



All the Best Podcast
Episode 54: “Surviving to Give Back”

Featuring Press Secretary for Vice President George H. W. Bush and Former U.S. Ambassador to Canada, Peter Teeley

Pete: April the first 2011. Dear Pete, the Points of Light Gala was a very special event in my life and the overwhelming response from friends really touched my heart, Barbara's too. Your gift to the Points of Light Institute Tribute is extraordinary generous, and Barbara and I thank you personally, for your wonderful support. We are now shifting gears to Maine. Relief on May the second. With lasting gratitude and friendship, 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."

Pete Teeley is a renowned political consultant and diplomat. He has spent his career in political communications. First serving as press secretary to senators Robert Griffin and Jacob Javits before joining Gerald Ford's campaign staff in 1976. Pete then served as the communications director for the Republican National Committee before joining my grandfather, George H. W. Bush's campaign staff in 1980. From 1981 to 1985, Pete was the press secretary for my grandfather during his Vice Presidency. Following his time at the White House, Pete acted as the American representative to the United Nations Children's Fund, as well as the ambassador to Canada under my grandfather's administration. Pete is also an author who published "The Complete Cancer Survival Guide" detailing his treatment and recovery with cancer. Pete, thanks for joining us today on "All the Best."

Pete: Thank you very much, Sam. It's really a pleasure to be here and I'm going to enjoy this immensely.

Sam: Pete, I'd like to start with this. The motto at my Grandfather's high school, Phillips Andover Academy, was "The end depends on the beginning." I want to start at the beginning. How did my grandfather's historic career begin?

Pete: All of this really began when your grandfather was in high school. We were just attacked by the Japanese at Pearl Harbor. And he vowed that he would join the military as soon as he graduated from high school. A lot of people tried to deter him from doing that and he refused. And the day after he graduated, he joined the Navy. He was a combat pilot. He was decorated. He was shot down. He was miraculously saved by a submarine after he was in the waters. And he once said to me, he says, you know, "When I was picked up by that submarine, I thought to myself, God has meant me to do something important." And I think that that was the day that really led him to be the person that he was.

He married your grandmother, who was an absolutely marvelous, wonderful woman. And I don't think that he would have accomplished everything that he did without her. She was absolutely selfless in terms of what she did. She had a wonderful family, raised the children with him. When you take a look at their lives, their lives are really an example for all. There are two couples in the world that I have met that I have the utmost admiration for. And of course, George and Barbara Bush and the others, George and Lenore Romney both very much the same people. Generous, really polite, thoughtful, dedicated human beings. You couldn't ask for more. I'll tell you one thing about your grandfather. He was absolutely marvelous in terms of doing things that were not important to him, but were important to you.

I remember talking to my mother and father, the night of the Texas primary in 1980, your grandfather looked at me. He says, "Pete, who are you talking to?" I said, "I'm talking to my mom and dad." He said, "great. Let me talk to them." He didn't have to do that, but he did and it was something that my parents remembered for the rest of their lives. I remember him telling them about a priest in Detroit called father William Cunningham, who started a civil rights organization after the Detroit riots in the sixties. At that time with government assistance, father Cunningham and his crew were feeding 80,000 women and children a month and we talked to him about that. And I also told him, I says, "you know, Father Cunningham is a wonderful guy, but he's a big Democrat and very liberal." And I remember him saying, "Well, hell, let's go see him. Let's go visit." Your grandfather and grandmother and the rest of us went out to Detroit.

It worked out perfectly well. There's a side story to that. Father Cunningham called me one day. He said to me, he says, "Pete, we just received a gift from Ford Motor Company and it's one of their old factories. It's next to a railroad so we can pull the railroad in and offload all of the food that we need." I said, "That's terrific Bill. He says, "There's one problem." I says "What's that?" He says, "We have to put on a new roof." And I thought to myself, well, how much can a roof cost? Well, this is a very big factory. And I said to him, "How much money do you need?" And he said, "I need \$6 million." And I talked to your grandfather about that. And he says, "Well, why don't you call over to Dick Riker's office," who was the head of HHS at that time, which I did.

