



**All the Best Podcast**  
**Episode 18: "Sunflowers and Pearls"**  
*Featuring former Aide for Barbara Bush, Quincy Crawford*

Quincy: June 26th, 2008. Dear Quincy, your beautiful flowers arrived yesterday, sunflowers. And I know that you know that sunflowers are my favorite. I am recovering, but it will be a long recovery. I'm lucky to have Maine with the downstairs bedroom and lots of family and friends. Something will be happening every day at the Point, two weddings: Christopher Ellis and Kristen King. Should be a busy Point. We miss seeing you and JT and the boys. With love and thanks, Bar.

President Bush: 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."

Brad: We're Mountaineers, volunteers. We're the tide that rolls, we're Seminoles. Yeah, we're one big country nation, that's right.

President Bush: I remember something I did. 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.

Brad: And 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.

President Bush: 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."

Brad: Yeah, we're one big country nation, that's right.

Sam: Quincy Hicks Crawford was aide to my grandmother, Barbara Bush, from 1994 to 1998. She was a receptionist in the office of George Bush in Houston from 1993 to 1994, and was director of scheduling and advance to first lady Laura Bush in the White House from 2000 to 2002. We are so happy to have Quincy with us today. Quincy, welcome to the show.

Quincy: Thanks so much, Sam. I'm so happy to be here.

Sam: Quincy, I'd like to start with this. I'd love to hear you tell us about the Barbara Bush that you came to know.

Quincy: Your grandmother was an extraordinary person. And it's funny when you tell people that you work for Barbara Bush. I mean, first of all, everyone loved her. But secondly, everyone sort of felt like they knew her, and it's because she was the most genuine and authentic person. She was very insightful when it came to people. She was very good at sort of figuring out what people needed. And she could sit in front of a crowd of thousands of people and wow them, and then in the next minute, offer comfort and ease the pain of a family of a sick child in a hospital. She was very complicated. There were lots of layers, but she was very compassionate. And she was witty and wise. And most importantly, she was very, very funny. She just had a wicked sense of humor and impeccable timing.

Sam: Very good timing. So, when you started working for Ganny in 1994, it was still very early on in the Celebration of Reading days. As you know, that's the big fundraiser my grandmother started in Houston and spread to other cities to raise money for family literacy programs and her foundation. Can you talk about her passion for family literacy and the effect these celebrations had?

Quincy: She was very passionate about literacy, and specifically, family literacy. She truly believed that if everyone could read, write, and comprehend, so many of the world's problems could be solved. And so, she gave a lot of her time and energy and money to that cause, and to the Barbara Bush Foundation for family literacy. And Celebration of Reading was one more way for her to do that.

I was the aide when she started planning the Celebration of Reading. It was funny. There was a group of people, they were helping her. And you could tell that they all thought that this event should be a big black-tie gala with all the bells and whistles. And of course, that was just not at all the direction that she was going to go. You know, she wanted it to be on a weekday in business attire so people could come from work. And she was going to give a great program and a lot of information with a few laughs. But as you know, she did not believe in things droning on forever. She wanted it to be short and sweet. And she really wanted it to be an opportunity for people to come and learn about family literacy, and then go home and read to their own children.

She kept an eagle eye on the finances. You know, it was not gonna be spent on anything frivolous or anything that just made the event look more glamorous. It was gonna go to the Barbara Bush Foundation. And of course, she was right. I mean, this event was a huge hit and so successful. People loved it. I think that very first Celebration of Reading on that first night ended up netting over a million dollars. And so, of course, it was a huge success, and it kept going in Houston. And then it spread to other cities.

And one more thing about Celebration of Reading, her cause was literacy, but she had such a passion for reading. She was just a voracious reader. And so, to her, nothing would be better than listening to these authors who she admired and having them read these books she loved. And interestingly, she became really good friends with a lot of the people who participated in Celebration of Reading.

Sam: Oh, wow. That's cool. So, you had many summers where you got to experience the madness and fun of Walker's Point in Kennebunkport, Maine. Can you tell us about life on Walker's Point with Ganny and Ganpy?

