirited match with Chris Evert and Pam Shriver as their partners.

After tennis, everybody was invited back for dinner. After dessert, we were told: “Oh, go anywhere you want. Everybody wants to see the [White] House.” My wife asked whether we could see the Lincoln bedroom. “Sure.”

I’m not certain how many people have stolen the breakfast menu off the pillow in the Lincoln bedroom. Not saying my wife did. I did mention hidden cameras at the time. She said: “Who pays for all this stuff? The public. Us.”

One day in 1990, a long white limo pulled up in front of our house — the first and last time that has happened. A man delivered an envelope. “Knowing what a great baseball fan you are, I wanted you to have the enclosed Topps George Bush baseball card. Only 100 were made. Best wishes, George Bush.”

What struck me was that, as the captain of a Yale baseball team that played for the national championship in both 1947 and 1948, a team that included three future major leaguers, Bush could emphasize whatever he wanted in the statistics and honors on the back of the card. Included was his .251 career batting average in 175 at-bats, plus his .133 average (2 for 15) in “postseason,” a number that couldn’t possibly have pleased him. No mention of being captain.

The previous year, I had written a profile for The Post on the president’s lifelong love affair with baseball and his general borderline addiction to every game ever invented — soccer was his best sport at Yale, where he was a star center forward. That baseball card worried me, so I asked the

proper authority at The Post whether I should keep it, return it, sell it to charity, whatever. They said: “Keep it. But never sell it.” Much as I enjoy the card, I wonder whether I would have picked a different option.

President Bush’s gift for personal connection, naturalness and self-deprecating warmth was extraordinary, as was wife Barbara’s, as many have noted. I’m certain I was never in his top million acquaintances, yet during one phone call he said, “Have you and Wendy seen any good movies lately?”

My thought, “Sir, isn’t there something else you should be doing?” Once the Gulf War began, he had a lot to do. And there was no more time for sportswriters.

Many serious people will have memories about this excellent yet somehow still modest man who, at every stage of his life, prepared himself for his nation’s highest office more thoroughly than perhaps any president before or since.

After Pearl Harbor, he enlisted on his 18th birthday and became the youngest aviator in the Navy. After military service, he made a fortune as a Texas oil man. Then, at 40, he turned to public service, including two terms as a Texas congressman, ambassador to the United Nations and later to China, as well as director of the CIA and then vice president under Ronald Reagan for eight years. Few men have respected expertise and thorough knowledge of institutions, policy and history more deeply.

Perhaps I met the manner more than the man. But I doubt they could be too dissimilar. For a lifetime, it’s hard to be a great deal different than we seem, even in the smallest details. During an interview in the Oval Office, I asked President Bush, since he was known as a slick glove man, whether he still knew where his old first baseman’s mitt was. He gave a strange little look, then opened a drawer of his desk.

“It’s right here,” he said, taking out his George McQuinn claw model. The glove was practically black from age but kept supple, oiled and in working condition. He pounded his fist in its pocket as so many of us have when we need to think about something — perhaps something difficult, probably not baseball.

I thought, then and now: “What a fine man. And what a great country.”

Points of light: Why service to others was the real hallmark of President Bush's life

CNN, Michelle Nunn, 12.02.2018

My first meeting with President George H. W. Bush was a job interview.

I arrived at the Bayou Club in Houston to talk to President Bush about the CEO job at Points of Light, the organization he created during his presidency to support and lift up "all the individuals and community organizations ... spread like stars through the nation, doing good."

I was appropriately nervous -- as a candidate for a big job, as someone about to spend two hours at lunch with a former President, and as a lifelong Democrat meeting with a man whose family had come to define mainstream Republicans.

President Bush's warmth, charm and graciousness immediately put me at ease. He charmed the doorman, the waiters and those in the restaurant eager to meet him. He told stories and asked questions. He drank a glass of wine with lunch and ordered dessert, enlisting all of us to enjoy the same. I think it speaks well of a man to order dessert at lunch.

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Since that lunch, I had the privilege of leading and representing Points of Light, now the largest organization in the world dedicated to volunteer service. And I have been lucky to interact with President Bush and his friends and family many times. He may be, as some have said before me, the only man who got to be President by being nice.

As people attempt in the coming days to define President Bush, they will characterize him as wise, gracious and committed to civility. And they will speak of his courage, from his days as a fighter pilot to his birthday celebrations jumping out of airplanes.

But I hope they don't miss what I see as the real hallmark of President Bush's life -- his unyielding commitment to public and community service. It was his true north.

George H. W. Bush's record of service to his country is well known. He enlisted in the armed forces on his 18th birthday. He flew 58 combat missions before he was shot down over the

Pacific during World War II. He served as a congressman, Ambassador to the United Nations, U.S. envoy to China, director of the CIA, Vice President and President.

As President, he broke new ground when he signed the Americans with Disabilities Act, giving tens of millions of people new rights, and launched the modern volunteer service movement by signing the National and Community Service Act of 1990, the first piece of federal service legislation in almost 20 years. He started the Daily Point of Light Award to honor extraordinary volunteers in 1989 and honored its 5,000th recipients with the Obamas at the White House in the summer of 2013. For decades, he signed every award certificate himself.

But most people don't know that George Bush was a volunteer leader long before he got involved in politics: starting the United Negro College Fund on the Yale campus; helping to launch the YMCA in Midland, Texas; coaching an inner-city baseball team in Houston.

When his young daughter Robin died, he and his wife Barbara started the Bright Star Foundation to aid in leukemia research. After he left office, the President and Mrs. Bush helped to raise hundreds of millions of dollars for cancer research, supporting the MD Anderson Cancer Center and founding a group called C-Change.

In the wake of disaster, President Bush joined with former President Bill Clinton many times -- in some of the greatest across-the-aisle moments of 20th-century politics -- to help those affected by hurricanes, earthquakes and tsunamis.

Behind this resume of public service was a record of great private kindness. People who loved George Bush long before he became President tell stories of him standing up for a bullied young boy, sending a handwritten note to a friend who was suffering and breaking down the boundaries of a country club by inviting a Jewish friend to play tennis.

In 2013, former President Bush shaved his head in support of a Secret Service Agent's son who was fighting cancer.

In 2013, he shaved his head in solidarity with a 2-year-old leukemia patient who is the son of a Secret Service agent assigned to his detail in Maine.

President Bush's grandson Pierce told those gathered at Points of Light's 2012 Conference on Volunteering and Service in Chicago that his grandfather "has just this special quality about him. When you look at his time in the world, he has led this amazing life serving others.... When I look at my life, I aspire to be like my grandfather because he has this humbleness, and he is a centered human being, and it's encouraged me to get out and serve."

George H. W. Bush lived a life of service. He made service a family tradition passed from generation to generation. And he made the call to service a centerpiece of his presidency.

His vision of "a thousand points of light" has endured for more than 20 years not just because it was an evocative phrase, but because it so well captures the President's core belief about this nation and about life.

As he wrote in a letter to journalist Carl Cannon in 2001, "Some of my happiness still comes from trying to be in my own small way a true 'point of light.' I believe I was right when I said, as President, there can be no definition of a successful life that does not include service to others."

As president, George H. W. Bush was one of the most powerful individuals on earth. But he knew that it was in the humble acts of serving others that he demonstrated his own -- and America's -- greatest strength.

George H.W. Bush showed his character in one phone call

CNN, Aaron D. Miller, 12.02.2018

One day in 1982, when I was still a young intelligence analyst at the Department of State following Lebanon and the Palestinians, the phone rang in my office. It was the White House situation room on the line.

Shortly after the operator told me to hold, I heard George H.W. Bush, who was the vice president to Ronald Reagan at the time, say, "Aaron, I know you're busy, but I read one of your memos on Lebanon. Do you have a few minutes to chat? I'm sorry to bother but I have a lot of questions."

Bush's death Friday night should remind us all that the essential qualities in a president, along with the inevitable flaws and imperfections, are what define a presidency. And that day, after hanging up the phone, I was struck by a couple of them.

First, there was the sheer humility and decency of Bush's demeanor and attitude that morning.

There was also his curiosity. Bush, who won the presidential election in 1988 after eight years as vice president, knew what he didn't know, and he showed a strong desire and urgency to find out. The desire to learn what you don't know, rather than basing decisions on what you already do, is an essential quality of leadership.

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It also reflects the fact that you take the job seriously and shows a great responsibility to maintaining a high standard of professionalism and discipline. Those qualities can give a president both the confidence to act based on sound empirical evidence, and a knowledge of when to hold back given uncertainties.

Bush's decision not to invade Iraq after pushing Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait was one example of that mix of prudence and wisdom. Criticized by some as not finishing the job, that restraint -- given the calamities that would embroil his son in Iraq in 2003 -- was clearly a critically important inflection point in the Bush presidency.

There are many ways to assess Bush's presidency. There are the superlatives, of course. He was the first vice president to accede directly to the highest office since Martin Van Buren, after Andrew Jackson, and the first president since John Adams whose son would also become president.

Bush also marked the last time a two-term president (in his case, Ronald Reagan), passed on the office to a member of his own party. He was also the last US president to have served in combat. Bush, along with his beloved wife Barbara, who died in April this year, also hold the record for longest marriage in presidential history: 73 years.

There are the accomplishments, which include navigating the end of the Cold War, his support for Germany's reunification and signing the 1991 START agreement, along with the passing of the American Disabilities Act and important amendments to the Clean Air Act.

There were also, of course, setbacks and failures. Bush's nominee for Secretary of Defense, John Tower, was rejected, marking the first time in in 30 years Congress would deny a president his Cabinet choice. Bush's presidency was also marred by the White House attack on Anita Hill during the confirmation of Supreme Court Judge Clarence Thomas.

He ultimately lost the presidential election in 1992, and the brilliant military campaign that pushed Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait could not soften the harsh domestic realities of high unemployment rates and the public perception that he was out of touch with average Americans.

But looking back now, it seems that the real significance of the Bush presidency, particularly against the background of the depressing, demoralizing and demeaning aspects of today's politics, was the matter of character.

Sadly, Bush now seems like a president of a bygone era, as a man of deep experience, selflessness and duty.

While his mission in life was certainly driven by personal ambition, it was always tethered to a broader goal of service and obligation to a nation he loved. Together with the passing of John McCain, Bush's death reminds us of what's often missing in today's politics -- the service and bipartisanship required to lead a nation through difficult times.

In a moment of self-reflection at the end of the first year of his presidency, Bush wrote in his diary, "I'm certainly not seen as visionary. But I hope I'm seen as steady, prudent and able."

He was certainly that and more -- a president like so many of our best who instinctively knew that to lead was to put the well-being and security of the republic above his own. We mourn Bush's passing with sadness and hope that his character, commitment, and basic decency will once again be reflected in the presidency he honored and valued so.

George H.W. Bush: What we've lost with the 41st president's passing

The San Francisco Chronicle, Rita Beamish, 12.02.2018

George H.W. Bush was not a made-for-TV president, especially alongside his predecessor, professional actor Ronald Reagan. He could seem stern, finger-wagging, tiny. So I was surprised when I first met him — as an Associated Press reporter on the tarmac boarding his campaign plane — that in person he was gregarious and approachable. Thoughtful, energetic and genial, he brimmed with the drive that had propelled him through numerous leadership roles, positioning him as day-one-ready for the White House.

Bush's old-school civility and — to use one of his favorite words — decency bore no resemblance to today's White House vitriol. During decades of fealty to other presidents and the GOP, he had built an impressive stable of friends worldwide: He arrived in the Oval Office trailing a lifetime of his trademark, handwritten notes — felt-tipped expressions of grace, sympathy, humor and emotion — like bread crumbs across the years.

Bush's friendships bridged political divides, notably including his post-presidential pal Bill Clinton. "I can't help it. I just like the guy," Bush said of the Democrat who had vanquished him from the White House. And when his once bitter rival, Sen. Bob Dole, R-Kan., came to the White House to watch Bush sign the landmark Americans With Disabilities Act, Bush singled out his old nemesis who had lost use of an arm in World War II: "Bob Dole has inspired me," Bush said simply.

Bush quickly eschewed Reagan's more distant affect by bounding into the press briefing room early and often to field questions. It wasn't his style to deride questioners, although he later revealed in his book "All the Best" that he tired of saying, "'Thanks for that important question,' when some bubble-headed reporter tried to stick it in my ear."

He was less restrained when my friend Maureen Dowd of the New York Times and I visited him in Houston in 2011 and asked about the White House ruminations of a brash New Yorker — Donald Trump. "He's an ass," the former president said tartly.

And he had a testy, combative side, once memorably ripping into CBS' Dan Rather who was persistently poking an Achilles' heel — the extent of Bush's knowledge about the Iran-Contra scandal during his vice presidency. He complained that the TV newsman had misled him about the interview focus.

Being uber-social, Bush enjoyed ferreting out personal tidbits about people in his orbit, once piercing the Soviet party-line patter of Raisa Gorbachev by prodding the Soviet leader's wife at a dinner party with, "What are you really like? What are your interests?" he later recounted.

He learned that, like him, I was a runner; he'd occasionally invite me to run, typically with a couple of others. I wanted news scoops on these outings, but he preferred small talk and kidding, once pointing out a buff, shirtless runner near the Pentagon. "There's a guy for you," he joked — as if this were the kind of thing we'd ever remotely discussed.

Similarly, he learned that a couple of my AP and Reuters colleagues were into sailing, and he'd invite them to go boating when the White House and press entourage would encamp periodically to Kennebunkport, Maine.

When I introduced him to my non-political dad at a White House Christmas party, Bush chatted with his fellow Greatest Generation veteran like an old buddy. But I nearly dropped through the floor, cringing, when I heard the president of the United States telling my enthralled father, "Well, we're quite proud of Rita around here." He knew my journalist's role in no way could warrant the odd comment, but I then realized this was simply his way of relating dad-to-dad, knowing just what Ben Beamish would like to hear.

