



**All the Best Podcast**  
**Episode 30: “Memorial Day: A Salute to Military Service”**  
*Featuring United States Marine Corps Veteran and Grandson Walker Bush*

Walker: May 25th, 2001. Memorial Day, a time for remembrance. If I were in Kennebunkport's instead of in Hong Kong, I would go to our Norman Rockwell-like parade downtown. It is about the importance of service to this, the greatest, freest, most wonderful country in the world. It is about giving back, not receiving. Giving thanks to almighty God. We pray in the square and no one thinks this is bad. It is about remembering. Our parades, assembles, and marches are about thanking God for our freedoms. We should, of course, honor those who gave the last full measure of devotion. Honor them now, honor them forever. George H. W. Bush.

George: In the first place, I believe that character is a part of being president.

Barbara: And life really must have joy.

Sam: This is "All the Best," the official podcast of the George and Barbara Bush Foundation. I'm your host, Sam LeBlond, one of their many grandchildren. Here, we celebrate the legacy of these two incredible Americans through friends, family, and the Foundation. This is "All the Best."

We're mountaineers, volunteers  
We're the tide that rolls, we're Seminoles  
We're one big country nation, that's right

Man: I remember something my dad taught me. He said, "Write your mother, serve your country," and he said, "Tell the truth," and I've tried to do that in public life all through it.

We're one big country nation, that's right

Barbara: You are a human being first, and those human connections with children, with friends, are the most important investment you will ever make.

George: We stand tonight before a new world of hope and possibilities for our children, a world we could not have contemplated a few years ago.

Sam: On behalf of our family and the George and Barbara Bush Foundation, this is "All the Best."

We're one big country nation, that's right

Sam: My cousin, Walker Bush, grew up in Alexandria, Virginia, right outside our nation's capital. Walker's father, Marvin Bush, has also appeared on "All the Best."

Upon graduating high school, Walker enrolled in Texas Christian University and headed down for the first year with a focus on business. After freshman year, Walker went back home where he enrolled in the United States Marine Corps, where he spent one year in the delayed entry program. After three months of boot camp, he went to the School Of Infantry East, where he became a machine gunner with Charlie company, 1st Battalion, 8th Marines. From January 2012 to August 2012, Walker and his unit were deployed to Helmand Province, Afghanistan. His second deployment was in 2014, to the South Pacific, on the island of Okinawa. After completing his four years of service, he returned to Texas Christian University, graduating with a BA in History and a minor in Communications.

Walker, thank you so much for joining us for this very special Memorial Day episode of "All the Best."

Walker: Happy to be here, and happy Memorial Day, Sam.

Sam: Well, Walker, let me start with this. Our main theme here centers around the concept of service to others that our Gampy and Ganny exemplified so well. Let's start there. What did you personally learn from Gampy and Ganny when it came to service?

Walker: Obviously, everyone's gonna say lead by example and help the little guy, but service to each other. They had such a devotion to each other and their family. And I think that they were such an active participant in all of our lives. They were always checking in with us, sending letters, phone calls, making sure everybody was doing what they're supposed to be doing. I think it's just incredible to have two grandparents always there with their grandchildren.

Sam: Yeah, they were master communicators. I would get a letter from them all the time, and I know you did the same, and guess what, my cousin Jebby and Jenna, they all have the same letters and they just made that time to connect with each of us in such a special way that made us all feel like we're the only grandchild, even though we weren't, not even close.

Well, Walk, Memorial Day is a time for remembering the selfless and courageous service of those who have worn our nation's uniform and helped defend our freedoms. Walker, I'd like to thank you and all veterans for your service. What first inspired you to join the Marines?

Walker: You know, I've always had a fascination with the military. I grew up in Virginia, and one of my best friends growing up had a farm out there. Going into high school and spending a lot of time outdoors and kind of just playing in the woods, that fascination and the intrigue grew for me. And then I went off to school at Texas Christian University and my buddy, Will, had just joined the Marine Corps just right out of high school. After not doing so well my freshman year, I went to his graduation from boot camp at Parris Island in May and decided right then and there that's what I wanted to do. So I packed up my dorm room and went home and enlisted right on the spot.

Sam: We've talked about why you joined the Marines. Now, let's get into what you did. Where did you go, what did you do, and what did you take away from it?

Walker: So I was a machine gunner with the 1st Battalion, 8th Marines in a line company, so I was thrown into a weapons platoon. So we're kind of attached out to different platoons of riflemen, as machine gunners.

About six months after I hit my unit, we packed up, went to Afghanistan, Helmand Province, and then spent eight months there, came back, did about two years' worth of training, and then went on another deployment to the South Pacific and Okinawa where we went to Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand, training with foreign militaries over there. And then the takeaway for me was kind of adaptability and just being patient and doing what you're told and pushing forward where you can and holding back where you need to. But it was a tough experience, but I wouldn't have changed it for the world.

Sam: Walker, let's talk about your brothers in arms, the men and women with whom you served. You hear time and again about the lifelong bonds that are forged while serving in the military. Was that your experience as well?

Walker: Those bonds are the strongest bonds you'll ever have in life. Those are guys that you can count on with your life, and you need to be able to count on them with your life, and likewise for them as well. When you're put in these dynamic situations where all you have is each other, at the end of the day, those are the guys that you're gonna want to spend your time with outside of the Marine Corps. I think one of the biggest struggles getting out of the Marine Corps was adapting to the fact that not everybody you come across post-Marine Corps understands your friendship dynamic because you are so used to having these people you can put your life on the line for.

