



### **All the Best Podcast**

## **Episode 41: “The Making of The George H. W. and Barbara Bush Presidential and First Spouse Coin”**

*Featuring Director of the US Mint, David J. Ryder*

David: Dear Dave, as we wing back to DC after perhaps the most intense year of travel of my life, and as this campaign 1986 has ended, I want to thank you for your leadership and making it all come together. It hasn't been easy, but you and your people made it all work. Thanks for an outstanding job well done. Sincerely, George Herbert Walker 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."

George: 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.

Barbara: You are a human being first and those human connections with children, with friends are the most important investments 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."

David J. Ryder is the 39th United States Mint Director who also held the position under my grandfather's administration and under President Clinton.

In addition to the United States Mint, the director's prior government service included Deputy Treasurer of the United States, Deputy Chief of staff to then Vice President Dan Quayle, and assistant to my grandfather when he served as Vice President under Reagan. As mint director, he leads an organization of almost 1700 people who are employed with responsibilities, ranging from securing the assets entrusted to the mint, to the design, manufacturing and distribution of precious metals, collectible coins, and national medals. My family and the foundation are also thrilled to announce that later this year, the U.S. Mint is releasing the George H. W. Bush presidential \$1 coin and the Barbara Bush first spouse gold coin. Director, thank you for joining us. How are you today?

David: I'm doing great. It's a hot day out here in Washington, DC, but I'm here almost by myself because of the COVID virus. We got most of our employees are teleworking, but I'm here and I'm with you and I'm very happy to be doing that.

Sam: Our main theme here on the podcast is service. And certainly you yourself have been in public service for many years. Can you talk about your own path to public service and any stories you might have with my grandparents along the way?

David: It all began, I was actually working in New York city on Wall Street at the New York Commodity Exchange trading in gold, silver and copper. And I got a call from an old friend one day. Her name was Karen Heart, who you may recall was later married to Craig Fuller, and the Vice President's chief of staff for a number of years. Karen asked me if I wanted to volunteer for an event that was going on in Liberty Island State Park in New Jersey, which was actually the campaign kickoff for Ronald Reagan. Of course I said, yes. I hadn't been too much involved in politics, but I spent a week with the advanced team there helping prepare for that event. The event went pretty well and later I was then asked by Ron Walker who asked me if I wanted to do it full time.

And I thought about it. I thought about my career on Wall Street. I thought about how I could probably go back to that. And I said, yes. And I began doing a lot of things around the country, traveling all over the country. And then one day I was asked to do an event for the Bushes and I believe it was in Michigan and I met a fellow by the name of David Bates and the Bushes that day. And I became hooked on the Bushes and I ended up doing a number of political campaigns with them. Eventually, once Reagan was elected president and selected the Vice President, I eventually became a staff member for the Vice President, and I never looked back. I actually met my wife, Monie, who was

working for the Vice President. We've been married 38 years now. It's been quite a ride.

As far as the story, if you don't mind, if you indulge me for a minute, I was on Air Force Two one day, getting ready to fly out to a political event in Boise, Idaho of all places. Just coincidentally, that's where I grew up. I asked the Vice President if he wouldn't mind, if my father flew on the trip from Boise, Idaho to San Diego, California. And it just so happened that my father has a lot of things in common with the Vice President. They were born on the same day, they flew the same TVM Avenger aircraft in World War II. Not only did the Vice President say yes, but he allowed my dad to sit in the jump seat behind the pilots of Air Force Two. And then after the plane took off and the announcement came over the loud speaker and said, "This is the Vishnu speaking. I understand that there's a World War II pilot on my plane and I would like him to come back to my quarters." In which I tapped my dad on the shoulder who was enjoying the ride in the cockpit of Air Force Two and I said, "Dad, that would be you. The Vice President's requesting you to his quarters." We got up and we went down and just to show you what a guy the Vice President is, he spent almost the entire flight from Boise to San Diego, talking to dad about their time in the war. He talked about his incident in the war being picked up by that beautiful submarine that popped up and picked him up. And they just went on and on and on. And all I can say in my eyes, George and Barbara Bush, are two of the most fantastic people and generous people and I just was lucky enough to be able to get to know them and work for them for quite a long time.