Quincy: Summers in Walker's Point were so fun and so crazy. You know, at that point in her life when I was aide, she was working half the year in Houston and half the year in Maine. And when she was in Houston, she worked like a dog. She traveled four days a week, and she gave speeches, and she promoted literacy and all kinds of other causes. And when she was in Maine for the other half of the year...and there was more of a focus on faith, family, and friends. But it was still so busy. And at the beginning of every summer, she would say, "That's it. We are cutting back. We are not going to do what we did last summer." And by the end of the summer, she would have doubled the number of people who had come in and out of Walker's Point.

Certainly, there was just lots going on all the time. There was family. I mean, you and your cousins and your aunts and your uncles were there on and off all

summer. But she ran the place like a ship captain, and she was always keeping tabs on the grandchildren, making sure you made your beds and that you picked up your towels and that helped out in the kitchen and that you were doing your summer reading. And then, of course, there were so many friends. And it was like a revolving door of people just coming in and out, usually just staying one night, sometimes two. And she would joke about how she ran the Bush Bed and Breakfast.

Then, of course, they had all these events. I mean, they were involved in so many organizations. At the time, she was on the Mayo Clinic board, and they were getting ready to build and open the Barbara Bush Children's Hospital in Maine. I mean, that's just a couple. They were involved in many, many organizations. But they would invite some of these people to come up for lunch or for dinner or for meetings. But your grandfather and these events, he would put together that usually started with some kind of entertainment. He would invite the Oak Ridge Boys or he would find out that The Whiffenpoofs were somewhere in the vicinity.

You know, one time he brought home the man that we affectionately call the singing priest. And he would start there and then he would fill in the audience with just a wide range of people, anybody who was at Walker's Point, his barber, the golf pro, people he had met in town that day. If we as staff had family or friends in town, sure, everybody would come. And it was like at any given moment, you could have 30 to 50 people show up. It was so much fun. These people would always have this look on their face like, they had no idea how they got here, but it was good. He just loved it. And she loved him. So, she put up with it. She loved it, too, but she could have done just a little bit less of that.

Sam: The couldn't help themselves. You know, they'd get on the boat and he'd say, "Hey, I met this guy on the dock. He's coming back for dinner." And Ganny would go, "Okay," you know.

Quincy: "All right." It was so wonderful. But really, it was so fun.

Sam: Of course, as one of the closest to my grandmother, you contributed a wonderful pearl for her "Pearls of Wisdom" book written by Jean Becker, the long-time chief of staff. Can you tell us about what you shared and why that was so meaningful to you?

Quincy: First of all, it was so hard to do because when somebody says, "What did you learn from Barbara Bush," I usually say, "A lot about everything." And it's so true. And you know, certainly, there were big life lesson that we learned.

I mean, there was faith, family, and friends, the importance of giving back. Tell the truth, be interested in others, don't wait for your circumstances to change, be happy in your life, and live it now, which is one thing I wrote about.

But I think Jean Becker got this book right in that, you know, it was oftentimes the small things that she did or said that was just so endearing. Certainly, one of the things that I thought was so great about her was the way she entertained. And, you know, it was never about how things looked. It was about how you made people feel, and comfort was key. If she was outfitting a guest bedroom, it had to have a lamp to read by, a chair to sit in, a table that you could put a drink on. And, of course, it always looked good, but it was not about looking perfect. And when she had people for dinner, I mean, she always said, "Quincy, just invite people to dinner."

People just liked to go to other people's houses, have dinner. And it didn't matter what you were serving. Not only were people satisfied with taco bar, they were probably thrilled with it. Things didn't have to match. Flowers could just come from your garden and be simple. And don't get me wrong. It was always beautiful. She always did a great job, but it was always about making people feel at home and like they were a part of your family. But I loved the way she entertained. And I can guarantee you that everybody who has been in and out of their house remembers it because of the way she did it.

Sam: So, Quincy, what's the one thing you came to know about my grandmother that maybe few people understood or appreciated?

