



**All the Best Podcast**  
**Episode 4: “Remembering ‘Gampy’”**  
*Featuring Grandchildren of George H. W. Bush,  
George P. Bush, Jeb Bush Jr., Pierce Bush, Lauren Bush Lauren*

Sam: "March 25th - J Day, I went with your mother to the jump area. Then, wearing my Desert Storm boots, I was off to a final plane-side briefing and into my white Elvis suit with white helmet and white gloves, the King would have approved) before boarding. We were off. The jumpers inside were hyped, giving the parachute jumper's equivalent of the high-five. I got caught up in the spirit of it all, totally hyped too. Nearing the exit zone, I was told to stand and back up towards the rear of the plane. My instructors kept saying "Back up a little more sir, a little bit more." It was only then that I felt a twinge of fear, not panic, but rather a halting feeling in the leg, groin, and gut.

Finally, it was time. "Are you ready to skydive?" "Ready to go." Before I knew it, I was plummeting face down towards the desert at 120 mph, shoulders arched, pelvis out. When I pulled the ripcord at 5000 feet, the jolt was far greater than I expected. Looking up, I saw the multi-colored canopy fully deployed. I grabbed the handles over my head for steering. I checked the altimeter on my left wrist, amazed at the slow and gentle descent. I practiced by turns and the flare. I was at peace. Gone was the noise from the free fall. I was alone, floating gently towards earth, reveling in the freedom, enjoying the view. It was a marvelous sensation.

The floating to earth took longer than I thought, but I wish it could have gone on twice as long. At about 750 feet, the ground seemed to come up at me much faster, more so at 100 feet. I was anxious to flare properly so as to make a soft landing. And the order to do so came about 50 feet before hitting the ground. Pulling down hard on the two shrouds gently softened the descent. I didn't hit hard, but a gust of wind seemed to pull me back. By then, my chute had been swarmed by the Golden Knights. I was down. It had gone well. I had lived the dream. Bar[SP] hugged me and smiled. All was well with the world."

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

Woman: 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 told 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.

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

Man: We stand tonight for 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: Welcome to "All the Best." I'm your host, Sam LeBlond. In June of 2019, my family gathered in college station, Texas at The George H.W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum where we celebrated what would have been my grandfather's 95th birthday and we were all gonna celebrate by jumping out of a plane. Let me back up here, the first time my grandfather parachuted out of a plane was in 1944 while serving in the US Navy and his fighter plane was shot down over Chichijima during World War II.

My grandfather then pledged that one day he would jump out of a plane for fun, and he did just that at the age of 73. From then on, my Gampy celebrated every fifth birthday by parachuting out of a perfectly good airplane. He jumped at the age of 75, 80, 85 and 90 and had been planning to jump again when he turned 95. Gampy passed away at the end of 2018 at the age of 94. During the funeral

celebration, my family decided that we were going to jump in my grandfather's place to mark what would have been his 95th birthday.

Now, I wish I could say that we all gathered on the morning of what would have been his 95th birthday and had a successful jump, thus continuing his legacy. However, unfortunately, the wind did not cooperate with us and we ended up not jumping. Be that as it may, the whole family still gathered and had a wonderful celebration to honor the memory of our grandparents. And I got the chance to catch up with several of my cousins, George P. Bush, Jeb Bush Jr, Pierce Bush, and Lauren Bush Lauren. I first asked my cousins to reflect on our grandfather's funeral celebration. When this was recorded, it had been about six months since the passing of our grandfather, and now we are approaching the one year anniversary of his passing. Here's my cousin, Pierce.

Pierce: A few years ago, I remember Ganny and Gampy had a friend that was passing away and it was a friend that had a big family. And every time they would go visit this individual in the hospital, they would notice that the individual was never with the family. And I remember Ganny specifically saying, "When it's our time to go, I hope we're surrounded by family." I had the honor to be in the room and witness the actual passing of our grandfather. And it was a moment that just changes the way you think of life in every way. It was a spiritual moment. It was a peaceful moment.

I got to hear all of our cousins call, and obviously our uncles and aunts, and tell Gampy that they loved him and how much they meant to him. And to see Gampy responding to those things and nodding just in his last moments of life and saying with his last words, "I love you more" which is just what he kept saying, was a deeply profound moment. Because he was so at peace, he was so at peace that he lived a life that was full. He had no regrets. And he went out with just this aura of incredible love and peace. He was so at peace about where he was heading.

So, I think, first of all, when I think about the week, you can't take away that moment. There's a moment where you're like, my grandfather's there and then there's a moment you're like, no, he's not there anymore, it's just like his shell, it's just a body. And it was really peaceful. So that was really deep and profound to be a part of that, and to be there and hold his hand, really moving.