A former Yale baseball star, Bush reveled in athletic pursuits, and unshackled his goofy humor during recreation-filled trips to his Kennebunkport home. He'd invoke a mysterious, invisible "ranking committee" that ruled on everything from horseshoes to tennis with decisions only Bush himself could divine. He chewed up the golf links, with us reporters and "photo dogs," as he called them, on hand for his patter at tee-off and the last hole. "We shoot for time," the self-anointed "Mr. Smooth" laughed after one speed record around the Cape Arundel course.

When foreign leaders came to visit, Bush lured them, too, out to fish, or roar about in his speedboat, whack tennis balls or stride through the woods. A vigorous pace cleared the mind, he said. And he found those personal interactions useful in governing.

Bush understood government and governing. Unthinkable by today's mores, he even collaborated with Democrats for policy progress, as on the milestone, regulation-expanding Clean Air Act amendments and the federal budget that expunged his "no new taxes" pledge. He banned imported semiautomatic weapons and blocked drilling off the coasts of much of California and Florida, no doubt factors contributing to his exclusion from the right wing's embrace, despite his profile as a war hero, churchgoer, family man and statesman who navigated global nuance to wrap up the Cold War and prosecute the Persian Gulf War.

A tireless note writer, he wrote me — a member of the profession that a future president would brand dishonest enemies of the people — when my mom died in 1990. He said he'd hesitated to pick up his pen "because you are a thorough-going professional journalist — and I know you like to have a certain arm's length. ... But heck with that right now." He was sad just thinking of his own mother's future death, he wrote. "But now you have the reality to cope with. Maybe in some small way it will help a little to know that we are thinking of you (your dad too)."

Classic George Herbert Walker Bush: an exemplar of decency, at a time when decency mattered.

George H.W. Bush remembered by 3 former presidents as ‘one of the best prepared’ in history

Fox News, Robert Gearty, 12.03.2018

Three former presidents spoke recently about the life of President George H.W. Bush, including his son, all acknowledging Bush 41 was one of the best-prepared presidents in U.S. history, CBS “60 Minutes” reports.

“I think he’s gonna go down as the greatest one-term president ever,” Bush 43 told the news program Sunday. “Because of his foreign policy, deftly handling the end of the Cold War, for example, reunification of German.”

Barack Obama said he especially admires Bush 41’s foreign policy.

“What people don’t appreciate fully, even within his own party, is the degree to which he had to land the plane when the Berlin Wall comes down,” Obama told the newsmagazine.

“You have chaos potentially in the former Soviet Union and Russia,” he said. “And uncertainty in Europe. All those things could have gone haywire at any point. And the restraint, the caution, the lack of spiking the football that they showed was, I think, an enormous achievement.”

Obama also offered this tribute of Bush, who died Friday at 94: “He was a good reminder that as fiercely as we may fight on policy and on issues, that ultimately we’re Americans first. And that kind of attitude is something that I think a lot of people miss.”

Obama visited with Bush in Houston last week -- a sign of their admiration for each other.

Bill Clinton read a letter Bush had left him in the Oval Office after the hard-fought 1992 presidential campaign, saying that his success as president would be the country’s success.

“This letter is a statement of who he is. That’s why he’s a world-class human being in my book,” he told the newsmagazine.

Clinton said his friendship with his predecessor grew stronger over the years.

“And in a world where everybody's just guttin' each other all the time, I thought it was a good thing to show,” he said.

Clinton added that his bond with Bush 41 was one of the great joys of his life.

“I think that history will be quite kind to him in his presidency,” Clinton said.

George H.W. Bush was my friend for nearly 40 years – and a very funny guy
Fox News, Raymond Siller, 12.03.2018

In 1979, when I was the head writer on “The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson,” an extraordinarily modest man named George Herbert Walker Bush told me he planned to run for president and asked me to write humor for him.

This began a nearly 40-year friendship that included overnights at the White House and the Bush family summer home in Kennebunkport, Maine. If you haven’t been, both beat Holiday Inn Express.

Bush was unpretentious. When I was his weekend guest at the vice president’s residence he bounded out to my car and hauled my luggage up to the guest bedroom. How many people have had a sitting vice president as baggage handler?

He pointed to the bed and said: “Couple of guys crashed here before you. Lowell Thomas, Chuck Heston, Billy Graham.”

Many Americans don’t know this but Bush had a penchant for practical jokes. Here are just some of the things I remember.

Once from the Oval Office, he buzzed an assistant that James Baker had left his wallet on the desk. Yes, it was an exploding wallet, but to be fair, President Bush never greeted Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev with a joy buzzer.

His Kennebunkport cigarette boat was equipped with three 300-horsepower engines that had the Secret Service scrambling to catch up. He’d invite guests for a ride, then gun it toward the dock to terrify passengers.

From his bed, he taped a tribute for my parents’ 50th wedding anniversary. In pajamas, hair mussed a la Stan Laurel, he imagined “how painful it must have been raising a kid who would stick a whoopee cushion on their chairs.”

In 1988, New Orleans hosted the GOP convention that would nominate Bush for president. He led me to the suite of Timberwolf and Tranquility, code names for George and Barbara Bush,

and into a room with network cameras and monitors blazing. No other Bushes were in sight. His children were delegates at the Superdome. Barbara led his cheering section from her box.

Suddenly, a half-dozen grandchildren charged in and queued up for a kiss. They'd been granted permission to stay up and see their grandfather nominated. George H.W. Bush – two-term congressman, special envoy to China, U.N. ambassador, CIA director, and vice president – would add one more job title to his resume. Designated babysitter.

The munchkins ricocheted around the room.

“Come on,” high-ranking babysitter said. “No Star Wars in here tonight.”

Grandpa asked an aide for a pointer and announced: “Tonight we’re playing Pointer Man.”

The vice president selected Sam, the then-4-year-old son of sister Doro, to be Pointer Man. Senate confirmation was not required for the appointment.

“You can be our first Pointer Man for five minutes,” grandpa told Sam. “Whenever you see someone you know on those TVs, point at that person.”

Sam had many choices since the networks kept cutting to his uncles, mother, and grandmother. Each time Sam recognized a relative, he stabbed a monitor with the stick. Pointer Man’s creator took him aside.

“You’re doing a terrific job, but you don’t need to hurt the TVs,” grandpa said. “Check behind the drapes. See if there are any Democrats in the room.”

Sam disappeared behind the curtains.

The roll call had begun. In the Colorado delegation, Vice President Bush’s son Neil delivered a longish tribute.

"Come on, Neil," Dad said. "We want to go over the top in prime time."

But Dad was moved that Neil was moved. A windy Midwest delegate lauded his state’s homegrown products.

“Will have no trouble sleeping tonight,” Dad said.

Brassy pigskin halftime music accompanied a forest of grinning Bush signs, held up by delegates swaying to the beat. A mile away, serene on a pastel sofa on the 39th floor of a cookie-cutter Marriott, the self-effacing object of their affection softly said: "There seems to be an enthusiasm building down there for me."

During a break, Bush and I moved into the kitchen area where he cracked open two Buds, put his feet up, and kicked over an extra ottoman for me. His mother had nicknamed him “Have Half.” Young George would give his friends half of his sandwich, half of his toys.

Back at the Republican National Convention, George W. Bush – a delegate representing Texas – pulled the delegate count over the top.

Maine Senator Olympia Snowe announced that a committee would be formed to go over to the candidate’s hotel and officially notify him of his nomination. It was past Bush’s bedtime, and he lobbed me a weary stare.

“Can’t wait for those people to show up,” the newly picked GOP nominee for president told me.

Soon the family began to dribble in. The mother of all Bushes gave me a happy hug and kicked off her shoes.

George H.W. Bush addressed his clan: “In a minute you’ll all be on prime-time TV. Plenty of exposure. Not much in speaking parts, but lots of visual.”

That fall, Democratic presidential candidate Michael Dukakis would prove no match for Bush. The day before their presidential candidate debate at UCLA, Bush phoned me at my “Tonight Show” office and invited me to a Dodgers game that night.

“Shouldn’t you be boning up for tomorrow?” I asked.

“Done that. And when he sees me on TV at the game, it’ll give him something to think about,” Bush said.

The next night, Dukakis shrank to the occasion.

Mid-September 1990, aboard Air Force One the president had me join him for lunch up front where he drowned his chicken salad in Tabasco sauce. His roots were New England but his heart was Lone Star.

Bush had recently attended the dedication of the Nixon library. "Nixon wasn't warm and fuzzy, but he gave me good tough advice about dealing with world leaders," Bush told me.

Bush was troubled by what President Saddam Hussein of Iraq had done to Kuwait when Iraqi troops invaded the small neighboring country.

"He's taken it off the face of the Earth," Bush said. "All records confiscated. It would be like Muncie, Indiana disappearing. Don't know where this is headed, but if the American Embassy is hit, we'll bomb the hell out of him."

Four months later, Bush addressed the nation to announce Operation Desert Storm, the military operation that sent Iraqi forces retreating from Kuwait and back to their own country.

With President Bush, there was no hint of the narcissism we've come to expect from our politicians. Bush speechwriters found first-person pronouns crossed out in their drafts. He just hated to say "I."

He was a hopeless softy with friends, beyond thoughtful. Who do you know who sends handwritten letters thanking you for your Christmas card? When he learned my dad had died just before an Easter weekend, President Bush invited me to spend the weekend with his family at Camp David.

Our country was blessed to have George H.W. Bush as our commander-in-chief. I was even more blessed. I get to brag that he was my friend.

How Barbara & George H.W. Bush Hilariously Punked Some Army Men Before His Epic Skydive in 2004

People, Susan Keating, 12.02.2018

The late George H.W. Bush and Barbara Bush playfully punked the U.S. Army's Golden Knights parachute team after the former president talked his way into jumping out of a team airplane to celebrate his 80th birthday.

"They had fun with us," Army Sergeant Major Bryan Schnell tells PEOPLE, as he still laughs at the gentle and good-spirited joke from 14 years ago.

You'll get the latest updates on this topic in your browser notifications.

"I was rigging him up planeside for his first jump," says Schnell, who was slated to leap from a plane while strapped to the former president. "All of a sudden this black SUV starts rolling up the side of the airport. Bush looked at me and said, 'Uh-oh. It looks like somebody found out about this.'"

The "somebody" was the former octogenarian's wife Barbara, who made a beeline for the two jumpers.

"She gets out of the SUV and tells me I better not hurt her old man, and if I do, she knows people who will find me," Schnell says, laughing.

"They were playing us a little bit," he adds. "They were acting like nobody knew about the first jump."

Many others, in fact, knew well in advance about the wild-seeming escapade.

The initial request from 41 to make the June 2004 jump found its way to John Fenzel, who at the time commanded an Army brigade that was in charge of the Golden Knights.

"I went to a three-star general and told him the former president wanted to do a tandem jump," Fenzel tells PEOPLE. "He turned to me and said, 'Don't screw it up.'"

There commenced an “extraordinary” amount of planning that included training the prospective parachutist, Fenzel says.

During one hands-on training session, Bush turned to the Golden Knights and said: “This isn’t my first jump.”

His first jump, of course, was during World War II when, as a young Navy pilot, Bush bailed out of a crippled warplane over the Pacific Ocean, and was rescued by a submarine.

The Golden Knights adventure was tame by comparison. Still, Bush kept the plan to himself and his Army confederates, until shortly before the jump.

“He didn’t tell anybody else about this,” Fenzel says. “Not his wife, and not the Secret Service.”

The secret skydiver revealed the news the night before a ceremony to mark the opening of his presidential library in College Station, Texas, on June 14, 2004.

That night, surrounded by various officials and Golden Knights, Bush casually remarked to Barbara that he was jumping into the ceremony.

“Without skipping a beat, Barbara turned to us and said, ‘If anything goes wrong, I’ll kill you all,’ ” Fenzel says.

“Everybody laughed,” Fenzel says. “Everybody knew he did what he wanted to do. This meant a lot to him.”

The Secret Service detail was nervous. “I told the Secret Service, ‘You have him on the ground, we’ll have him in the sky,’ ” Fenzel recalls.

On the day of the jump, Bush had even more ideas for the jump. He wanted to do it alone, including a free fall, Schnell says. If not for being a former president, he could have.

“He is a big man, and he was in great shape,” Schnell says. “You could tell right away he was in great shape, physically and mentally. He was ready to do it. He was flawless. He was completely able to do the jump by himself.”

Reason prevailed, Schnell says. “You don’t want to take a chance with the former president,” Schnell says. “We made the decision as a team to do it as a tandem.”

On the way up in the plane, Bush was happy and looking forward to the dive, Schnell says. The jump itself went smoothly and without a hitch.

“Barbara was very vigilant throughout the entire time,” says Fenzel, who waited on the ground alongside America’s Grandmother. “It was a poignant time. Afterwards, she walked quickly over to him and gave him a big hug and a kiss.”

Congratulatory hugs came also from Chuck Norris and former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev (who declined an offer to jump with the Golden Knights).

“He had a great time,” Schnell says. “After he landed, he was excited.”

At lunch afterwards, Bush talked to Schnell about his first unplanned jump. “He said that being under a parachute at that time was surreal,” Schnell says. “He wanted to do it again in a different setting.”

He enjoyed the adventure so much, he arranged for more. “He loved it,” Fenzel says. “After each jump, he made a point of saying, ‘Just because you’re old doesn’t mean you have to sit in the corner drooling.’”

‘The Most kind and considerate person I’ve ever known’: George H.W. Bush remembered by former presidents and other officials

The Washington Post, Felicia Sonmez & Paige Cunningham, 12.02.2018

George H.W. Bush was remembered Sunday by three former presidents and several members of his administration, including former vice president Dan Quayle, former secretaries of state James A. Baker III and Colin L. Powell and Richard B. Cheney, who served as Bush’s defense secretary.

Former presidents Barack Obama, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, the late president’s eldest son, paid tribute in appearances on CBS’s “60 Minutes.”

Asked what his father had told him when he became president, the younger Bush responded with the same words the two exchanged shortly before his father’s death: “I love you.”

“And, you know, as corny as that sounds to some, it is the most important words you can hear in life,” George W. Bush said. “You don’t hear a lot of people say ‘I love you’ when you’re president.”