Sam: Thank you for sharing that story. That sounds a lot like Gampy, he made time for everybody, even his own grandchildren like me, where there's 17 of us. And I felt like the only one. So it's a gift that he really had to connect with people. And that's amazing. The U.S. mint has just recently announced and released the designs for coins honoring both of my grandparents. When you look at everything that has to happen for a coin like this to become a reality, it really is remarkable. Would you kindly take our listeners behind the scenes on that entire process?

David: It was kind of a long process. It started with Senator Cornyn of Texas introducing some legislation that was to honor your grandfather and Mrs. Bush. We spent quite a lot of time on getting that done. We helped, in some cases, rewrite the legislation to make it more easy to get these coins minted and manufactured. We also ensured that we were able to sell them in an off year as this legislation took a bit longer to get done. And it was introduced, it took a bit of time to get passed, but it was passed by unanimous consent and it became law. We have since then been getting them ready to go and manufacturing

them. So if it weren't for Senator Cornyn and his wonderful staff, it wouldn't be here. I don't know if you know this, but the last president who died prior to President Bush was President Reagan and coincidentally, the legislation had lapsed because there hadn't been a death up until that point. And so we rewrote the legislation and introduced the legislation specifically for George and Barbara Bush.

Sam: Now, does that legislation carry through to the next possible coin or is this a one time legislation for these two coins?

David: When ensured when we wrote the legislation, and it was one of the things that we really wanted to get done to have it a legacy and that it goes on in perpetuity. So whoever the next president is that passes, this will give them the ability to have their coin in metal as well.

Sam: Director, even though you served in my grandfather's administration, the coin design process has to be an impartial process, correct?

David: Most times, yes. In this particular case, I had a little bit something to do with it, and I was pushing it along in the right direction, nudging it this way and nudging it that way. And I was somewhat successful. But the design process we went through, I believe nine different designs for your grandfather. We had nine different artists working on the program. We developed, I believe it was 11 different artist renderings of your grandmother. And then ultimately the Bush family was able to select the two designs that they wanted. And they're the ones that are now gracing the gold coin for your grandmother and the medal for your grandfather .

Sam: On the back or reverse of my grandmother's coin, the Mint's artists paid tribute to her commitment to family literacy by depicting a person reading with a wide open road in front of them. Can you talk about the significance of that?

David: The artist was very intent on grabbing the First Lady's love of literacy. The road represents a road to life. The book is an open book for learning, education, all of the things that Barbara Bush stood for. It's a very good rendition of, I think, her legacy. We wanted to make sure that that legacy lived on through this product. We worked with the Barbara Bush foundation quite extensively who helped us and educated us on what it should be and what it should be like. We got a lot of great advice from them. And then we also worked with the Bush Library. People like Tom Cullimore, who's an old friend who lives here in town that I shared many stories with on Air Force Two and other places. We worked with Tom and his team to make sure that the design was right. We went through a number of iterations and he was very helpful.

And I think ultimately we got it right. At least I hope so. I think the American public who will end up purchasing these products will like it as well.

Sam: Yeah. I can't wait for everyone to see it and really look. It's amazing how much imagery you can fit on a side of a coin and how perfect it is to really push that legacy of reading and family literacy that my grandmother worked her whole life to promote. Director, I understand my grandmother's coin comes out first on August 20th at noon. Now I need you to be honest here. Did you decide my grandmother would go first because you knew what she would do to you otherwise?

David: All right, Sam, I'll be honest with you. I learned a long time ago to pay close attention to Barbara Bush and not cross over the line if I could possibly help it. If you indulge me, I want to tell a quick story about Mrs. Bush, that I think your listeners might enjoy. This takes place in Paris, France. We were in a motorcade heading back to the ambassador's residence, which is right close to the Champs-Élysées next to the American embassy. It was raining like cats and dogs. And the motorcade pulled up in the back of the ambassador's residence, which is this gorgeous building full of antiques and antique carpets. And it was just a spectacular residence. And as you might think, there were a couple umbrellas for the ambassador and for Vice President Bush and Mrs. Bush. And there was no umbrellas for the staff like myself, and it was raining harder than I've ever seen it rain before.

And as we walked in the back entrance of the ambassador's residence, the Bushes closed their umbrellas and they were standing there next to the door. And as myself and I believe the head of the Secret Service detail and a couple other staffers, we came charging into the room, trying to get out of the rain. And I was standing in the middle of the room and I looked up and your grandmother was giving me the evil eye. And I'm trying to think, what did I do wrong? And I realized right at that same time that I was standing in the middle of a beautiful Persian rug, dripping, soaking, wet, getting the carpet soaking wet in the same time. And all she had to do is look at me and I went, "Oh my. Dave's in trouble yet again." And we slithered off over to the side and she just shook her head and they went off about their business.