And I said, "I'm calling on behalf of the Vice President. We had this person who's doing wonderful work in Detroit and they need money for a new roof." He said, "I'll call you back." They call back in 10 minutes and we had the money. It was really a delightful experience, but it would never have happened if the question would have been, What does the Vice President think about this? And if I would have said, well, I haven't talked to him yet the answer would have been no. There's a lot of stories like that, Sam, that just epitomize your grandparents. I know one woman, for example, her husband died at a fairly early age and her son went to college because of your grandparents. They never talked about it. And there was countless other individuals that had experiences like that, that they just thought it was the right thing to do. You didn't have to boast or discuss it.

Sam: Pete, you had your own successful career in politics and media before you met my grandparents. What were you doing and how did you eventually gravitate into the Bush orbit?

Pete: That's a very, very good question. I was working for Senator Javits of New York at that time as his press secretary and I took a leave of absence to work on the Ford Presidential campaign. And it was there that I became very close to James A. Baker, III who ran the Ford campaign. We worked daily. We became very fast friends. And I remember we had dinner one night and we were talking about the existing campaign and what might happen in the future. Baker said to me, he says, "You know, if President Ford is not elected, I think I'm going to go to work for George Bush because I think he's going to run for President." And we talked about it and I said, well, if you're going to do that, and if he's going to run, I would be interested in becoming involved. So President Ford lost, as you know, things started to move in terms of Bush a nomination candidacy.

And it was just assumed that when the campaign was put together, I would be the press secretary. I mean, there was really no question about it. The only problem was, I didn't know George and Barbara Bush, they were obviously interested in me. So I flew to Chicago. Your grandfather was giving a speech that weekend. It was around Thanksgiving time. And about a year and a half before the first caucuses I met him at the airport, got in the car, drove downtown with them. We had a discussion and that was it. I went back to the airport and flew back to Washington and I was the press secretary for the 1980 campaign. That would have been 1978.

Sam: You served then Vice President Bush as his press secretary from 1981 to 1985. Those were four dramatic, eventful and historic years from the assassination attempt on President Reagan in 1981 to an important trip to Germany in Europe in 1983 to galvanize support for the deployment of short range, nuclear weapons, Pete, looking back, what stands out to you?

Pete: After the election of 1980, the administration was being put together. And one of the positions that was not filled with the office of the press secretary and Jim Baker called me up and he said to me, "Pete, I have to hire someone for a press secretary, I really would like to hire you, but the Reagan people would have a fit if I did." That was because I worked for Senator Javits of New York and your grandfather. And they were both considered a little bit too far to the left to be simpatico with the Reagan folks. I said, well, okay. He says, "Who do you think I should hire?" I said, "I think he should hire Jim Brady." He did, and unfortunately it was only a couple of months after that, that the assassination of President Reagan was attempted, the worst casualty was Jim. He was hit in the head with a bullet and essentially paralyzed for the rest of his life.

His mind was fine. He was very sharp and he had a great sense of humor, but he had no mobility and it really changed his life forever. And that was very, very

sad. And then there was an instance during that time, when President Reagan was taken to the hospital, that secretary of state Al Haig basically went out into the press room and announced the fact that he was in charge. Well, he wasn't, but it was very confusing and people weren't sure. Okay. Is Hagen in charge? Where's Bush? The Vice President was in Texas at that time, there was a bit of uncertainty. I had talked to your grandfather on the phone and I talked to Jim Baker and I said to Baker, I said, you know, "We need a statement from the Vice President when he gets back that's really going to clarify things and make people feel a lot more comfortable in terms of what is going on."