The younger Bush predicted that his father would be remembered as “the greatest one-term president ever, because of his foreign policy, deftly handling the end of the Cold War, for example, reunification of Germany.”

Obama praised the late Bush’s foreign policy as well, noting that Bush “had to land the plane” when the Berlin Wall came toppling down.

“You have chaos potentially in the former Soviet Union and Russia, and uncertainty in Europe,” Obama said. “All those things could have gone haywire at any point. And the restraint, the caution, the lack of spiking the football that they showed was, I think, an enormous achievement.”

Clinton read the note that Bush left for him in 1993, when Clinton entered the Oval Office for the first time as president. “Your success now is our country’s success,” Bush wrote, in part. “I am rooting hard for you.”

“This letter is a statement of who he is,” Clinton said. “That’s why he’s a world-class human - being in my book. . . . It’s been one of the great joys of my life, my friendship with him. Our arguments were good-natured and open, and we continued to debate things all the way up until recently.”

The casket bearing Bush’s body will arrive at the U.S. Capitol on Monday night and will be on public display in the Rotunda until Wednesday morning, when it will be taken to Washington National Cathedral for his funeral. President Trump has declared Wednesday a national day of mourning.

In an appearance on CNN’s “State of the Union,” Baker said he spent time with Bush on Friday, the day of his death. Baker said he arrived early in the morning at Bush’s Houston home, where the president ate a big breakfast of eggs, yogurt and fruit drinks. Baker said Bush hadn’t gotten out of bed in “three or four days,” but that based on his energy that morning, Baker thought the former president would “bounce back.”

“That last day was really a very, very gentle and peaceful passing for him,” Baker told host Jake Tapper.

Baker said Bush wasn’t ready to go after his wife, Barbara, died in April, but “by the time he got back to Houston from his summer in Kennebunkport, I think he was ready to go.”

Baker noted that Bush was his daughter’s godfather and his friend of 60 years. Bush is the reason Baker got into politics, recruiting Baker to help with his Senate campaign after Baker’s first wife died of cancer.

“George Bush was possibly the most kind and considerate person I’ve ever known in my life,” Baker said.

Tapper asked Baker whether the era of civility in politics died with Bush. “I hope it didn’t die on Friday, because we badly need to bring some civility back into our public discourse,” Baker said. “We need to stop yelling at each other and start listening to each other. George Bush had a Congress that was totally controlled by Democrats, and look what he got done.”

Powell, who served as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under Bush, described the late president as “a perfect American,” noting his service in the White House, in Congress, as U.S. ambassador to China and as CIA director, as well as his career in business.

“You name it, he did it,” Powell said on ABC News’s “This Week.” “And then he became vice president for eight years and then president of the United States. But throughout that entire period, he never forgot who he was. He never let it all go to his head. He was a man of great humility. He was humble.”

Powell added that Bush was “a product of his parents, who told him, you know, ‘Don’t show off, George; just always remember, you’re humble, you work for people, you serve people.’”

In an appearance on “Fox News Sunday,” Cheney was asked about Bush’s reported criticism of him as “hard-line” and “iron-ass” during his time as vice president to his son, George W. Bush.

Cheney acknowledged Bush’s criticism and said, “First of all, I was more, I guess, of an iron ass when I was vice president.”

He then said that after the elder Bush made those comments, he sent Cheney a note reading, “Dear Dick, I did it.” “And then he went on at great length to tell me what a great American I was,” Cheney said.

Later that year, Bush invited Cheney to sit with him at the head table at the prestigious Alfalfa Club dinner. “That sort of dampened down any notion that there was a fundamental break between Bush and Cheney.”

Quayle was asked by Fox News Channel’s Maria Bartiromo what he believes Bush’s legacy will be. He said that while historians will have their own interpretations, his view is that Bush “got things done.”

“When he left office, the economy was growing at probably 5, 6 percent,” Quayle said on “Sunday Morning Futures.” “The Berlin Wall came down, Eastern and Central Europe freed from the yoke of communism. Apartheid in South Africa was eliminated, success in putting

Saddam Hussein back into Iraq, Noriega apprehended. So many things in the short period of time, and the domestic front as well, so, accomplishments.”

Quayle noted that Bush was president during a time of divided government, with Democrats controlling the House and the Senate.

“We had to work hard to get Democrats to support us,” Quayle said. “And sometimes divided government works. It clearly worked in our administration, and you can get things done if you reach across the aisle and work hard.”

Bush granddaughters reflect on former president's final moments

Subtitle: Marshall Bush and Ashley Bush said they celebrated their grandfather's life and felt his love "until the very, very end."

Today, Eun Kyung Kim, 12.03.2018

Two of George H.W. Bush's granddaughters shared the final moments they spent with the late president, saying that while they grieve his loss, they also feel immense joy "celebrating his life."

Marshall Bush, the daughter of Marvin Bush, the former president's youngest son, was with her grandfather when he passed away Friday surrounded by loved ones.

"It was incredibly peaceful and sweet — beyond sweet. A bunch of our family and best family friends were there and everyone was touching him and holding him," she told TODAY. "We just wanted to make sure that he knew that we loved him as much as he loved us. And making sure he wasn't alone and he was comforted. It was just beautiful. It really was beautiful."

Her cousin, Ashley Bush, the 29-year-old daughter of Neil Bush, Marvin Bush's older brother, last saw her grandfather at Thanksgiving, when she spent the holiday "holding his hand and singing hymns" with him at the dinner table.

"I think my most recent memories are really just cuddling up in bed next to him and feeling his love till the very, very end," she said.

Ashley Bush said the family is grateful that her grandfather got to enjoy "a really long and wonderful life."

"But there are moments when I get choked up, or we get choked up talking about a memory," she said. "It's still difficult to grieve, but we're celebrating his life this week."

The cousins said they are both comforted by the idea that their grandfather has been reunited with his wife of 73 years, Barbara Bush, who passed away in April. The former president also lost his daughter, Robin, to leukemia just shy of her fourth birthday.

"I know he's back with our grandmother and with our Aunt Robin so I'm happy he's happy," Marshall Bush said.

Marshall Bush said she loves the idea that her grandfather can finally shower some of the love she has felt her entire life on the daughter he lost.

“His favorite thing to do was be with family and to hug and make sure that you knew how much he loved you, so I think we’re just very happy that she now gets to experience that, which she did not for a very long time,” she said. "She was only 4 when she passed away and she now gets to experience what we all got to experience for 94 years."

Guest Commentary: “Great But Also Good”

Subtitle: Pennsylvania’s Treasurer on the passing of his friend and mentor, George H.W. Bush

The Philadelphia Citizen, Joseph Torsella, 12.04.2018

When I first got to know George H. W. Bush, I said that he was the most decent public person I’d ever met.

After a few years of knowing him, I eventually revised that to delete the “public” qualifier: he might be the most decent person I’ve ever met, period.

I was head of the young National Constitution Center in 2007, my second stint in the job. I’d been brought back for round two with a specific purpose: find a new Chairman to replace the long-serving and legendary Jack Bogle, who was pulling back.

After weeks of brainstorming ideas, we came up with what we thought of as a moonshot: former president George H. W. Bush. For the Constitution Center, it would be a coup, instantly vaulting a young and insecure institution into genuinely national stature.

Trouble was, for Bush, it made absolutely no sense. He had just announced that, in his 80s, he was done with board service. He’d had some visits to the Constitution Center, but no deep obligation. There was no Bush donor or family member as our secret weapon. We were in Philadelphia, he was in Houston and Maine. He hated fundraising, which was much of what we needed.

And yet...it intuitively seemed worth a shot. So we crafted our most persuasive letter, arguing simply that his lifetime ethic of service perfectly embodied our message, and we needed his help to shape a new generation of citizens. We conspired a little (maybe a lot) behind the scenes with his chief of staff, Jean Becker. And against all odds, I eventually found myself getting on the phone with a former Leader of the Free World, making our pitch.

I was stunned when he said, “Yes.” Because there was literally no good reason for him to agree. Except...that to his core he completely agreed with everything we said about citizenship, thought the country needed what we were offering, and thought he could help.

That was George H. W. Bush. When the bell of duty rang, he showed up, no matter what the hour or who was ringing it. The guy who lied about his age in World War II not to get out of service, but to get into it. The guy who liked to say “We” instead of “I.”

For the Constitution Center, it worked out just as planned, totally changing the trajectory of the institution. He blew right through all the limitations on his role we’d proffered as inducements, diving into every aspect of the place, cheerfully doing all the things we promised he’d never have to.

We’d told him, of course, we expected only his time, not his money. But at the first board meeting, there was a report on contributions by trustees. I saw his face cloud, could almost see him thinking “Well, I’m supposed to be the leader here, and leaders set an example....” At the coffee break, he hustled to his office, and came back to press a significant check into my hand.

For me, it was a remarkable experience of a remarkable man, who was so different from the caricature I’d known as a 25-year old voter in 1988.

Instead of tongue-tied syntax, he was effortlessly insightful and often eloquent.

Instead of a buttoned-up patrician, he was open and funny. I mean wickedly, hilariously, can’t-repeat-most-of-it funny. He once described a Prominent Historical Figure’s unpleasant personality as “just always seemed to have a pickle in the ass.” We shared a passion for fishing, and he once sent me a photo once of himself, posing in a tee shirt with a picture of a fish and the words, “Does this shirt make my Bass look fat?”

Instead of the starring-in-my-own-play vibe that comes with most pols, he was intrigued by life outside of any sense of himself. I’d given tours of the Constitution to scores of VIPs. George H. W. Bush was by far the most genuinely curious of them all, seeing all that history with an awestruck kid’s sense of wonder, not the “Where am I in this story?” take you’d expect.

But most of all, he was kind beyond measure, with a caring and decency that was profligate and indiscriminate.

Once he called our office after hours to leave a message. He spoke with a staffer he hadn't yet met and, of course, had a chat. He learned her father had died a few weeks prior. Within days, he sent her a handwritten condolence note.

We had a board meeting at his library in College Station. I remember him standing in the Texas heat, 100 degrees at least, 7 pm at the end of a very long day, sweating through his suit. Why? Hours after the trustees and donors had left, he wanted to make sure all the Constitution Center staff had taxis to the airport.

Larry Kent was our board vice-chair to Bush. He and I would have occasional working lunches with Bush to go over board business. They were usually at divey restaurants, where 41 always knew the names of the owner's kids—and would make sure to send food over to his Secret Service detail.

For me, it was the beginning of a friendship—and mentorship—that changed my life, and how I think about service. At first, I couldn't figure out why George Bush was so gracious to me, a lifelong Democrat, and certainly nobody a former president needed to worry about. But that was before I really knew what made him tick.

I left the Constitution Center to run for federal office. And the Republican 41st President of the United States would regularly reach out to give me, the Democrat, advice and encouragement. News that the Republican incumbent in my race had switched parties to become a Democrat brought my short-lived campaign to a strange and surreal end. That day, I couldn't get many of my political "friends" to answer my calls.

But George Bush? I didn't have to call him; he was the first person to call me, within 10 minutes of hearing the news, to commiserate.

In the aftermath, he invited me to visit him to kick around my next step, shared that after a similar disappointment he tried diplomacy for a while, thought I should too, and said he wanted to help.

I took the advice, and found myself being nominated by Barack Obama to serve as Ambassador to the UN for Management and Reform. 41 was delighted and then, when some prominent voices

on the right started reflexively attacking me, pissed off. Another call: “I want to write a letter supporting you to the Senate.”

Who does this!?! In what world does a former Republican president write a public letter on behalf of a Democratic nominee?

George H. W. Bush, that’s who, whose world was all about country above party, about service above self, and about human connection and decency above all. A world where a defeated president, and a proud man, becomes friends with the upstart who beat him...to raise money for hurricane victims.

I’ve been thinking about that world a lot since Friday night. Maybe it’s not as lost and far away as we think.

The knowing of George H. W. Bush made me a better person. As the SNL version of him might have said “Not gonna be perfect. But better. Kinder. Nicer. Humbler.”

The having of George H. W. Bush made us a better country. The verdict of history on his presidency will be, I think, very kind. The masterful end to the Cold War, the generous spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the national unity and statecraft of the first Gulf War—his legacy is secure.

And maybe the dying of George H. W. Bush can make us an even better country still. I like to think God has us live in the times and places where we’ll do the most good. But maybe the same thing is true of our dying. Maybe our going, as well as our coming, is for a purpose.

If in this turbulent and noisy and angry moment of our history, the passing of this American, who was great but also good, causes all of us to honor him by resolving to be a bit more like him...to live a little more in his spirit of kindness, and character, and humility, and above all, decency...then George H. W. Bush will have done his last, and finest, public service to the country that he loved so much and so well for so long.

Dear Uncle George, thank you for sharing your boundless love

Denver Post, Walker Stapleton, 12.03.2018

Dear Uncle George,

This is a tribute I actually hoped never to write. You were always someone I hoped could live forever though deep down I knew it impossible, even for George H.W. Bush. On my son Craig's bedroom wall is the first letter you ever wrote to me or actually about me to my parents the day after I was born; April 16, 1974. In the letter you asked my parents to do you one favor, to please if they ever got sick of me to just leave me off with you so you could love and care for me. I had no idea then that my life for the next 44 years would be filled and enriched by your boundless capacity for love in more ways than I could ever have imagined.

Just down the stairs from Craig's room is a picture of one of my earliest memories, holding a stack of mackerel on the docks in Kennebunkport, Maine after a fishing trip with you. I was 6 years old and you asked me to go fishing with you. I thought at the time this was the coolest thing in the world because I loved your fast boat. What I didn't know was that it was also the day after you were asked to be vice president. I remember coming back to the breakwater and seeing signs of love and support for you lining Maine's coastline. What's going on I think I asked and you replied "giving back is a great thing for someone to do Walker. When you are a bigger guy, you should consider it." Kind of a hard day for me to ever forget, Mr. President.