Sam: She never hesitated to let you know where you stood.

David: I became very conscious of not upsetting your grandmother, not a good thing to do .

David: Director, if it makes you feel any better. I got that look for about 35 years straight. So she gave it to everybody. She fired that thing out, like it was

going out of style. But anyway, I want to talk more about the coins. Director, why is my grandmother's coin gold while my grandfather's coin is not? How does that decision get made?

David: Now it's part of the original legislation that we incorporated in the current legislation. It started off with a coin that was depicting the presidents at the end of their service and so on and so forth. And it was a bronze coin that was the metal of choice and we stayed with that. And under the legislation, there was always a gold coin manufactured for the First Lady. It's a gold proof coin, as well as an uncirculated coin. It's very beautiful. It's shown in a wooden case. We're also doing another part of this project where we're including a three coin set, having the Vice President's proof presidential coin struck. And with that, we're having his metal struck, which was his metal that was manufactured during his presidency, as well as Mrs. Bush's coin in bronze. It's a three coin set. I'm not sure if that's been done before, but I think those that want to purchase that later on this year will enjoy it. The medal is going to be in silver. So there's a silver medal of bronze coin for Mrs. Bush and the President's own Presidential Medal.

Sam: Director, please tell us more about these coins and where everyone can go and get them .

David: Well, the first thing you said, Mrs. Bush's coin goes on sale August 20th, the price hasn't been set yet because it's gold. The price of gold has been fluctuating lately. We will price that a little bit later. Everybody needs to go to the U.S. Mint website, which is [www.usmint.gov](http://www.usmint.gov). They can order them right there on our website as many as they like. Later on in the year, we don't have a date just yet, but we're going to be introducing the President's coin. And then that other coin's set as well as some bags and rolls of Presidential Dollar Coins that the public can buy from our website. As I said, [www.usmint.gov](http://www.usmint.gov). We'll make as many as they want.

Sam: We were talking a little bit before we started recording. I'd love to hear how's life at the Mint during this COVID-19 pandemic. I know you said that it's kind of a skeleton crew in there, but how is this affecting the Mint's day to day business?

David: It started off affecting our business. We had a couple COVID cases where we had to shut down our Westpoint bullion depository. We shut down the Philadelphia Mint, the world's largest Mint a couple of times. We closed the San Francisco Mint for over a month. The Denver Mint has been up and operating for quite a long time now, but the good news is that we are meeting demand because of the coin shortage. It's not the fact that we don't have coins.

It's the fact that coins are not circulating. And so we're now manufacturing at almost a 20 year high, at manufacturing 1.65 billion coins every month. While it has affected us, our gold sales are at all time record highs. We have sold a 1,300,000 ounces of gold. We have sold quite a lot of silver. We're having record sales and all along, our Mint employees are coming to work. They're being very well protected under all the CDC guidelines and we take the health of our employees pretty seriously. And so far, knock on wood, we have not been that badly affected.

Sam: Well, that's great to hear. Now I have a quasi serious question here. Director. I see more and more people using their cell phones and payment options outside of currency. Do you think that will affect the demand for coins or dollars or even special interest coins like this?

David: I don't think you're going to see a reduction of dollar bills or coins, certainly in my lifetime and probably in your lifetime. I think they're here to stay. They're a great value for consumers who have to use cash as their means of making a transaction. A lot of people don't have credit cards in this country. So I think the currency is going to be around for quite some time. As far as the coins and metals that we're depicting your grandparents, I don't see that stopping anytime soon either. We manufacture quite a lot of those types of products and sell them all over the world. We have a Mint customer base that's in excess of 500,000 and growing every day and they love our products and love these types of coins that we're going to be introducing with your grandparents' images on them.

Sam: Well, I don't know if you know, but my grandfather instilled a competitive nature in our family. So I want to know how many we need to sell to have the record.

David: You need to sell a lot. And I have no doubt, given how competitive your family is, that we will be able to achieve just that .

Sam: Well director, thank you so much for taking us behind the scenes on these very exciting developments at the U.S. mint and thank you for all that you did to make these coins a reality. We cannot wait to see them in person. And thank you for joining me on "All the Best."

David: Thank you, Sam. I appreciate you having me.

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.

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.