Sam: It must have indeed been very moving. I then asked my cousin, George P, about how the series of funeral celebrations progressed.

George: You know, there are really, I think, three celebrations, if you will. First in Texas. So within 48 hours of his passing, a lot of the Texas family came to

Ellington field over in Houston. And not all of us are extroverts, a lot of us are introverts, I'm not public by nature. And for a guy that I adored and worshiped to be out in a tarmac with Air Force One coming and a line of cameras, that was a little overwhelming, and I probably wasn't ready and prepared for that moment.

But when taking the casket to DC, it took on a different tone. I thought just because you had active members of Congress, you had the president himself, the so-called strains between Trump and Bush worlds, but the country really came together. For me, I just enjoyed the fact that somebody like Senator Bob Dole wheeled in his chair up to the casket, the open casket under the Capitol, and strengthened himself to get out of his chair to salute, just a patriotic moment. And I think a lot of Americans really don't appreciate the fact that we can work together and, you know, make this country better.

But for that moment, wherever I would go in DC, people would say, you know, "Your grandfather is the greatest of our country. He represents the greatest of the greatest generation that our country will ever see." And I just felt like the politics of the day just shut down. And it was just awesome and something to really appreciate.

Sam: Politics did in fact seemingly shut down for the day as the country paid their respects to the 41st President of the United States, many of whom paid their respects in person at the Capitol rotunda. Here's Pierce again.

Pierce: Going to the United States Capitol late at night and just seeing this unbelievably diverse reflection of our country coming to pay tribute to the man that we loved as our Gampy, but also who happened to be our 41st President. Seeing people come in wheelchairs and hearing them, with tears in their eyes, talking about how they feel like their life is a life that is fuller because of what our grandfather did by signing the Americans with Disabilities Act, seeing people come from Germany and talking about how Gampy, through his unbelievable leadership, was able to reunify the German country and bring a peaceful end without a bullet being fired to the cold war. I mean, those moments will just stick with me forever.

And so, I think the second thing that kind of stands out the most to me was just being there and greeting people and hugging people. And it was not a Houston country club set. It was a very diverse collection of Americans that were really grateful, and to describe why was just words that I'll never forget. I really think we went close to 11:00 p.m. and the line was still out the door, people trying to come in. It was just really moving to me, really moving.

Sam: Speaking of a diverse crowd, my cousin Jeb Bush Jr, offered this memory of the Houston funeral.

Jeb: I heard the story that in Houston, you know, obviously, there was a waiting list and just people all over the city trying to get a ticket to get inside to pay the respect during Gampy's funeral. I came across a big dog business guy and he was sitting there and he told me afterwards he asked the guy next to him, he was like, "Oh, that's..." he was the janitor at 10,000 Memorial. And it was just really neat that Gampy, all the people that were in his life that were important to him, whether it was a janitor or former president or big dog businessmen, he really took time to really get to know everybody, didn't matter who you were and, you know, he remembered that. And he wanted those people there.

Sam: After Gampy's funeral celebration concluded in Washington D.C., we went back to Texas for the final stage of the celebration. Here's George P again.

George: When he came back here to Texas, to his church, to his pastor, to his friends, I thought that it took on a different tone. It was more personal and it brought it back home which, I think, for family members, we appreciate it. I really thought that it was more personal because it was more of people that were involved in the ceremonies that knew him. Of course, we you bring it to campus, that was a different experience altogether with the military and what the campus of NM did to turn out for Gampy.

All along the train, all along the track where we took the casket to, the library itself and to the cemetery, it was just flawless. And then I'll just close by saying when the, I think it was the...I forgot which Naval airplane flew over with the 21-plane flyover. And the final didn't just fly over us at a few thousand feet, it came really close. And the afterburner opened up above us and you just felt this rush. It was just so moving and it shook you to your core.

Sam: This whole celebration was a beautiful remembrance of my grandfather's life. And I think my cousin Lauren Bush Lauren's overall sentiments of the events said it best.

Lauren: As sad, obviously, as it is, and as much as I miss Gampy, it was such a beautiful celebration of his life. And not just his resume, what I kinda took away and what is a reminder that I hope to always carry with me is that it was a celebration of his character and the kind of man he was and what kind of leader he was, the kind of grandfather he was, the kind of husband he was. And the fact that he always, you know, was very considerate and always thought of the other guy. And I think a lot of qualities that the world is hungry for now, his life and the memory of it was such a coming together around those character traits

and values that people are craving, and why we obviously loved him and feel so lucky that he was our grandfather.

So I think that was just a beautiful sort of life reminder. And I think even since his passing, I try to kind of keep that with me in how I conduct myself and how... It was a nice wake-up call of like, how do you want to be remembered? What are those character traits that you want to cultivate in yourself to be a good human? And then also, in the larger world, what is that legacy of service and leaving the world a better place than you found it?