Sam: Is that something that you've carried over into your post-deployment relationships? I mean, are you that loyal guy that everyone can count on?

Walker: I like to think that I am that guy. I certainly try to be. But if there was anybody in a unit of mine or even in the service that gave me a call and said, "Hey, I need you to hop on a plane right now," I would do it. and I know most of those guys would do the same for me. But not everybody understands those relationship dynamics and so getting out of the service, you kinda have to retrain your mind to understand that they don't understand. You kinda have to navigate and figure out a new approach to maintaining relationships.

Sam: Yeah. I mean, there's a lot of people who do struggle with that. Have you had any people you've known who've had trouble transitioning back to civilian life?

Walker: I think all of us have our own little struggles, but I was in a relationship at the time where her brother was one of my best friends growing up as well, and he had been a Marine, and he got out a couple of years before I did and so he kinda knew how to approach my situation. That was a huge help for me. Additionally, I have such a large family, as you know. There's always someone there.

Sam: Walker, can you share with us the story of your return from active duty? I heard one of your first stops was to visit Gampy and Ganny at Walker's Point in Maine. I'm sure that they were more than proud of your service. What was that reunion like?

Walker: That was actually right after boot camp and I was so proud to finally be wearing a uniform and have a little bit of freedom. So I flew up to Maine with my mother and this was about the time that Gampy was kind of struggling walking and couldn't stand up as well as he had been able to in the past. So I showed up in my full uniform. He was waiting at the door, greeted me, stood up out of his chair and gave me a salute, told me how proud he was of me, and that

was the proudest day of my life. He cried, I cried, Mom cried. There's a lot of crying involved, but it was definitely a very proud moment for me.

Sam: Well, now, I'm crying. Okay, so Walker, if you had the chance, would you do it all over again? What would you say if a young man or woman asked your advice about enlisting?

Walker: In a heartbeat, I'd do it again. I really needed it to kinda set my life on a good path, but my heart was in it. I think the first thing I would tell anybody that wants to join or is considering joining is your heart's gotta be in it. You gotta want to be there, because if you don't and you're not doing what you need to be doing, people notice and people take offense to it, especially in the military.

Sam: Well, let's switch gears. The World War II generation was not the kind to talk much about their experiences, especially Gampy. Did you ever talk to him about his war service?

Walker: He never opened up to me about it. I sat down that day, after boot camp, and I think he knew that I wanted him to tell me a little something, give me some advice, but he never talked about it. I think that's something different that a lot of the Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom guys figured out. We're very open about our service and you have to talk about it and get those demons off your back. It blows my mind that he never talked about it and went through the experiences that he did mentally unscathed.

Sam: Amazing, amazing. Well, Walker, since this is the official podcast of the George and Barbara Bush Foundation, I have to ask you about our Ganny as well. I already know the answer to this, but I assume I'm not the only one in this conversation who got into hot water with our grandmother. Do you have any stories to share?

Walker: I remember, I was about nine years old. I must have done something really bad. But this was down at George's ranch down here in Texas, and she really ripped into me. I went to my room, cried. I think it was Easter, and I don't think I even came out of my room for Easter. I was so devastated that I disappointed this woman. But the one thing that I realized was she wasn't chastising you, she was trying to make you a better person. She really knew what was best and what you needed to be doing. And I think she wanted us to now grow up with the mentality of having a silver spoon, so to speak, and she wanted us to understand the importance of our actions and make sure that we were doing the right things.

But one of the funny stories that I always come back to is...one of the side effects of being a Marine is tattoos and getting in the pool in Maine was always a struggle for me for, I guess, the last eight or so years of her life. It was hard at first because she would hop in her golf cart and ride down quickly, so I'd have to hop out of the pool, put a towel on and a shirt. She had to have known something was going on, but I don't think she ever once caught me without a shirt on, and I think I had to wear a long-sleeved shirt for the past 10 years up in Kennebunkport.

Sam: Well, hopefully, this summer, you can break out the guns, show off the tats, that's awesome. So I want to end with this, Walk, it's been just over two years since we shared the special privilege of being pallbearers for Ganny. What do you remember from that experience?

Walker: The gratitude and appreciation for our grandparents that so many people across this country have. I think it's a true testament to their character and the kind of people that they were, that so many people wanted to show up and take part in this celebration of their life. And the biggest thing was that everybody that we talked to or came in contact with had some emotional story or attachment to our grandparents that showed us the appreciation of the country. I think that was the most inspiring thing to me, how loved and appreciated they were.

Sam: Well, Walker, thank you so much for joining us on "All the Best." Thank you for your service and hope to see you soon.

Walker: Happy Memorial Day, Sam.

Sam: I'm Sam LeBlond, reminding you to listen, share, and subscribe to "All the Best" on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and everywhere great podcasts are found. Thank you for joining me as we celebrate "All the Best."

We're one big country nation, that's right.

Barbara: Both George and I believe that while the White House is important, the country's future is in your house, every house, all over America.

George: Preparedness, strength, decency, and honor, courage, sacrifice, the willingness to fight, even die for one's country. America, the land of the free and the brave. And God bless the United States of America, the greatest country on the face of the Earth.



