

“George H.W. Bush: Former President, War Hero and Humanitarian Dies at 94”

Michael Graczyk, *Associated Press*

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HOUSTON, Texas — Former president George H.W. Bush has died. He was 94 years old. The World War II hero died Friday night, November 30. He was at his Houston home. His wife of more than 70 years, Barbara Bush, died in April 2018.

Bush rose through the government ranks. He went from being a U.S. congressman to leader of his Republican party. The Democratic and Republican parties are the two major political groups in the United States. After being vice president under the popular President Ronald Reagan for two terms, Bush was elected president in 1988.

### **41st President**

A 1991 Gulf War win over the Middle Eastern country of Iraq increased Bush's popularity as the 41st president.

Iraq was led by a violent dictator, Saddam Hussein. Hussein's troops invaded the tiny neighboring country of Kuwait on August 2, 1990, over an oil dispute. On February 24, 1991, U.S. troops stormed into Kuwait. The fighting only lasted 100 hours. The United States successfully removed Hussein and his troops from Kuwait. The U.S. suffered only 148 combat deaths, while over 20,000 Iraqi soldiers were killed. Hussein would continue to rule Iraq until 2003, when he was captured by U.S. troops. This took place under the presidency of the senior Bush's son, George W. Bush.

The 1991 victory made the elder Bush very popular. However, he later admitted to the weakness that cost him a second term as president. He couldn't clearly explain his vision for America's future. During the early 1990s recession, a time of economic trouble when many people lost jobs, Bush was also haunted by breaking a promise. "Read my lips. No new taxes," he'd told voters when running for president. Yet, he did raise taxes. Meanwhile, many Americans were struggling to pay for housing and other needs.

### **Second Father-And-Son Presidents In U.S. History**

Bush lost his bid for re-election to President Bill Clinton in 1992. Still, he lived to see his son, George W., elected president twice. They became the second father-and-son presidents after John Adams and John Quincy Adams.

Former President George W. Bush released a statement following his father's death. It said his father "was a man of the highest character."

"The entire Bush family is deeply grateful for 41's life and love," the statement read.

### **Raised Money For Disaster Victims**

After leaving office, George H.W. Bush occasionally made speeches and visits to other countries. He also teamed with President Clinton to raise tens of millions of dollars for disaster victims. They raised money to help those affected by the 2004 tsunami in the Indian Ocean and Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

"Who would have thought that I would be working with Bill Clinton, of all people?" Bush once joked.

### **Well-Meaning Leader Worked Hard To Help Others**

Bush found popularity again after his presidency. People began recognizing him as a well-meaning leader who worked hard to help others. After all, Bush had helped free Kuwait. The elder Bush decided against trying to topple Iraq's leader Saddam Hussein. The Iraqi leader was taken out in the 2003 war led by Bush's son, but the fighting that followed Hussein's downfall was long and deadly. The war led by the younger Bush was costly, lasting more than eight years.

Other battles George H.W. Bush fought were not so easily won. He tried to lower Americans' use of drugs and make American children the world's best educated.

### **One Of Youngest Pilots In World War II**

George H.W. Bush joined the Navy on his 18th birthday in 1942. The athletic, 6-foot-2 Bush became a war hero while still a teenager, flying 58 missions as one of the youngest pilots in World War II. He was shot down in 1944 while completing a bombing run against Japan. Bush was rescued in the ocean, but the two pilots with him did not survive. Bush received the Distinguished Flying Cross for his bravery.

He returned home to marry his 19-year-old sweetheart in January 1945. Barbara Pierce was the daughter of a magazine publisher. They were the longest-married presidential couple until her death in 2018. Bush was the father of one of the nation's most famous families in government. In addition to George W. becoming president, another son, Jeb, was elected Florida governor in 1998.

Bush approached old age with a positive attitude — and with bravery. He celebrated his 75th, 80th and 85th birthdays by skydiving.

Image below: Donald Trump, current President of the United States, and former presidents Barack Obama, Bill Clinton, and Jimmy Carter at the late George H.W. Bush's funeral service



### **Read on for the full transcript of George W. Bush's Memorial for His Father:**

“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 the Secret Service boats straining to

keep up.

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

In his 90s, 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 with dignity, humor and kindness. When the good lord finally called, how to meet him with courage and with the joy of 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 illusive 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, the mission completed, the shootdown. We learned of the death of his crewmates whom he thought about throughout his entire life. And we learned of the 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 he 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.

When he lost, he shouldered the blame. He accepted that failure is a 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 3-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 her 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 e-mail 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 nurtured and honored his many friendships with a generous and giving soul. There exists 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 wonder why he insisted on speed golf; he's a good golfer. Here's my conclusion. He played fast so 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 grandfather. 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 answered the phone, said "I think he can hear you but he hasn't said anything for 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. 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, the volume on high, all the while holding Mom's hand. After Mom died, Dad was strong, but all he really wanted to do was 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 he 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? 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 to remember you for exactly that and 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 know the blessings of knowing and loving you, a great and noble man. 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."

Hubbard, Lauren. "Full Transcript of President George W. Bush's Eulogy for His Father." *Town & Country*, Town & Country, 5 Dec. 2018, [www.townandcountrymag.com/society/politics/a25412038/george-w-bush-eulogy-for-father-george-hw-bush-full-transcript/](http://www.townandcountrymag.com/society/politics/a25412038/george-w-bush-eulogy-for-father-george-hw-bush-full-transcript/). Accessed 6 Dec. 2018.

Graczyk, Michael. "Former President George H.W. Bush Dies at Age 94." AP NEWS, *Associated Press*, 1 Dec. 2018, [apnews.com/268a8787ed114379a92a06b401451ba7](http://apnews.com/268a8787ed114379a92a06b401451ba7). Accessed 6 Dec. 2018.