Sam: Another place that my family likes to celebrate is Walker's Point in Kennebunkport Maine. My Gampy used to call it his anchor to Winward. My cousins couldn't wait to share their memories of Walker's point. Here's Pierce to start.

Pierce: What I love most about Maine was it was this place where it seemed like time just stopped. You could go and it just felt like you were connected to something that was much bigger and much longer-lasting. The fact that it's been in our family since 1898, the fact that our grandfather went there every year of his life, except for one summer during World War II, the year that he was shot down. And I think all of us have been there every summer, at least for a weekend. And so, I feel like we're so blessed to have a place like that. You ask, why are we a close family? It's because of the time that we spent as a family in Kennebunkport.

Sam: My cousin, George P, then shared his sentiments.

George: There was never any activity off the table. So, as a kid, if you were interested in camping, they'd let you camp out front. If you were into soccer, they put a soccer goal out there. They really invested their time, their passion in us. That's something that, you know, I will always treasure. But the boating, the fishing, just the great memories, the advice, the words of wisdom that I'm gonna seriously miss. And their unconditional love, I mean, they were always there. I am gonna miss Ganny's witty humor.

Sam: I'll also miss Ganny's witty and sharp sense of humor. Although, I may not miss getting caught by her when I got into a bit of mischief from time to time with my cousin Jeb Jr.

Jeb: Kennebunkport and Walker's Point means family. And you know this we might've caused Ganny to get some gray hairs a little earlier than she probably wanted to. But if you could imagine 20 grandkids and uncles and aunts and people just running around, all kind of doing different things, whether it's

swimming or playing golf, tennis, backgammon, just having fun on Walker's Point, and all doing it together as a family.

Sam: One thing that Walker's Point is great for is boating and that's Lauren's favorite part of Walker's Point.

Lauren: One thing that I love and will always connect with Walker's Point is boats, and that's very much connected to Gamps. And he would personally sort of certify us teaching you essentially the tricks of the trade and things that he grew up loving and learning. And it's neat now, having kids of my own, James is three, Max is one, pretty special to be now being able to take them, like they're gonna have those memories also. It is just my happy place, as I think it is for all of us.

Sam: The theme we keep coming back to in this podcast is service. And service is such a large part of our lives because of how our grandparents, George and Barbara Bush, both ingrained how important service was in living a full life. Here's Lauren again.

Lauren: Our grandparents were obviously a huge influence in my life and they never said, "Here's what you need to do." But I think there was a general sense and expectation of, live your life, make it meaningful, do something that you love, do something in the service of others. So no surprise that many of us have kind of pursued a path with that element in mind. And I just feel grateful that that was always kind of part of, not an expectation, because I don't think it was sort of verbalized in that way to us, but more as an example of what you can accomplish in life by pursuing something that you're passionate about but also keeping in mind the element of service to others.

Sam: Lauren has indeed found a passion for service and has channeled that passion into the founding of her social enterprise, FEED.

Lauren: Really, it was the idea I had in college after being able to travel around the world with the UN World Food Program. And through that sort of firsthand experience, seeing the realities of dire poverty and extreme hunger that unfortunately exists around the world. So one in nine people globally are hungry, about a hundred million children are kind of stunted, malnourished, underweight. So very much this is an issue globally but also here in America where about 42 million Americans are food insecure and rely on soup kitchens and food pantries to make ends meet. So seeing all this, learning all this, and really having that firsthand experience of going and meeting these communities and families, I felt very inspired to do something.

But candidly, for years I was like, "What am I actually going to do? This is clearly such a massive global issue. How can I," and at the time as a student, you know, "make an impact and really rally others around this again, very abstract, massive issue of hunger?" And at the same time, I love design, I like fashion. So I was kind of pursuing two different paths, one of humanitarian aid work with the World Food Program, you know, the UN on the ground and the other taking design classes and doing internships in New York City.

So FEED really came out of this kind of aha moment of, I don't have to pick a path, I can do both, do one to support the other. So I came up with the idea for FEED as a consumer goods brand, and as a way for people to give back. So every product we make and sell, there's a number on it and that signifies the amount of meals essentially that will be donated through that purchase. So making it very bite-size, very tangible and hopefully very meaningful, for consumers to get involved in the issue of hunger.

Sam: Service is also a primary focus of George P. And he has found a wide variety of ways to serve.

George: One of my first jobs after school was to go out and teach in a rural impoverished area, which definitely formed my views on education. Worked in uncle George's campaign and saw a presidential campaign from beginning to end, which was an incredible experience that I recommend to any young American thinking about getting involved in politics. But really took that to look at ways in which I could serve others, serving the federal judiciary, joining the military, and then eventually offering myself to Texans in this office as land commissioner.