I called Boyden Gray, who, you know, and he and I sat down and we talked about this and the two of us drafted a statement for your grandfather when he returned to Washington. And I remember we were in the situation room with most of the cabinet, the national security people, at the end of the meeting, the Vice President said, "All right, what's next?" And I said, "You have to deliver a speech to the American people, short, but to the point, things need to calm down here. And I think this is terribly important." He says, "Let me see it." So I gave it to him and he looked at Baker and he said, "Jim, have you read this?" Baker said, no. He says, "Take a look at it." And Baker said, let's go. And your grandfather went out there. He was on national television, said all the right things in terms of who was in charge, what was going on. There was no transfer of power whatsoever. And that was a very, very delicate and important talk that he gave. And it was extraordinarily successful. That was quite a start to the administration. And there were a lot of things that went on beyond that, that were very important. A lot of them in foreign policy with your grandfather. One, which was kind of minor in a way, but it was major in terms of domestic politics here in the United States. And that was in the spring of 1981.

François Mitterrand became President of France and he won the election. But the communist party in France at that time showed enormous strength. Mitterrand, in effect, put a half a dozen communists in his cabinet. Now this is in the middle of the cold war. Being a communist, it was not exactly a moniker that you would like to have, but people at home here in the U.S. were upset about it. They were concerned about it. President Reagan said to Vice President Bush, "I want you to go to France and try to get this thing settled." All right. So we went there and the problem was, you could go over there and make a talk or whatever it may be. But the fact of the matter was that Mitterrand was the head of state. It was his cabinet, these elections were his and his choices. So we went over there.

He met with President Mitterrand. There was some indecision in terms of what it was he would say. And he was very, very cautious about interfering in another government's actions. So anyway, we went to the American Embassy

and sat with the ambassador. We scribbled out a statement. It was on the back of an envelope actually. The Vice President went out there, made the statement, took some questions, etc. Later we flew to London and then back to the United States. But the interesting thing was, everyone said it was really a smart and good thing that the Vice President had done. What was more important is what Mitterand said to the press and basically said, "this is brilliant foreign policy." It was really a great, great compliment for your grandfather. So we came back, had some other travels. We went over to the Philippines for the inauguration of the President, and then we had a very, very serious trip following that in 1982 and that was to China.

A lot of people would probably forgotten that that was not the first trip to China. When President Bush was put on the ticket with Ronald Reagan, the weakness of the ticket in terms of the Presidential nominee, Ronald Reagan, was he had no foreign policy experience, but the one thing that George Bush did, he had tons of foreign policy experience. In the midst of a campaign, kind of unheard of, they asked George Bush, if he would go to China and talk to the Chinese leadership in terms of what the policy would be under a Reagan administration. So we went over there. The question was a two China policy because Reagan had been a staunch defender and supporter of Taiwan while he was governor. And as a candidate, the Chinese considered only one China and Taiwan was part of China. That was agreed to in the campaign that that would be the policy.

So we went over to China and met with all of the top leadership there, Deng Xiaoping and all the way down. And anyway, we had a really, really good discussion and it was tough. I remember those negotiations, the Chinese were there. They would be asked a question by our interpreter and they always acted like they didn't know what we were saying. Well, they all spoke English, but they demanded to hear it in Chinese so they could actually think about what the answer may be. It was very clever. It worked out just fine. The day we left the New China News Agency put out a very favorable report in terms of the trip. That was in 1980. Two years later, there was a massive arms sales to Taiwan and as you can imagine it that did not go over very well with the Chinese government. They were really, really upset about it.