Over the years, I've collected dozens and dozens of personal letters from you about important matters like the family ranking committee for horseshoe and tennis tournaments. There's a letter you wrote to me when a kid picked on me at school and another letter when I graduated from college. Your capacity to care about so many other people in life always astonished me.

I remember how you attended the funeral and gave the eulogy for Woodrow Willoughby, the longtime elevator operator at the White House, because he had become family. I remember getting the opportunity to ride with you to the Houston Astrodome to give your speech for re-election in 1992. Everyone in the room at the Houstonian Hotel was trying to rush you into the car to get you to your speech but you wouldn't budge. You wouldn't budge because the spouse of a staff member had cancer and you were too busy consoling the family. On one of the biggest

nights of your life as president, you actually cared more about giving comfort to someone in need than anything else you could've or should've been doing that night. "This is more important," I remember you saying through the door.

It is impossible for me to reflect on your vast life of service because it is simply too overwhelming that one person could accomplish so much in the one life we all share. Here though are a few small things I think everyone should know about you.

You were a man of deep faith who always managed to love your family first and always at just the right moment. Outside of family, your capacity for kindness and generosity to others knew no bounds. You were the most unfailingly gracious of men. You carried yourself with deep humility and you told great stories. You had an incredible sense of humor and often it was self deprecating. You always cared far more about people than politics. You had this incredible knack for making people around you feel special and important no matter if they were in the coat room or at your dinner table. You have more friends than any man I'll ever know.

Mr. President, your deep and abiding love for our country and your lifetime of service is a testament to patriotism and heroism that will endure for the ages. You inspired me and thousands of others around the world to give something back to others through public service.

May our country never forget your legacy of service, sacrifice and selflessness.

Once Upon a Time, U.S. Foreign Policy Worked

Subtitle: George H.W. Bush's administration was evidence of what the establishment was capable of.

Foundation for Defense of Democracies, John Hannah, 12.02.2018

I worked on the State Department's Policy Planning Staff during the last two years of the late President George H.W. Bush's administration. It was my first job in government and an extraordinary period in world history. As I came on board at Foggy Bottom, Bush had just facilitated Germany's unification. The international coalition that he'd mobilized was in the process of evicting Saddam Hussein from Kuwait. In a few months' time, Bush would help manage the peaceful unraveling of the Soviet Union and the launch of historic peace talks between Israel and its Arab neighbors via the Madrid process.

As I've had a chance to reflect on that experience over the past quarter-century, a number of things stand out. First, I'm struck by the incredible talent that Bush surrounded himself with on national security issues. In terms of intellectual firepower, diplomatic skills, political and bureaucratic chops, and foreign-policy experience, he assembled a genuine murderers' row: Brent Scowcroft, James Baker, Dick Cheney, Colin Powell, and Robert Gates. Not to mention the heavyweights who filled out the next couple of tiers down, including the likes of Lawrence Eagleburger, Paul Wolfowitz, Dennis Ross, Robert Zoellick, Condoleezza Rice, Stephen Hadley, William Burns, Nicholas Burns, Zalmay Khalilzad, Scooter Libby, Eric Edelman, and Richard Haass.

Not a lot of shrinking violets there. Dedicated, serious people (most of them well versed in the dark arts of bureaucratic jujitsu) fiercely arguing over how best to secure U.S. interests and a more peaceful international order as some of the most consequential events in modern history unfolded at lightning speed. Bringing together that many thoroughbreds in one place could have been a mess. But it all worked for the most part like a well-oiled machine. Bush commanded the apparatus masterfully, molded it to best serve his decision-making needs, empowered his advisors to carry out clearly articulated presidential directives, and engendered a degree of cooperation and loyalty that more often than not had U.S. foreign policy firing on all cylinders. The results speak for themselves.

A second thing that impresses me in hindsight was Bush's capacity for making big decisions in a timely manner about momentous events where not only American lives, but also the peace and security of the world often seemed to hang in the balance. The continuous stress must have been enormous. But the well-considered decisions came like rapid fire, one after another. To support German unification. To go to war against Saddam. To oppose the coup against Mikhail Gorbachev. To facilitate the Soviet Union's collapse and ensure the gathering of thousands of loose Soviet nukes. Boom. Boom. Boom. Boom.

It's easy to forget now, but none of it was preordained, least of all the successful outcomes that Bush achieved. But despite the enormous downside risks, not a trace of presidential hand-wringing was ever in sight. Instead, Bush's Oval Office radiated with the quiet confidence and competence of a commander in chief who'd not only spent a career operating at the highest levels of politics and diplomacy, but had also flown 58 combat missions as a naval aviator, been blown out of the sky over the Pacific Ocean, and lost two of his crew in battle.

Finally, I've thought a lot about some of the hallmarks of George H.W. Bush's foreign policy. The unwavering belief in the importance of U.S. global leadership and power, for sure. The sustained investment of presidential time and energy in diplomacy, definitely. But also the hard-headed realism that prioritized virtues of restraint and prudence in the exercise of American might and the expression of American exceptionalism. The secret effort to stabilize relations with China so soon after Tiananmen. The refusal to go to Berlin in 1989 and "dance on the Wall." Stopping the Gulf War after 100 hours. The infamous "Chicken Kiev" speech. I'll confess that, at the time, I took exception to many of these decisions. I still don't agree with all of them. But in light of everything that has transpired in the two-and-a-half decades since Bush left office, it's hard not to feel a deep appreciation for the extraordinary experience, skill, and, yes, modesty that he brought to the task of making U.S. foreign policy.

I never got to meet Bush. But I do have a couple of personal anecdotes. It so happens that it fell to me to write the first draft of the valedictory foreign-policy speech that he delivered at Texas A&M a month after losing his re-election bid to Bill Clinton. Nothing particularly memorable or flashy about it—but how many of Bush's speeches were? Nevertheless, it was a strong call for continued U.S. leadership to help secure a new era of peace, prosperity, and expanding

democracy after having led the West to victory over Soviet totalitarianism in the Cold War “by the grit of our people and the grace of God.” The National Security Council chopped my draft in half, but the structure of the speech and at least some of my original language survived, including what Bush identified as the key to sustained American foreign-policy success: “the patient and judicious application of American leadership, American power, and—perhaps most of all—American moral force.”

A second small anecdote. In the mid-1990s, I wrote to Bush out of the blue requesting a meeting to discuss a paper that I wanted to write on the need for a shift in U.S. counterterrorism policy. Buried away somewhere in a box in my attic is his reply. It’s a brief note, typed by some assistant, I’d imagine. But it very much had the feel of his voice. He apologized that his schedule was such that a meeting in the near future probably wasn’t practical. He sent along a copy of a report by a counterterrorism task force that he’d overseen while serving as Ronald Reagan’s vice president. And he closed by graciously thanking me for my service to the country and to his administration.

No, thank *you*, Mr. President. For everything. It was truly an honor and a privilege. RIP, sir.

Building a lasting George Bush legacy

The Eagle, Charles F. Hermann

Legacy. President George H.W. Bush clearly had an aversion to the term. Perhaps he treated it similarly to his distaste for broccoli. He avoided the term as much as he did the vegetable.

Yet helping to construct what is a major living element of his legacy to future generations is exactly how I came to know this extraordinary person who served as our 41st president. That continuously evolving legacy that President Bush made possible is the George Bush School of Government and Public Service.

Of course he gave his name to the school, but that totally neglects the far deeper reality of his intense commitment to its ongoing development. Clearly he enjoyed our community, enthusiastically embraced the spirit of the entire Texas A&M University, but took a special keen interest in the Bush School. He encouraged the development of the school in countless ways. Perhaps his greatest joy occurred in engaging with the Bush School students — in the classroom, pitching horseshoes, or over a meal.

In their bid for his presidential Library, the Texas A&M regents and their expanded committee that included faculty and leading residents of the community had a brilliant idea. They tied the proposal for his presidential library to the creation of a new professional school of public and international affairs. They suggested putting his presidential library right next to a Bush School. In fact the Texas A&M proposal for the Bush Presidential Library devoted as many pages to describing the school as it did to their plans for the library.

It worked. Reportedly every time President Bush interacted with representatives of Texas A&M, as he considered different locations for his library, he inquired about their ideas for the school. Mrs. Bush joined her husband in those queries. In his official letter accepting the proposal to locate his library on the Texas A&M campus, the first reason he mentions for his choice is the idea of establishing a school of public service.

That's what provided me with the opportunity to become acquainted with President Bush. In fact, when I accepted the offer to serve as the founding director of the Bush School and flew to

Houston for an initial orientation to the task ahead, we visited President Bush in his office before coming on to College Station. Creating the new Bush School was challenging and exciting. One of the joys was the recurrent engagement with President Bush. He always made clear that the university officials made all decisions, but he eagerly helped when asked. Across the years, his engagement was extraordinary.

He advocated a separate dedication of the Bush School from his presidential library, so the new school “gets the attention it deserves. Barbara and I will come and perhaps the Governor of Texas.” (Governor George W. Bush did join his parents at the school’s dedication.)

He repeatedly made himself available to participate in classes.

He often invited the students and faculty to join him for a meal.

He engaged student informally when he was fishing, working out at the campus rec center or pitching horseshoes.

He participated in each year’s Bush School graduating class.

He helped recruit not only new faculty but prospective students.

He urged annual conferences with leading academic, business and government officials in China.

He invited leading figures (USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, and Sen. Edward Kennedy) not only to give public lectures but to join him in classroom discussions.

He and Mrs. Bush hosted Bush School fund raisers and advisory board meetings at Kennebunkport in Maine.

At this time of remembrance, countless others will examine George H.W. Bush’s extraordinary contributions to our nation as a Navy pilot in World War II, congressman, U.S. representative to the United Nations, the U.S. representative to China, director of the CIA, vice president and president of the United States, but for me it was the friendship he offered as I joined many others in building a part of his legacy at Texas A&M University and in our community.

I covered President George H.W. Bush as a White House reporter – he was gracious to everyone

Fox News, Janet Cawley, 12.03.2018

For nearly four years, I covered the George H.W. Bush administration as a White House correspondent for the Chicago Tribune. Watching as the former president's flag-draped coffin was flown back to Washington for a final time Monday, I reflected again on what a kind, decent and generous man he was – and with an irreverent sense of humor to boot.

So many have written, and rightfully so, about President Bush's political challenges and accomplishments. I tend to remember the personal things, his day-to-day interactions with reporters that let the man shine through.

Like the time he had about 12 or 15 of us – who had flown to Kennebunkport, Maine with him – over to his family home for impromptu drinks and a chat. As I remember it, he went to the local liquor store and bought the wine himself.

As the president and first lady Barbara Bush led us around inside, I confess I spent a good portion of my time trying to memorize the numbers on all the phones (not one of which stayed with me when I left). The house was like the man – not ostentatious in any way, practical, with a big room for the grandchildren on the top floor and no glitz anywhere.

President Bush was a gracious host and we all talked, but not about anything earthshaking. I would be astonished if a day like that ever happened again.

Bush enjoyed every minute he spent in Kennebunkport. He loved to eat at an extremely informal lobster joint named Mabel's, could often be spotted zooming around in his beloved cigarette boat, and played golf so quickly we nicknamed it "aerobic golf."

If he hated the press in any way, I don't think we sensed it. No doubt he liked some reporters more than others, and would prefer not to have some things reported, but he was gracious to everyone, usually calling on us by our first names. Today's presidential anathema toward the media would have been unthinkable then.

In Washington, it was the same thing. At the annual Christmas party for the press, the Bushes would stand in front of a brightly decorated tree and link their arms with you and your guest (only one allowed) while a very professional photographer snapped a shot.

Journalists often took their spouse or a parent as a guest. I usually took my brother – and that photo instantly became a family treasure. If you were there with a parent, I feel certain the president had an extra minute for some chitchat with mom or dad.

Even Millie, the Bushes' beloved English springer spaniel, was part of that kinder, gentler time. I clearly remember being allowed out on the South Lawn to play with her puppies – and everyone had a rollicking good time.

President Bush was both a man and a symbol – of what civility was and what it brought to the table – with reporters and everyone else.

McBride: Bush became a father figure to me

The Detroit News, Tim McBride, 12.02.2018

The expression Great American is used so often in daily life there's a risk the true meaning of the words is forgotten or devalued. George H.W. Bush reminds us what it means to be a Great American.

I grew up in Wayne, Michigan and met George Bush at a campaign event in Michigan in 1980 when he was a candidate for the Republican nomination for president. I was a student at Eastern Michigan University just getting started in Republican politics. I was inspired by Bush and later became a Bush delegate to the 1980 Republican National Convention.

By mid-1985, as a result of hard work and a few lucky breaks, I became Vice President Bush's personal aide, also known as the "body guy" — a role I held for five years. During that time I spent the better part of every day with the vice president (later president) traveling a million miles across the United States and around the world, keeping him on schedule, organizing his daily agenda and briefing him before every meeting, from summits to campaign stops, to ensure he was fully prepared. The position also involved less glamorous things like arranging for exercise bikes, ordering room service, making sure he packed the right clothes — even waking him up — when we traveled.

In 1988, during vice president Bush's campaign to become president, my dad was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. The vice president knew of the gravity of his illness and frequently asked how he was doing.

In October 1988, near the end of the campaign, while on a stop in Dearborn — Bush quietly pulled me aside and urged me to drop off the campaign for a few days to go visit my father. "I'll be fine," he said, "don't look back and regret not spending the time with your dad."

When my dad died just before Christmas, the vice president and Barbara Bush were among the first to reach out and offer their condolences. And in the years that followed George Bush celebrated the important milestones in my life — my wedding, the birth of my children, professional accomplishments — as one's own father might.

As I was leaving the post as his personal aide, the now-president sent me one of his famous self-typed letters, punctuated with crossed out typos. “If you ever need to talk about a problem,” he wrote, “If you ever need an outstretched hand. ... If you ever feel like crying I hope you’ll remember Bar and I love you like a son. You are over there. For now we are over here; but there is no separation.”