So all along the way, really, you know, whether it was personal recommendations or advice that Gampy would give or just reading about him. Because he was never the kind of guy that would say, "When I was this age I did that and you need to do..." It was more of, you cannot have a successful life unless you think about doing something for somebody else.

Sam: Jeb Jr. has found a calling to serve in the area of education.

Jeb: In terms of service to others and being involved in the community, I'm on the board of the Barbara Bush Foundation where we promote adult literacy, which is a huge problem, 36 million Americans read at a third-grade reading level or less. I'm also on the board of Kipp Miami, which is a charter school. Also on the National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, which is a DC think tank. We're focusing on creating an environment where all kids have access to a high-quality education. So we do that through choice and transparency. And

KIPP Miami, they focus on doing that for the most at-risk kids in the community. We do that by bringing in outside teachers and bringing in a loving environment where kids have access to high-quality education.

Sam: And my cousin Pierce was deeply inspired by the service legacy of both George and Barbara Bush and has turned that into a full time passion, as the CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters Lone Star.

Pierce: When you see grandparents like George and Barbara Bush who just lived very full lives, they left nothing on the field. And you kind of say why, it's not because they lived a life to gain more worldly possessions, it was because they lived lives that were constantly about giving, about lifting others up, about getting in the game, as Gampy you would say, getting your jersey dirty, right? And so, for me, you know, when I graduated from college, it was like, what are you gonna do? How are you gonna actually go try to have a career and do something that's unique?

So while I was trying to figure that out, I signed up to become a big brother, which is a one-to-one mentoring program. I've been matched now for 10 years to Jaylin[SP]. At the time I signed up, I never thought that that would actually lead to a career. But what I love so much about the mentoring movement, and Big Brothers Big Sisters, in particular, is that when you form these relationships, they're just that, they're relationships. And both parties change, and there's great dignity in that.

Yes, 90% of the kids we serve, on free and reduced lunch, have a parent that's incarcerated or come from a single-parent household. But what I love most about our program is that when you talk to the volunteers, they all, without hesitation, say that their life has been changed by the program just as much, if not more, than the kids. And we're obviously measuring the outcomes, our programs are geared towards focusing on the outcomes for the kids. But really, I signed up to do that because I felt, Sam, that I was, and we all were, so blessed to have grown up in this amazing family, to have the gift of unconditional love that our grandparents gave us, our parents gave us.

And so, it was just a nonstarter that there would not be some way that I would try to pay that forward. And I think all of our cousins could say the same thing in different ways, right? And so, I chose to do it through Big Brothers Big Sisters. Now, I've been the CEO of the largest affiliate agency in the country for the past four years. And I just get this sense of joy every day when I wake up. It's a challenging job. We have a staff of 180. It's about a \$12.5 budget. It covers a wide swath of Texas. And so, it's not an easy job, but it's a job that gives me great satisfaction because I know the fruit of our labor, which is

simply empowering our donors and our volunteers to make an outcome noteworthy.

We just had a graduation ceremony, 86% of our littles are going to college. You can't pay for that sense of satisfaction you get. And I credit Ganny and Gampy and I'm so happy that we had their lessons because it's how you live a full life, is by dedicating yourself to something larger than just self-interest, self-gain.

Sam: And then couldn't help myself, because I'd be lying if I said there hadn't been rumors and rumblings. I asked Pierce if he had any plans to join the family business of running for public office.

Pierce: I really worry that in this climate, which is a soundbite climate, and it's a climate where it's all about kind of making the evening news. With a sound bite, it doesn't reflect the era that our grandfather so noble he served in. You know, I worry that good people will say, "Hey, it's easier to serve as the CEO of Big brothers Big sisters than it is to get your jersey dirty and do something." So I think that I feel the bug and I feel like I currently am living a life of public service, through a job that I really love, that empowers people to make a difference, and it's a difference that we can measure. And I think that I'd be surprised if I don't, in some way, try to continue to find ways to do that. Whether it be continuing through a job I love like Big Brothers Big Sisters or some other way. Who knows?

Sam: Well, I guess that's as good as we're gonna get from Pierce, for now. Thank you so much for joining me on this episode of "All the Best." I want to close by sharing something my uncle, George W, said about Gampy at his funeral. "George H.W Bush had two speeds, full throttle and sleep. Full throttle applied to everything that he did, whether it was in relation to his family, his country, boating, golf, or jumping out of a perfectly good airplane. If we can strive to live even at half throttle, we're doing pretty good."

From my cousins, George P. Bush, Jeb Bush Jr, Pierce Bush, and Lauren Bush Lauren, we'll see you next time on "All the Best." 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."

Lyrics

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

Woman: 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.

Man: 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.

END