Quincy: Well, I think there were several things that people just didn't realize about her. One is that she was an incredible athlete and so fit. She played tennis and golf. She would sit on the stationary bike, reading for hours. She was a big swimmer. And as you remember, like on that Greek cruise when everybody else would get on a tender and go to shore, she would swim to the shore. She had so much energy. She loved technology. She would handwrite letters, but she would always peck away at her computer and keep her diary in that. And before there were smartphones, she had a Trio. Then she bought me one so that we could sync up everything together. She was just always interested in learning more about technology and trying to find the next big thing that she could buy.

And also, she really could have been an interior designer. She just had an incredible knack for it. And she loved putting together a home. She loved a house project, and she loved putting together a home. And there was a story about General Scowcroft when he bought his condo in Kennebunkport. And your grandparents were so excited about it. They were thrilled that he was

gonna be nearby. But the deal was that he would buy the condo and she would get to decorate it.

Sam: Oh, God.

Quincy: Like, she took it on like it was her full-time job. And she just loved every minute of it. But there was one day that we were driving around, running errands for things that she needed for the condo. And I turned to her and just said, "You know, you really are incredibly good at this." And she turned to me and smiled and said, "Well, thank you, but you can't afford me."

Sam: Oh, gosh.

Quincy: And she was right.

Sam: That's great. So, Quincy, my grandmother famously called people "dearie." It wasn't always a term of endearment as I'm sure you know. I am speaking from personal experience as someone who was called "dearie" often when I was misbehaving. Can you share a time or two where you were "dearie-ed" as they say?

Quincy: So many "dearies" I can't even tell you. There were a lot of times I was called "dearie." Sometimes "dearie" could be an affectionate term, though. She would sometimes use it with friends. Now, "dummy" was not affectionate. And sometimes if you were an aide, you got "dearie" and then you got "dummy." Always well-deserved, we made our big mistakes. Oh my gosh. It was so funny, and we would all laugh about the times that you would get "dearie-ed."

Sam: Quincy, we've talked a lot about my grandmother, and I have to ask you about my grandfather because I know you had such a wonderful relationship with him as well. Do you have a favorite memory with him?

Quincy: He was also just an amazing person — smart and kind and generous. He was always pulling off a great practical joke, but he was just good to the core. And he did something every day to reach out to somebody else and try to make their lives better.

One time, I was in Maine visiting Jean Becker and staying in town. And I was not working for your grandparents at the time. This was after I had been her aide. And you all were getting ready to go on your annual Greek cruise. My friend Michelle came the day before you all left, and she was gonna stay with me in Maine. We were gonna maybe drive up the coast. And your grandfather heard that she was in town and said, "Well, let's go out on Fidelity." We boated

around and she was like, "Well, that was great. Like, I can just go home. My vacation's perfect." And about 15 minutes later, we got a call from Jean Becker who said, "President Bush wants you and Michelle to go on the Greek cruise tomorrow. So, you have to work on your passports."

And we went to the airport with everyone the next day where we picked up our FedEx packs that had, like, a passport and a swimsuit in it, and we got on the plane and went to Greece. It was incredible. And interestingly, you know, Michelle, who was on that trip, several years later also became a Barbara Bush aide. And we are still very, very good friends.

Sam: So, you're kind of stowaways on the trip.

Quincy: We were stowaways, but like, in a really good cabin.

Sam: Well, Quincy, I'd like to end with this. And I know we talked about not crying on the podcast, but I have to ask. Now that my grandparents are gone, what do you miss most about not having them around?

Quincy: So many things. I think about both of them so often. And here's the thing, Sam. I said I had a follow-up to my sunflower letter, and it's this. The summer after your grandmother died, I was driving through Arkansas going to pick up my son at Camp Ozark. I was off the beaten path, driving through farmland, and I started to think of her. And I just kind of got lost in thought and I just really wasn't paying attention to where I was. And all of a sudden I realize that I was in a giant sunflower field. And you know, I just realized then that she's probably always gonna be watching over us. And she's probably always going to be trying to give us advice still. I think she'll always kinda be around.

Sam: Well, Quincy, thank you so much for sharing those amazing stories. I hope to see you very soon. Thanks for being on "All the Best."

Quincy: Thank you so much. I loved being on this and seeing you.

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

Brad: Yeah, 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.

President Bush: 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.