I last visited the president in Maine this summer while he was in the hospital. He was holding fast to his daughter Doro’s hand, reminiscing about his beloved Barbara; he was clearly heart broken. But I could also tell he was comforted to be back in Kennebunkport, Maine, a place he visited almost every year of his life, and the home to his “Summer White House.” He called Walker’s Point, the small peninsula that juts out in the Atlantic where their home sits, his “anchor to windward.” It’s also the magnet for the more than two-dozen Bush children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

George Bush’s life of service to others and devotion to his family is now complete. His place in our lexicon as Great American secure. He, and all he embodied, will be missed.

The President Who Treated Me Like a Son

Subtitle: On George H.W. Bush's birthday, his former aide, Tim McBride, remembers the man he loved like a father and to whom, on Inauguration Day 1989, he lent his overcoat.

The Daily Beast, Tim McBride, 06.12.2009 (REPRINT)

From 1985 to 1990, I was George H.W. Bush's personal aide, better known as the "body guy." In college, I had been active in Republican Party politics in my home state of Michigan, and I had worked on conventions and campaigns. Still, becoming the vice president's personal aide was an unexpected and unlikely opportunity for a middle-class kid from the Detroit suburbs.

I didn't know much about being a body guy when Vice President Bush asked me to take on the job in mid-1985. Though I'd been on his staff for a few months by then, the VP did not know me all that well. "Why don't we try this out for about three months," he said, "to see if you like me and I like you." Well, I knew I liked him...

Being the vice president's personal aide meant that I was with him from the start of his day until late in the evening when his events were finished. My job was to manage his day and to keep him well-briefed and on schedule. When we traveled throughout the country or around the world, the job was literally 24/7, managing the official and the mundane, including finding time to eat and exercise. Over the next five years, we logged over a million miles together. Growing up in the Midwest, I couldn't imagine traveling to places like Tunisia and Yemen, or eating whole Maine lobster for the first time in the dining room of the vice president's residence. In fact, I'd never seen a whole Maine lobster.

With every passing day I got to know George Bush better. His great sense of humor was not apparent to many Americans while he was in office, even though he was the first to laugh at himself and Dana Carvey's impersonations of him. I saw his devotion to Barbara Bush and to his family, his children and grandchildren, as important to him as oxygen itself. When the president turned in for the evening, he never failed to thank the staff and the Secret Service agents, whom he had affectionately nicknamed "the Marshalls." That simple act of kindness only inspired us to work twice as hard for him the next day. His was strong, quiet leadership, more concerned with achieving the right result than whether or not he got the credit. And George Bush was renowned for his humility, instilled in him at an early age by his beloved mother, Dorothy Walker Bush.

This quality, however, drove his staff crazy—you try running for president without using the word “I.”

For most of 1988, as I was busy crisscrossing the country with George Bush when he was campaigning for president, my dad was sick with pancreatic cancer. Vice President Bush regularly insisted that I leave the campaign bubble, if only for a day, or even a few hours, to go home to see my father while I still could. As a father, he knew how much it would mean to my dad and, years later, how much those moments would mean to me. When my dad died a few days before Christmas in 1988, the first call I received was from the President-elect and Mrs. Bush, offering their condolences and their love.

Throughout his life George Bush has looked out for “the other guy,” a trait admired by everyone who has ever known him. I have a vivid memory of what occurred on Inauguration Day, 1989, arguably the most important day of George Bush’s life. As we stood inside the Capitol waiting for the precise moment when he and Mrs. Bush would be escorted to the swearing-in platform, the president-elect noticed Mrs. Reagan carefully bundling up President Reagan, even though it was a mild 51 degrees outside. Mr. Bush turned to me and urgently said he needed his overcoat. “President Reagan is in his and I don’t want to draw this contrast,” he said, “I can’t go out there looking heartier than the president.” The problem was his topcoat was locked in the limo on the Capitol plaza four stories below. With the 12:05 p.m. swearing-in just minutes away, there was no time to retrieve the coat, but the president-elect was insistent. I quickly offered my topcoat, which fit well enough for him to wear out onto the platform, removing it just before taking the oath of office.

In July 1990, the president asked me to take on new responsibilities as assistant secretary of Commerce. Known as a prolific letter writer, President Bush self-typed a letter to me as I was leaving the White House. In it, he said, “If you ever need to talk about a problem. If you ever need an outstretched hand... if you ever hurt and feel like crying I hope you’ll remember that Bar and I love you like a son. You are over there. For now we are over here; but there is no separation. It is right that you have a chance to show the world what you can do—and you’ll do very well indeed.”

In 2008, as my children joined thousands of other kids on the White House South Lawn for the chaos of the Easter Egg Roll, I had a quiet visit with the 41st president in the private quarters of the White House Residence. I told George H.W. Bush how much he has meant to me for the past 25 years. I told him he filled a void left by my father's passing in ways he could never imagine; he celebrated and shared in the joy of every important event in my life—my falling in love and getting married, the birth of my two children, professional triumphs and disappointments. His were the phone calls, letters, and emails I will treasure forever.

George H.W. Bush closed his 1990 letter to me with words equally well-suited for him on this great day, his 85th birthday: “Good luck to our noble friend. And P.S. Thanks for having given so much to so many of us.”

A farewell to 41, and a round to remember

Subtitle: The day George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton became friends forever

Golf Digest, Jim Nantz, 12.01.2018

For more than a quarter century, I was fortunate to visit and play golf with President George H.W. Bush dozens of times, usually while paying a visit to the Bush compound in Kennebunkport, Maine. With the passing of this great man and mentor, I feel at least one story can be told that pretty much encapsulates the man who carried the virtues of life—and golf—with every breath.

In 2005, President Bush served as co-chair with President Bill Clinton for tsunami- relief efforts in Southeast Asia. It was a partnership that raised \$1.5 billion in aid. During this time a friendship developed between the former political rivals, and together they decided to secretly get together on a social basis that summer. Somehow, they chose me to be their “intermediary”—as they called it—for their two-day, two-night mini-vacation in Maine. Usually when I visited 41 it entailed not just golf but playing horseshoes, going out on his boat, cruising over to the little seaport of Ogunquit for lobster rolls and ice cream at Barnacle Billy’s, and long chats at the main house. Each stay was like going to summer camp. Every day was field day. But for this particular stay, President Bush explained that I’d make an easy companion for the two of them as they played their first round of golf together since the two of them, along with President Gerald Ford, teed it up at the Bob Hope Classic in 1995. Presidents Bush and Clinton played golf together three times after that, and I’m proud to say I was there for all of them.

The venue was Cape Arundel Golf Club, a storied Walter Travis course where President Bush had learned to play golf and where his father, Prescott Bush—a former USGA president—had won the club championship eight times. President Bush also was a Cape Arundel club champ, having beaten a postal worker named Chad Brown, 8 and 7, in the final in 1947.

The round between the two former leaders of the free world began nicely, both rooting each other on. President Clinton birdied two of the first three holes. On the par-4 fifth, which is only 315 yards, President Bush drove into trouble in a small hollow left of the fairway. He had just 125 yards to the green, but it was a tough shot. As he was contemplating how to play it, President

Clinton rushed over to offer help. “No need to go at the green,” he said. “Just look at your lie. It’s too risky.” With that, President Clinton walked up the slope to the safe part of the fairway and waved his arms like a football official calling a timeout. “Aim right at me, George!” he hollered.

President Bush murmured to me, “What do you think I should do?” He clearly wanted to go for the green. I said, “Sir, how old were you the first time you played here?” President Bush said, “I was 10.” I said, “How many times do you figure you’ve played this hole? Fifty times a year on average? Maybe thousands all told? I’m just saying, President Clinton has never played here.”

President Bush reached for the iron that would get him home, but then hesitated. “Jimmy, he’s making such an effort,” he said. “Look at him up there, waving his arms. He’s my guest. I want him to be happy.” And with that, he pitched back into the fairway. He played his next shot—still 120 out—onto the green and faced a 20-footer for par.

Now, President Bush was a terrible putter. He’d battled the yips for a long time and eventually found some solace in an extra-long putter known as the Pole-Kat. I don’t think he ever saw a putt he liked. But this time he knocked it right into the center of the cup for his par. Everyone whooped. President Clinton came over, high-fived President Bush and said, “See, George? That was the right way to play it!” Forty-one agreed, and the two of them walked to the sixth tee arm in arm. Truly bonded like never before. American patriots, now friends forever. It was a beautiful moment.

George H.W. Bush had perhaps the greatest résumé in American history. Director of the CIA, ambassador to the U.N., envoy to China, vice president of the United States and then, of course, president. It’s staggering to contemplate one person achieving so much. But to me and many others, our lives were highlighted by having George H.W. Bush as a great and loyal friend. What I saw in President Bush’s behavior was respect, civility, deference and decency. These traits were central to who he was. And they melded perfectly with the game that he loved.

Novelist: George H.W. Bush's 'decency' shows 'what we need and we miss'

The Hill, Michael Burke, 12.02.2018

Thriller novelist Brad Meltzer on Sunday praised former President George H.W. Bush for his "decency" and said that people in the U.S. are no longer "talking to each other decently."

"I think if you did a search of all the things that have been said about him now that he's passed, look how many times the word 'decency' is mentioned. And I think part of it is because of course that's who he was, and I think part of it is because as a country that's what we need and we miss," Meltzer said on C-SPAN2.

"And again I don't care what your politics are — I don't care what side of the aisle you're on," he added. "We are not as a culture talking to each other decently anymore."

Meltzer added that, in his view, there is too much of "us versus them" rather than "we" in U.S. dialogue.

"I'm personally tired of us vs. them and it's time to get back to 'we.' George Bush, may he rest in peace, was very good at 'we,'" he said.

Bush died on Friday at the age of 94. His death has prompted an outpouring of praise for the former president, including from President Trump, who has feuded with the Bush family.

Trump on Saturday told reporters at the Group of 20 summit in Argentina that Bush was a "wonderful man" and "a very fine man."

Bob Dole gives George H.W. Bush standing salute, rising from wheelchair in dramatic moment

Fox News, Kaitlyn Schallhorn, 12.04.2018

Former Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole was helped out of his wheelchair Tuesday afternoon to salute the American flag-draped casket of former President George H.W. Bush.

Dole, 95, arrived at the Capitol Rotunda — where Bush will lie in state until Wednesday — pushed in his wheelchair by an aide. Once at the casket's side, the aide helped Dole stand. And as he was steadied, Dole raised his left arm and saluted.

A longtime senator and congressman from Kansas, Dole was then helped back into his wheelchair where he sat for several moments in front of the casket of his former colleague. Like Bush, Dole is also a World War II veteran. He was the Republican presidential nominee in 1996.

Dole suffered extensive injuries to his arms in the war. A 1996 New York Times article detailed his injuries as so severe, he could not use his right arm or hand and his left hand was partially numb as well.

The Dole Institute of Politics at the University of Kansas set up a special memorial to honor Bush's legacy and his relationship with Dole. A guest book will eventually be sent to the Bush family, the institute said.

Bush's service dog Sully visited the casket in the Capitol earlier Tuesday.

Bush will be honored with a funeral service at the Washington National Cathedral Wednesday before his body is flown back to Texas for burial. He died on Nov. 30 at the age of 94.

The gracious toughness of my old boss, George H.W. Bush

New York Post, Peter Robinson, 12.03.2018

Graciousness and toughness. Contradictory attributes though these may seem, in George Herbert Walker Bush they existed in equal, remarkably abundant measure.

Start with the toughness. After the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, the future president could have stayed in school. Instead, he enlisted in the US Navy at age 18 and became a pilot a year later. By the time he was 20, he had flown 58 combat missions, including one in which he was shot down and found himself floating in the ocean for hours before a submarine rescued him.

Postwar, Bush could have stayed on the East Coast and followed his father to Wall Street. Instead, he became an oil wildcatter, moving his bride, Barbara, to a Quonset hut in Midland, Texas.

When he entered politics, Bush could have made his rise a lot easier if he had become a Democrat. Instead, he remained a Republican, adamant that Texas needed to become a two-party state. It did — but not before Democrats walloped him both times he ran for the Senate.

The graciousness? That appears most vividly in small incidents, when there could have been no doubt that he was simply being himself, not appealing to reporters or posing for the cameras.

Item: When his press secretary, Pete Teeley, walked me into the West Wing to tell Bush that he wanted to hire me as the then-vice president's new speechwriter, I was a 25-year-old from a small town in upstate New York. Would Bush grill me about policy? Would he probe my knowledge of American history?

I was so nervous I hadn't slept in two nights. Sensing my unease, Bush dispensed with questions. Instead, he looked down at my feet, slowly raised his gaze to my face, and said, "Looks about the right height. Let's hope it works out." And then he shook my hand.

I saw that pattern repeat itself dozens of times. George Bush, putting people at ease.

Item: The White House is an intensely hierarchical place, but Bush ignored the pecking order. If he was running behind schedule, he would step out of his office to apologize in person to anyone he was going to keep waiting.

If he needed to go over a speech in a motorcade, he would have the speechwriter climb right into his limousine with him — even when that meant that a senior member of the White House got kicked out.

Once I needed to discuss a speech with Bush immediately. He had me join him in the West Wing barbershop, where he had an appointment. Bush sat in the barber chair, I pulled up a stool and the barber went to work. Bush traded wisecracks with the barber and included him when we talked about the speech.

The US president, a barber and a young wordsmith — just three guys in a barbershop. George Bush made us equals.

Item: Nearly 30 years after I worked for Bush, I helped arrange for him to receive an honorary degree from my alma mater, Dartmouth College. The former president and Mrs. Bush would fly from their summer home in Maine to Hanover, NH, where Dartmouth is located.

The morning of the ceremony, which was to take place outdoors, the weather in Hanover turned frigid and windy. I started receiving texts from Jean Becker, the former president's chief of staff.

Bush's physician, she explained, had urged him to stay at home and indoors. Mrs. Bush sided with the physician — emphatically. In a third email, Becker admitted that she, too, had advised her boss to stay home.

And then, just as I was about to tell administrators at Dartmouth that the Bushes would be unable to join us, Becker sent me one final text. The former president had considered everyone's advice — and rejected it. He and Mrs. Bush would reach Hanover in an hour. "He doesn't want to let people down," Becker said.

Eighty-seven years old and confined to a wheelchair, George Bush would still rather have put himself out than let anyone down.

There are a hundred dissertations still to be written about the 41st president's policies, but we already know what we need to know about his character. Graciousness and toughness. George Herbert Walker Bush displayed those attributes in equal measure. He was an American gentleman.

President George H.W. Bush Had ‘The Vision Thing’ in Spades

Atlantic Council, Damon Wilson, 12.02.2018

President George H.W. Bush ascended to the presidency with a reputation for experience, judgement, integrity, and a steady hand. However, the looming question was whether he could inspire people with, in his own words, “the vision thing.”

That quotation, first reported by Robert Ajemian in a Time feature in 1987, dogged George H.W. Bush throughout his presidency. Yet, President George H.W. Bush – more than any post-Cold War president – successfully articulated a vision of a “Europe whole and free” that became an historically successful strategy guiding US policy for the subsequent twenty-five years. Indeed, his words, first spoken when I was a high school student gripped by the possibilities of the end of the Cold War, have inspired my own career for the past three decades.

On May 31, 1989, President H.W. Bush – speaking in Mainz to the citizens of a then still divided Germany – set out his vision for American leadership in support of a united Europe built on the foundation of lasting security and shared values of democracy, freedom, and prosperity.

He said, “For forty years, the seeds of democracy in Eastern Europe lay dormant, buried under the frozen tundra of the Cold War. And for forty years, the world has waited for the Cold War to end. And decade after decade, time after time, the flowering human spirit withered from the chill of conflict and oppression; and again, the world waited. But the passion for freedom cannot be denied forever. The world has waited long enough. The time is right. Let Europe be whole and free.”

Only four months into his presidency, he delivered remarks that shaped not only his administration’s strategy, but became an American bipartisan grand strategy for the coming decades. These remarks were an audacious challenge to those living behind the Iron Curtain and set a high bar for America’s aims in Europe – words all the more notable coming from a famously cautious US president.

Remarkably, President George H.W. Bush spoke these words days before Poland's first free elections on June 4, five months before the fall of the Berlin Wall that November, more than two years before the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, and more than two and half years before the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The story of a Europe whole and free began as a united Germany, the restoration of the nations of the Central and Eastern Europe, the independence of Russian and other nationalities from Soviet communism. "Europe whole and free" at first embodied the hopeful future of the continent no longer divided by the Iron Curtain with half beholden to totalitarianism. Yet, soon, dramatic political and security shifts on the ground forced Washington and Brussels to define a set of policies toward Western Europe's post-Communist, eastern neighbors.

For the next twenty-five years, American policy toward Europe and Eurasia would be guided by the vision of a "Europe whole, free" – a concept that from the start, included Russia.

President Bush drew on a common transatlantic grand strategy from much earlier, making it relevant for the dawn of the end of the Cold War. The United States fought World War II not only to defeat the Nazi menace, but to help Europe emerge from war in a way that would never force the United States to fight again in Europe. After forty-five years of Cold War, President Bush forged a bipartisan US policy to fulfill our original aims of 1945.

While not anticipated at the time, NATO and European Union enlargement became the most effective tools for achieving this vision. The prospect of joining these great institutions became an engine for reform, returning former Warsaw Pact nations to their European home. But enlargement was always coupled with forging a new cooperation with Russia.

President George H.W. Bush's formula for success broke down in 2008 – and it broke down violently. The crisis in Ukraine suggests just how broken the strategy may be.

Today, Europe remains incomplete, its institutions uncertain, and America ambivalent about its

role in Europe. Even past advocates question today's relevance of the paradigm of a Europe whole and free. Russia after all is no longer a partner in pursuing a "common European home," a term coined by Gorbachev. Rather Putin is rejecting the post-Cold War order. Unfortunately, he has positioned himself and therefore Russia as an adversary rather than a partner.

So our task is whether we can or even should retain the vision of a Europe whole and free – and complete the integration of Europe – holding out the prospect of a place for a different Russia in the future – in the face of a Russia that rejects this vision today.

Faced with this historic challenge, much like 1989, the United States needs the kind of leadership, integrity, and yes – vision – that President George H.W. Bush offered then for America's role in the world.

George H.W. Bush: The Right Man at the Right Time

Atlantic Council, Daniel Fried, 12.02.2018

Vision and boldness are not labels usually attached to President George H.W. Bush. But such were the qualities he displayed in 1989, when he led the United States to embrace the advent of democracy in Poland, the first breakthrough in what turned out to be the end of Communist rule in Europe. Ahead of almost the entire US foreign policy establishment, Bush bet on freedom, one of the great calls of US Cold War policy. He showed prudence and restraint in his tactics, but deployed these qualities in the service of strategic US interests and its deeper values, which he understood were indivisible.

It is hard now to recall how improbable the end of Soviet rule in Europe seemed even as late as the 1980s. The United States and the West had accustomed itself, in practice if not in theory, to living with perpetual Communist domination of one-third of Europe. “Liberation” of Eastern Europe was regarded as purely aspirational, if not irresponsible. President Ronald Reagan spoke of tearing down the Berlin Wall and meant it. But his conviction that democracy would prevail in the Cold War was shared by few, even in his own administration. Poland’s Solidarity was a mass, pro-democracy movement. But imposition of martial law in 1981 appeared to crush it.

But communism in Central Europe and especially Poland had failed to generate either political legitimacy or economic results. By 1988-89, with a Polish pope, John Paul II, in the Vatican, Solidarity was back, its underground structures functioning and strikes spreading. The Communist regime, facing rising, mass opposition, switched tactics and tried to co-opt the opposition, offering the so-called Roundtable Talks with Solidarity, which began in early February 1989, just after Bush’s inaugural.

Most in the new Bush administration dismissed the potential of change in Poland. The Hungarian Revolution of 1956, the Prague Spring of 1968, and the first Solidarity movement of 1980 had all failed, and the current effort would as well, or so went the thinking. (I was then Polish desk officer in the State Department, a modest position, surrounded by this thinking).

But in Poland, Solidarity’s leader Lech Wałęsa understood that the Roundtable Talks were an

opportunity; that if the Communists through those talks gave up any of their monopoly of power, it might well lead to their giving it all up.

Bush also understood this, among few in Washington who did. In September 1987, as vice president, he had visited Poland. He knew Wałęsa, Communist Poland's leader Wojciech Jaruzelski, and had a feel for the potential of the moment. The Roundtable Talks concluded in early April 1989. On April 17, according to their terms, Solidarity was re-legalized, and that same day Bush gave a speech throwing US support behind the new opening in Poland.

Polish parliamentary elections followed on June 4, only partly free (by terms of the Roundtable, 35 percent of the seats were freely elected, and the rest divided between regime-recognized groups and political parties). But Solidarity-backed candidates won every single open seat; the election had become a referendum on Communist rule and democracy had won.

The situation was fraught. Soviet troops still occupied Poland and the Soviet Union had never, and most Americans thought would never, let their European empire go. In Poland, Solidarity had a mandate but the Communists had the guns.

Into this mix of hope and peril, just a month after the Polish elections, Bush arrived in Poland (and Hungary, also going through political upheaval). In a speech to the newly-seated Polish parliament, now including former dissidents, democratic activists, and labor leaders turned elected officials, he pledged US backing for transformation of Poland and, by extension, all of Central Europe. In a trip to Solidarity headquarters in Gdansk, to wild enthusiasm, he boosted Polish confidence.

But Bush's greatest achievement on that critical trip may have been the lunch he hosted in Warsaw, at the residence of the US ambassador, for the emerging Solidarity political leaders with the still-in-power Communist leaders, including Jaruzelski. This brought together former political prisoners with their former jailers.

To the Solidarity leaders, Bush offered support and recognition as the legitimate future leaders of

their country. To the Communists, he offered respect if and as they surrendered power. Indirectly, he signaled to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev that the Polish transformation had US backing, and that the Soviets could not reverse it without cost. His low-key style calmed nerves; his bold substance helped advance history.

By September 1989, a Solidarity-backed government was in power in Poland. Communist governments started falling across Central and Eastern Europe. The Berlin Wall came down. The Cold War ended on US terms, freedom's terms.

President George H.W. Bush helped make that happen.

Years later, in the late 1990s, Bush returned to Poland. I was then the US ambassador and had the chance to tell him how much his policy decisions and personal engagement had meant in 1989 and how much good had come of them. His response was characteristic: he looked down and murmured, "Oh, perhaps." But no doubt about it. George H.W. Bush was the right man at the right time.

Thank You, President George H.W. Bush

Atlantic Council, Frederick Kempe, 12.04.2018

The Atlantic Council mourns the passing of George H. W. Bush, the 41st President of the United States.

President Bush was one of the most distinguished international public servants of his generation. He was one of the greatest international statesmen and Atlanticists to ever serve as commander-in-chief. Measured by his historic accomplishments, he was one of our greatest Presidents ever and perhaps the most consequential one-term President in American history.

Here are just a few reasons why:

He won the Cold War peacefully and graciously, thus liberating Eastern Europe and ending Soviet-style Communism. That defused a nuclear standoff that for decades hung over the world with the threat of mutually assured destruction. He played a decisive role in unifying a democratic Germany within NATO and the European Union. He pushed back the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait militarily and with limited casualties, liberating the country of its occupiers, setting the standard for the post-Cold War order.

Less recognized, Bush completed the North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada and Mexico, which was later ratified during the Clinton administration. He helped pave the way for a new World Trade Organization through reaching an agricultural deal with Europe. His administration also established the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum. Thus, he not only spoke about the possibility of a New World Order, he also laid some of its first foundation stones. At the same time, he worked with an opposition Congress to pass landmark legislation for Americans with disabilities and for clear air.

President George H.W. Bush arrived in office uniquely prepared for the challenges he would face. He was shot down in the Pacific as a Navy pilot in World War II, he served in the House of Representatives, he was the US envoy to the United Nations and China, the director of the CIA,

and for eight years was Vice President to President Ronald Reagan prior to becoming President.

Placing service above self, a characteristic that defined him throughout his life, he inspired those who worked with him from both sides of the political aisle to act with a similar sense of integrity and purpose. He set an example for his countrymen of decency, integrity and patriotic duty – a gentleman of admirable public and private character.

With his restrained and principled leadership, he safely guided the United States through an era of momentous change. It was his collaborative leadership, in which he won the trust both of West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, that made the peaceful liberation of Eastern Europe, the reunification of Germany and set in motion the first steps toward his still-unrealized goal of a Europe Whole and Free. He brought along French President Francois Mitterrand and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who doubted the wisdom of reunifying Germany.

“Few empires in history have fallen in such peaceful fashion,” wrote the Wall Street Journal this weekend, noting that Bush’s cautious temperament and long experience helped to negotiate a transition without firing a shot” after President Reagan’s boldness and ideological conviction “won the long twilight struggle.”

Said President Bush himself of this accomplishment in his last State of the Union Address in 1992: “The biggest thing that has happened in the world in my life, in our lives, is this: By the grace of God, America won the Cold War.”

In introducing him for the 2009 Atlantic Council Distinguished Leadership Award, our organization’s highest honor, then-Defense Secretary Robert Gates said, “One of the great privileges of my life was to be at President Bush’s side as he provided inspired leadership to a world that in a span of less than 36 months experienced the liberation of Eastern Europe, the reunification of Germany into NATO, the victory of the West in the Cold War, the first Gulf War

and the collapse of the Soviet Union ... As the Communist Bloc was disintegrating, it was George Bush's skilled yet quiet statecraft that made a revolutionary time seem much less dangerous than it actually was."

Upon learning of the passing of George H. W. Bush, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said "I mourn George Bush, the 41st president of the United States, as the chancellor of the German Federal Republic but also as a German who, without the results of his policies, would hardly be standing here."

In accepting our award, President Bush as always wanted to shift the spotlight from himself and shine it on others. "I would simply like to salute the capable men and women I had at my side during four years of genuine change and challenge. Together we not only upheld the public trust placed in us; we also helped to leave the world a safer and more secure place than we found it."

Rest in Peace George H. W. Bush. Thank you for making the world a better place than you found it. In your passing, one prays today's leaders will find inspiration to build upon your legacy with similar decency and determination.

Column: The enduring heartbeat of George H.W. Bush

ABC News, Mark K. Updegrove

While it seems hard to believe now, George H.W. Bush left office 25 years ago last January lamenting that the nation never knew his "heartbeat."

Bush was deeply hurt by his 1992 re-election defeat at the hands of Democratic challenger Bill Clinton, who nurtured the perception that the out-of-touch Bush was indifferent to the concerns of everyday Americans.

As Bush packed his bags and left the White House toward an uncertain future, he feared he'd let down those closest to him and would be consigned to an "asterisk" in history, the Chester Arthur of his age.

He needn't have worried. As passions around his presidency receded over time, Bush, unlike most of his presidential predecessors, would live long enough to get a good sense of how he would be seen in posterity -- and the news was good.

Hardly an asterisk, the 41st president would come to be esteemed for his sheer competence in office during a consequential time, especially given his steady hand in foreign policy -- guiding the world toward a peaceful end to the Cold War as the Soviet Empire collapsed under its own weight; championing the reunification of Germany in the face of Western European opposition; and leading an unprecedented coalition of nations toward the liberation of Kuwait from Iraqi seizure in the Gulf War.

In domestic policy, his landmark legislative achievements included the Americans with Disability Act and the Clean Air Act, for which he would receive due credit. Even his political Waterloo -- breaking his "no new taxes" campaign pledge in order to seal a 1990 budget deal with a Democratic-controlled Congress -- has been vindicated by economists who credit the move as helping to pave the way toward the prosperity of the Clinton years. The Kennedy Library acknowledged as much when it honored him with its "Profile in Courage Award" in 2014.

But while he would see history's indebted nod, it almost certainly meant more to him that Americans heard his heartbeat loud and clear. In an increasingly barbed, self-aggrandizing world, he was revered for his character. The last of our World War II presidents, who began their reign in the White House in 1961 when John F. Kennedy proclaimed that the "torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans," Bush became an emblem of the best of the Greatest Generation: decent, humble, instinctively putting service above self. It was that ethos that helped boost the 2000 presidential candidacy of his son, George W., who would ascend to the presidency with the help of the trusted Bush brand name. The old man was a good egg, so why not give his son a chance?

Later the elder Bush showed his civility when he paired with his former rival, Clinton, at his son's behest to raise funds for disaster relief after a tsunami devastated Southeast Asia. The unlikely friendship between the two was an inspiring sign that hatchets could be buried in the name of something bigger.

And nearly a decade later, a new generation, born well after his presidency, became introduced to him in 2013 after the viral social media promulgation of a photo of him and the 2-year-old Leukemia-stricken son of one of his Secret Service agents -- both as bald as cucumbers -- after Bush shaved his head in solidarity.

Bush was by no means perfect. Political expedience occasionally got the better of him. He came out against the Civil Rights Act of 1964 during a failed bid for the Senate in his home state of Texas; was less than forthcoming about his knowledge of the Iran-Contra affair while he vice president in the Reagan years; and he was slow to condemn a racist 1988 GOP campaign ad featuring an African American convict. But more often than not, he led with his values.

Bush's call for a "kinder, gentler nation," may stand as his most enduring declaration, a characteristic appeal for America to be a compassionate society.

His heartbeat may have faded, but the hope resounds.

As George H.W. Bush is laid to rest, we are reminded of what leadership requires, the toll it takes

Dallas Morning News, Editorial, 12.05.2018

The sight this week of an emotional George W. Bush, holding back tears as an honor guard solemnly carried his father's casket up the steps of the U.S. Capitol, reminds us that our presidents — in this case two — have been first and foremost ordinary men, fathers and sons, propelled by history, a strong will and one hopes an equally strong sense of civic duty into extraordinary circumstances.

Near sunset, under a purple sky, as George H. W. Bush's flag-draped casket passed by his eldest son, the lines of the great American poet, Walt Whitman, writing after President Abraham Lincoln's death, returned to us:

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,

My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,

The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,

From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won.

Whitman was writing at a time when our nation, what he called "the vessel grim and daring" was still engaged in a bloody civil war. Lincoln was assassinated on April 14, 1865, just five days after Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee surrendered his army at Appomattox Court House in Virginia.

We're reminded of the Whitman poem not because our nation faces anything like the degree of peril it experienced during the Civil War. But because it reveals the tremendous weight carried by anyone elected to our nation's highest office and the many duties that individual must fulfill.

Yes, chief of state, chief executive and commander in chief are perhaps the most important obligations a president must fulfill for the citizenry. But, as Whitman touched on in his poem "O Captain! My Captain!" the president also serves, in a sense, as a "father" of the country.

As commander in chief and as the nation's chief diplomat, the president is called upon to, in Whitman's words, captain the ship of state through "fearful" voyages and return it "anchor'd safe and sound." And as old fashioned as it may sound, we still believe that being America's chief of state "requires a president to be an inspiring example for the American people," as the textbook maker Scholastic explains it, and that he or she is "a living symbol of the nation."

And it is perhaps in this role that our nation's 41st president shone most brightly. Whether he was flying 58 combat missions as a fighter pilot in World War II, leading our armed forces — and a coalition of 35 allies — to a swift victory in the 1991 Gulf War, or with incredible diplomatic deftness helping to assure the dissolution of the Soviet Union was handled peacefully — the Cold War won without firing a shot — he put country first. But his patriotism was never arrogant, never puffed up. He served his nation, as he served his family, with a firm but gentle hand.

Today, after lying in state at the Capitol Rotunda, George Herbert Walker Bush will be eulogized by family, friends and political leaders from both sides of the aisle during his funeral service at Washington National Cathedral.

Leading by example once again, and wanting above all else to be sure that the ship of state is "anchor'd safe and sound," he made it clear in his last wishes that he wanted President Donald Trump and his family to be in attendance — a final grace note for a man whose 94 years had many.

‘A great and noble man’: His son and other dignitaries honor George H.W. Bush at Washington Funeral

Dallas Morning News, Todd Gillman and Tom Benning, 12.06.2018

WASHINGTON — Five U.S. presidents and an assortment of royalty and other leaders from around the world gathered Wednesday morning for the state funeral of George Bush, the nation's 41st president.

They recalled him as a statesman of unusual restraint and wisdom, a father with enough heart to befriend even his adversaries, a blue blood with a deep sense of public duty.

"He recognized that serving others enriched the giver's soul. To us, his was the brightest of a thousand points of light," another president, his son George W. Bush, said in his eulogy. "When the history books are written, they will say that George H.W. Bush was a great president of the United States — a diplomat of unmatched skill, a commander in chief of formidable accomplishment, and a gentleman who executed the duties of his office with dignity and honor."

The recollections entwined the personal and geopolitical as the nation bid farewell to the patriarch of one of its most enduring political dynasties, amid elaborate pageantry at the Washington National Cathedral.

"Through our tears, let us know the blessings of knowing and loving you. A great and noble man," Bush said, unsuccessfully stifling a sob at the end. "The best father a son or daughter could have."

George W. Bush's daughter Barbara Bush — named for his mom, a first lady — had said a day earlier that her dad had been working to get through the eulogy "without breaking down." He almost made it.

Such occasions provide an opportunity to recall bygone eras, and to observe the passage of time in the graying hair of former Cabinet secretaries, senior aides and presidents.

Jimmy Carter, born four months after the elder Bush, is 94. Bill Clinton and the younger Bush are 72, as is President Donald Trump. Barack Obama is the youngest member of the club at 57.

All but Bush sat in the same front pew, with Trump on the end, his first lady between him and Obama, the tension at times palpable, mostly directed at Trump. It was visible in the body language in the pew, and reflected in subtle and sometimes pointed passages in the eulogies highlighting the late president's graciousness, respect for adversaries and aversion to any go-it-alone approach during international crises.

Comments about the wall that fell on Bush's watch — the one between East and West Berlin — brought to mind the one that Trump has demanded between the United States and its southern neighbor, Mexico.

The funeral marked the first time that Trump was in the same place with all his living predecessors.

He shook hands only with the Obamas when he arrived, and he stood when the Bush family entered. George W. Bush shook his hand, then the first lady's, and worked his way to the end, greeting all the former presidents and first ladies before taking his seat with his family across the aisle.

Laura Bush and the Trumps also exchanged greetings.

The elder Bush, who died at age 94, left office 26 years ago after one term as president, eight years as Ronald Reagan's vice president, and stints in the U.S. House and as CIA director, chairman of the Republican Party and U.S. envoy to China.

Since his death Friday night at home in Houston, memories of a kinder, gentler time in the nation's political life have come flooding back. Thousands of mourners recalled his genial demeanor and lifetime of public service this week, paying their respects at the U.S. Capitol as Bush lay in state.

The eulogies

Presidential historian Jon Meacham, a Bush biographer, delivered a eulogy that charted the course of the former president's life. Bush signed up as a Navy fighter pilot at 18 and later survived a near-fatal crash in World War II.

"Throughout the ensuing decades, President Bush would frequently ask, nearly daily, 'Why me? Why was I spared?'" Meacham said. "And in a sense, the rest of his life was a perennial effort to prove himself worthy of salvation on that distant morning."

"To him, his life was no longer his own," the historian continued. "There were always more missions to undertake."

Meacham was also sure to point out the lighter sides of Bush's biography, recalling the time Bush accidentally shook the hand of a mannequin while stumping in New Hampshire — shrugging off the gaffe by saying, "Never know. Gotta ask!"

That tale and others drew laughter from George W. Bush, who's had similar flubs.

As for Bush's place in history, Meacham hailed him as "America's last great soldier-statesman, a 20th-century founding father."

He compared Bush's "thousand points of light" appeal for volunteerism to Abraham Lincoln's call to the "better angels of our nature," describing those turns of phrase as "companion verses in America's national hymn."

"An imperfect man, he left us a more perfect union," Meacham said.

Other eulogies came from Brian Mulroney, Canada's prime minister during Bush's tenure, and former Sen. Alan Simpson, a longtime friend.

Mulroney lauded Bush for hammering out a trade deal with Canada and Mexico.

Speaking from Clinton, who finalized NAFTA, and Trump, who has trashed it as the worst deal in U.S. history, Mulroney diplomatically noted that it had spurred unprecedented growth across the continent, even as it was "recently modernized and improved by new administrations."

He predicted that a century from now, historians would rank Bush atop the list of presidents, citing his especially deft handling of the Soviet Union's implosion. At a juncture fraught with peril for the world, he said, Bush provided "the Russian people the opportunity to build democracy in a country that had been ruled by czars and tyrants for a millennium."

Dictators fell across Eastern Europe, and Germany stood on the precipice of reunification — another dangerous turning point for the world order.

"I believe it will be said that no occupant of the Oval Office was more courageous, more principled, and more honorable than George Herbert Walker Bush," Mulroney said.

The late president's son, only the second president preceded in the office by his father, hailed him as a role model in all his roles — father, husband and president.

"He was an empathetic man. He valued character over pedigree, and he was no cynic. He looked for the good in people and he usually found it," Bush said. "To us he was close to perfect, but not perfect. His short game was lousy. He wasn't exactly Fred Astaire on the dance floor." And he was no fan of broccoli.

But, the son said, the elder Bush had a heart big enough to serve as a father figure to an ever-growing list of younger friends and protégés, "including the unlikeliest, the man who beat him, Bill Clinton."

"Dad taught us all what it means to be a great husband" in a 73-year marriage to Barbara Bush, who died in April, Bush said. "He laughed and he cried with her. He was dedicated to her totally."

"After Mom died, Dad was strong, but all he really wanted to do was hold Mom's hand again."

At age 85, the elder Bush was still eager to go out on a speedboat, his son said. At 90, he made his last parachute jump.

"The idea is to die young, as late as possible," Bush said, reciting a favorite saying. "One reason that Dad knew how to die young is that he almost did it." Bush was afflicted first by a serious infection and then when he was shot down in the Pacific.

No Trump remarks

The current president was not asked to speak, a break from decades of tradition that reflected Trump's strained relationship with the Bushes.

Trump mocked the late president's son Jeb, a former Florida governor, as "Low energy Jeb" during the 2016 primaries. The elder Bush held such disdain for Trump that he cast his final presidential ballot for the Democratic nominee, Hillary Clinton.

Still, he wanted the president to attend, and Trump has been gracious. He declared a national day of mourning. On Tuesday, he and the first lady paid respects at the Capitol as Bush lay in state, and visited with the Bush family at Blair House, the official guest residence across from the White House.

When Barbara Bush died in the spring, Trump skipped the funeral, saying he didn't want to create any disruption.

He has been largely isolated from previous presidents, not known to have sought counsel from any of them since he took office, on any topic — an unprecedented tack, given the institutional memory that exists only within that ultra-exclusive club.

Lyndon Johnson was the last former president buried without a eulogy from the sitting president. His death in 1973 came two days after Richard Nixon's second inauguration.

'Decent and honorable'

The funeral Wednesday made no reference to those complicated dynamics. The ceremony was instead full of personal reflections, such as one from Simpson that Bush was the "most decent and honorable person I ever met."

The former Wyoming senator sent the audience into repeated fits of laughter, recalling Bush's high jinks and his loyalty through difficult times. Bush's humility stood out, Simpson said, quipping that "those who travel the high road of humility in Washington, D.C., are not bothered by heavy traffic."

Simpson also recalled that Bush had a "very serious flaw, known by all close to him."

The former president "liked a good joke, the richer the better, and he'd throw his head back and give that great laugh." But Bush could "never, ever remember a punchline," said Simpson, known for his wit and comedic timing.

"So the punchline for George Herbert Walker Bush is this," Simpson said. "You would've wanted him on your side."

Apart from Barack and Michelle Obama; Bill and Hillary Clinton and their daughter, Chelsea; and Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter, three other presidential families were represented. The guest list included two of LBJ's children, Luci Baines Johnson and Lynda Johnson Robb, along with Susan Ford Bales, daughter of Gerald Ford, and Nixon's daughter, Tricia Nixon Cox.

A more intimate church service will be held in Houston on Thursday morning, followed by burial at Bush's presidential library at Texas A&M in College Station.

There were many personal touches to the Washington ceremony, as well.

Granddaughters Lauren Bush Lauren and Ashley Walker Bush, daughters of Neil Bush, read from Isaiah. Another granddaughter, George W. Bush's daughter Jenna Bush Hager, recited a passage from Revelation.

Both readings pointed toward salvation.

"And the city has no need of sun or moon on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb," Hager's passage read. "The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. Its gates will never be shut by day — and there will be no night there."

Princes, presidents, prime ministers

There was also all the pomp of a state funeral.

Uniformed members of the U.S. Marine Orchestra, the U.S. Coast Guard Band and the Armed Forces Chorus offloaded from buses as the sun rose over D.C., joining media, support staff members and others in winding through the security that comes with the presence of multiple presidents.

Guests passed a thicket of TV cameras on the cathedral's front lawn.

Those in attendance were greeted inside by military honor guards; two massive bouquets of white roses; guest books growing longer with each signature; a 24-page program with a golden presidential seal; and a single white candle that flickered next to where Bush's casket would soon lie.

Buzz greeted the arrival of stars in the Bush orbit, such as former Secretaries of State Condoleezza Rice and Colin Powell. Legendary Duke University basketball coach Mike Krzyzewski drew a crowd about halfway back in the cathedral.

Texas connections abounded. Before the service, Energy Secretary Rick Perry, the former governor, chatted with Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee, D-Houston, while Kay Bailey Hutchison, the U.S. ambassador to NATO and a former senator, talked to German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

Then Perry and Hutchison, once bitter political rivals, shared a warm embrace.

The VIP list reflected Bush's impact on history. Although he served just one term, it was an especially eventful four years.

Bush presided over the fall of the Berlin Wall and encouraged the reunification of Germany.

Merkel, who grew up in East Germany, was in the pews, along with Lech Walesa, the head of the Solidarity movement — the first independent trade union in the Soviet bloc — who became the first president of a post-Soviet Poland.

Poland's current president, Andrzej Duda, was on the guest list, too, along with John Major, British prime minister during Bush's tenure, and Prince Charles.

Among the other royalty: Jordan's King Abdullah and Queen Rania and the former emir of Qatar.

Kuwait, liberated under Bush in the first Persian Gulf War after Iraq had invaded, was represented by its former prime minister.

George H.W. Bush and the Texas Media

Subtitle: The 41st president was described as his own best press secretary – especially with the Texas media

Texas Monthly, Dave Montgomery, 12.10.2018

When George H.W. Bush started planning his funeral years ago, recalls Jim McGrath, his post-presidency spokesman, he made sure that members of the Texas press corps would be given priority access in the inevitable outpouring of international media coverage following his death.

“He just assumed he was going to take care of his hometown press and his home-state press,” says McGrath. “We decided that our priorities were Houston and the Texas media in that order.” The late president’s gracious accommodation to the Texas press corps in death reflects the kind of relationship that he had with the press in life. It now seems like a dreamy memory, particularly in an era when the current president derides the press as an enemy of the people.

As a former Austin bureau chief for the now-defunct *Dallas Times Herald* and twenty-year Washington bureau chief for the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, I covered Bush 41 from his first presidential race in 1980 through his eight years as vice president, four years as president, and into his post-presidency back in his hometown of Houston. I saw George H.W. Bush as did many of the other long-time reporters who followed him closely—both as a premier newsmaker who pioneered the rise of the Texas Republican party and as the approachable good guy eulogized in the flood of tributes following his death on November 30. I believe we covered Bush with unimpaired objectivity—and he certainly received his share of critical coverage—but the former president’s instincts for humor, friendliness, accessibility, goodwill, and acts of kindness created a rapport with the press that bears little resemblance to the contentiousness that exists in today’s political environment.

“He felt at ease with the press,” said Peter Roussel of Houston, a former White House spokesman who knew Bush for a half century and served as his official press representative during his years as a congressman, United Nations ambassador, and national chairman of the Republican party, as well as his 1970 campaign for the Senate. “Being his press secretary made it easy for me to be in that job because, quite frankly, he was his own best press secretary. He was his own best spokesman.”

Many of my own experiences with Bush came to mind as my wife Linda and I attended his funeral among more than a thousand other invited guests at St. Martin's Episcopal Church in Houston. I remembered the white-knuckled ride on his speedboat off the coast of Kennebunkport, jogging with him during a two-day swing on the West Coast, and laughing over pizza with other Texas reporters at his office in Houston after he left the White House.

One of my most indelible memories is the time he rescued me from journalistic humiliation during the first year of his presidency. In November of 1989, as communist Eastern Europe was crumbling, Bush addressed hundreds of realtors at the Loews Anatole hotel in Dallas. Three of my Texas colleagues and I, part of a larger cluster of journalists covering the event from the back of a huge ballroom, were slated to interview Bush after the speech. The plan was for then-assistant press secretary Sean Walsh to escort us to the presidential suite atop the hotel as soon as the speech ended.

I turned away from Walsh's direction for a nanosecond, the equivalent of taking my eye off the ball. When I looked back in his direction, there was no Walsh, no Texas colleagues, and hordes of realtors were headed my way as the ballroom began to empty. Panic was quickly setting in as I realized that I had no hope of tracking down the president's location amid the throngs of people and vast net of presidential security throughout the hotel.

But George Herbert Walker Bush had my back. When it became clear upstairs that I had been misplaced, he instructed Walsh to quickly hunt me down and made sure that anything he said before I arrived would be recorded. "We've got to help the little fellow out. We'll make sure he's covered," Walsh, who is now a principal in a law firm with former California Governor Pete Wilson, remembers the president saying. I wrote a front-page story from the roundtable interview with no hint of the near-disaster.

Other old-school Texas reporters have their own treasured anecdotes from their days covering Bush. Dave Ward, who was a legendary anchor for nearly fifty years at Houston's KRTK Channel 13, met Bush when the future president was an alternate delegate at the 1964 Republican National Convention in San Francisco. Ward, who still does feature segments for the station, was covering the convention as a Houston radio reporter and was hunting for Texas

delegates to comment on a group of protesting hippies trying to block the entrance to the convention hall. He got what he considered a gem from Bush, who said the delegates would be amenable to talking to the protesters “if they would go home and take a bath and put on some decent clothes.”

Two or three years ago, Ward remembers, he bumped into the former president at a Houston restaurant. “Hi, Dave,” the president said. “You had any trouble with hippies lately?” Ward said he remained in touch with the president throughout his career and was twice invited to the White House. After Ward won a Guinness world record for his 49 years and 218 days as an anchor, the Bushes sent him a letter of congratulations signed by “your biggest fan, George H.W. Bush.”

Tom DeFrank, who was born in Houston, grew up in Arlington, and graduated from Texas A&M, knew Bush for more than four decades in a Washington career that included *Newsweek*, the *New York Daily News*, and the *National Journal*, where he still covers the White House as a contributing editor. The two’s Texas ties helped fuel a long-running friendship, DeFrank remembers. At a White House Christmas party in 1989, DeFrank and his future wife Melanie were being greeted by the president when Bush noticed an engagement ring on Melanie’s finger. “He gets all excited and the receiving line just stops,” DeFrank said, recalling how the president pointed out the ring to First Lady Barbara Bush and talked about how DeFrank had just gotten engaged. Two weeks later, the couple was invited to a movie at the White House. “That’s the kind of guy he was,” DeFrank recalled. “He was very kind and very decent. He was, as we say in Texas, the real deal.”

Dana Carvey Remembers George Bush, From Muse to Friend

The New York Times, Dana Carvey, 12.07.2018

Late on Nov. 8, 1988, the phone rang. I answered, and a familiar voice said: “Well, congratulations. You won.”

“I won? What do you mean I won?”

“Bush won, so you won,” he answered.

“Jon?”

“YES, it’s me! JON LOVITZ! And NOW YOU are going to be the president on ‘Saturday Night Live’ for the next four years. HAPPY NOW?”

On “Saturday Night Live,” your friend’s defeat can be your victory. Comedians can be insanely competitive — the reason “class clown” is singular is because if there were two class clowns, one clown would ultimately kill the other clown.

Jon had played the Democratic presidential nominee, Michael Dukakis, during the fall of 1988 opposite my George H.W. Bush impression. We both knew that if our guy were to win we would be in a lot of cold opens, a coveted spot to start the show for at least four years.

I told Jon he had run a hard-fought campaign, and then I looked up at the TV to see that the real Michael Dukakis had just conceded to the real George H.W. Bush. The fake Dukakis had conceded to the fake Bush three minutes earlier.

The George H.W. Bush conundrum

President Ronald Reagan was an easy target. He had an impossibly low hairline, a tan, wrinkled face, a bobbling head, and as a bonus, he called his wife Mommy. He was comedy gold.

On the other hand, the first President Bush was a comedian’s nightmare. There was nothing to do an impression of — no hook. My take on him, in the early sketches, was actually kind of terrible

and not particularly funny. I always had good jokes with the help of two brilliant political satirists, Al Franken and Jim Downey, but my first Bush cold opens were just O.K.

Then one late Friday night on the 17th floor of Rockefeller Center, as Franken and I sat in his office racking our brains, something unexpected happened. Lorne Michaels, the creator and executive producer of “S.N.L.,” had asked for a Bush cold open, and in comedy terms, “we had nothing.” I was playing around, trying to make Al laugh. At one point, I raised my right arm and began rotating my hand lazily with index finger pointed — as if the hand were reaching for some thought. And then it came out — my voice flattening in a lazy syntax — “those people out there ... doing that thing ... doing that thing in that whole area over there.”

Al was laughing his ass off, and we both knew we had a hook. At that moment, President Bush became a character.

In the ensuing months, a lot of sub-hooks and hand gestures were added. And ultimately, if President Bush said, “Not going to do it,” I said, “Na Ga Da It.” That’s actually how it was written on the cue card. I could tell you more, but it wouldn’t be prudent at this juncture.

Lincoln Bedroom: Been there, done that

On Dec. 4 1992, I was on the phone with Lovitz. Again. I heard a beep indicating call waiting.

“Hold on a sec, Jon.”

“This is White House operator No. 1. Please hold for the President.”

“Sorry Jon, I got to take this call.”

“What? You got a BIGGER name on the other line?!”

“Yes.”

Suddenly I’m on the phone with President Bush, who had lost his bid for re-election the month before. I’m more than a bit nervous.

“How ya doing, Dana?”

“Doing fine, thanks, Mr. President”

“Well Dana, wondering if you would consider coming out to the White House and help cheer up the staff. Folks are a little down. Could use a laugh.”

Wow, I thought to myself. I make fun of him for years, he loses the election, and now he wants me to come to Washington and cheer up the staff? I was caught off guard, and the first thing that popped out of my mouth was, “Well, uh, where would I stay?”

It felt stupid as soon as I said it. I had just asked the president of the United States to book a hotel for me. There was a long pause. Then, “Well, you could, uh, stay right here in the White House, with Bar and me.” Two weeks later my wife, Paula, and I put our luggage down in the Lincoln Bedroom.

(Dear reader: At this point you are probably thinking: Lincoln Bedroom, wow! Is it gorgeous? Yes. Is it awe-inspiring? Yes. Did my wife and I make love in the Lincoln Bedroom? I’m not going to say, but my son’s middle name is ABE.)

Soon we were sitting in a beautiful living room. I was in my one and only suit, drinking a beer. Across from us, the President and Mrs. Bush, and another couple who were longtime friends, were having cocktails. There was a bit of awkward small talk, then the president said, “You know, Dana, I never thought your impression of me was nasty — never hit below the belt.”

I smiled and nodded. That was nice to hear. Then: “Hey Dana, why don’t you do that impression you do of me for everybody right here, right now.” I froze. Suddenly my impression seemed like a grotesque representation of the actual man.

“Uh, it’s not very good ... uh, it doesn’t really sound like you ... it’s just a weird voice ... like John Wayne trying to do Mister Rogers.”

The president smiled, index fingers raised. “Don’t tell me you’re NA GA DA IT.”

I started to sweat. I chugged the rest of my beer. “Got an idea!” the president said. “Secret Service guy right outside the door. His name is Brian — why don’t you use my voice and see if you can trick him into thinking it’s me.” Everybody stared at me in anticipation. So I did it.

“HEY BRIAN, I KNOW YOU’RE DOING THAT SECRET SERVICE THING, BUT CAN YOU COME IN HERE FOR A SECOND!”

The agent opened the door and leaned his head, looking slightly confused. “Its O.K., Brian, just having a little fun!” the president said.

(Dear Reader, everything you’ve just read is true but the quotes may not be word-for-word accurate. I didn’t have a tape recorder. I have one now.)

The next day I met with the president in the Oval Office with his advisers. The plan was that the staff would be assembled in the East Wing, “Hail to the Chief” would play, and I would come out as George Bush to the surprise and delight of everyone.

So there I was, hidden off to the side of the room, which was packed. I was nervous. They loved the president. How would they react to me? “Hail to the Chief” began playing, I emerged from the alcove and started doing Bush making a Santa’s list.

“Love socks, stripy socks, also would love a pumpkin-colored tie — very festive, very pumpkiny.” Trust me, it’s killing, and I could see the president laughing really hard. I pulled out all the stops — “NA GA DA IT,” “wouldn’t be prudent,” “Santa doing that thing he does in that whole area over there.” Eventually the real Bush came up, and he did me doing him in front of me, and then I did him doing me in front of him. Paula and Barbara were behind us laughing.

But there was definitely a sense of melancholy in the air. A new administration was coming in, and a lot of these people would be saying goodbye very soon. The president, being who he was, was only thinking about others. I was just relieved it all worked out.

A friendship begins

Later that day, my wife and I accompanied the president and the first lady to the Kennedy Center, where outstanding artists were awarded for their contributions to the arts. (Another generous gesture from the president — my work was done, but we were still hanging out.)

The recipients that year included Lionel Hampton, Joanne Woodward and Paul Newman. We settled into our box seats high up in the theater, and I noticed that all four of us had a Secret Service agent seated behind us. I asked Barbara Bush about it, and she said that it was standard protocol since, “you know, Lincoln.”

During a break in the show, I happened upon Newman, who had apparently referred to Vice President Dan Quayle in some derogatory manner in the press.

“I’m trying to avoid him,” he said. “He knows I think he’s a moron.” Just then Quayle approached, and Paul skedaddled back to his seat.

Just as the show ended, Walter Cronkite, the host, looked up to the balcony where we all were sitting and, in his booming voice, congratulated President Bush “on behalf of a grateful nation” for his 50 years of public service. Then the entire audience stood up, faced us and gave him a loud, lengthy ovation.

It seemed to catch the president off guard. The Secret Service whisked us away to a small elevator, and I looked up to see the president with tears running down his cheeks. No one said a word. My wife and I had known the Bushes for only 30 hours, and there we were, sharing this intimate family moment.

And so began my lucky 25-year friendship with “Barbara and George.” My wife and I happily received Christmas cards every year, as well as other postcards and letters. When I had a health scare in 1998, President Bush wrote to me to ask: “Can I do anything Dana? We’ve got great doctors right here in Houston.” When we did charity events together, I did my Ross Perot impression for him, and he would always laugh.

On Election Day in 2004, I got a surprise call. Again, the voice was familiar.

“Hi, Dana. George Bush here. How ya doing?”

“Hi, Mr. President. Uh, isn’t your son running for re-election today?”

“Yeah. But how are you doing?”

“I’m fine thanks. How’s the election looking?”

“Don’t know yet. But Bar and I saw you on some ‘S.N.L.’ reruns last night and wondered how you were doing.”

That was who he was. Always making sure everybody else was O.K.