So George Bush was asked to go back to China. Now this is a really interesting trip in a couple of aspects. What I was unaware of at that time is that the top 12 leaders of China were sent a letter explaining the policy of the U.S, Vis-A-Vis Taiwan, Vis-A-Vis the Chinese, our policy of a one China, Taiwan is part of China, etc. There was one glitch in that of the 12 letters that was supposed to go, only 11 went. So there was one official who didn't receive one. Part of the trip was when we were going over there, that 12th letter would be delivered to

the person who didn't have his, but in the meantime, the New China News Agency was extremely critical. I mean, there was no good news coming out of this meeting whatsoever. And the day before we were leaving at night, it was about 6:30 in your grandfather's suite, it was myself and Dan Murphy, who was then the chief of staff. Dan Murphy was the first four star Admiral in the U.S. Navy that never attended the Naval Academy. And he was also your grandfather's deputy at the CIA. So they had a very strong relationship. All of a sudden, they started talking about this letter and I said, "What are you talking about?" And then they explained what the letter was all about and why we had the one and why we couldn't get through to the Chinese whatsoever in terms of the policy. Your grandfather looked at me, he says, "Pete, you have any ideas?" I said, "Well, the one thing that we could do in your meetings tonight and say, if the policy is not accepted by the Chinese government, that on your farewell press conference tomorrow, we will release the letter."

Later that night, he said that they had accepted it. We did not have to release the letter the next day because the New China News Agency came out with this glowing report about the culmination of the meeting. That was a real, real big plus, but there was one other thing that was equally important and perhaps even more important. The day of that evening, when that meeting was taking place later in the day, your grandfather was meeting with Deng Xiaoping, the head of the Chinese government. It was the two of them with interpreters and during that time, somebody gave to me a report from the Associated Press that was just really 15 or 20 minutes old. And I read it and it was very detrimental in terms of what we were trying to do. And there was criticism of Reagan and I thought it was important enough for your grandfather to see it. So I walk into this room, there's the two of them together, nobody else, except the interpreters. And I said, "I'm sorry to interrupt here." I said, "Mr. Vice President, I think you want to see this." He looked at it, literally 10 seconds and handed it back. What they were talking about at that time, Sam, was the international economy and the Chinese economy and your grandfather urging Deng Xiaoping to open up the country to foreign investment, to American technology business know-how, etc. That is how China became open to the economy that they have today and I was unaware of that.

We were on the plane the next day. And I went up and sat down and talked to him. I said, "What were you talking to Deng Xiaoping about all that time?" And he told me, he says, "I was talking about the economy. They've got a billion people. They need jobs. They need money. They need social services. They need all sorts of things. And the only way to do that was open it up to business, to economics, to world trade, etc. Lo and behold, that's what occurred and look where the Chinese are today. So maybe they're too far ahead of where we want them to be today, but it's been a tremendous success story. There's no doubt

about that. A year later, it was in January of 1983. It was a Thursday evening about six o'clock and your grandfather called me and he said, "Pete, come on over. I need to see you." I went over there, walked in and there was another person in the room and it was Arthur Burns.

And Arthur Burns was the former chairman of the Federal Reserve. He was then the U.S. Ambassador to Germany. At that particular time, the issue was the deployment of the intermediate nuclear force weapons in Europe. The Soviets had already deployed theirs. And of course we and NATO, but we should at least deploy the safety measures or to be a deterrence. But what was happening is that Andre Gromyko, who was the foreign minister of the Soviet Union, was running around Western Europe, basically threatening war. There was a tremendous peace movement in Europe at that time, particularly in Germany, the Green Party, etc., they were putting tremendous pressure on Cole, the head of state. Reagan asked Bush to go over there and try to do something. Now in the meeting with Arthur Burns, he said to your grandfather, "George, you have to come up with something dramatic to change all of what's going on. Otherwise we're never going to get those missiles in there." So he looked at me and he says, "Pete, you have any ideas?" I said, "Well, right now, no," I said, "But anyway, let me give it some thought." And I did. I called Chris Buckley, the Vice President's speech writer, brilliant, brilliant writer. His father was William F. Buckley. But anyway, we got together and we talked about this. I said, "You know, the one thing that we could do is we could have an open letter to Brezhnev from the President in terms of meeting anywhere, any time to sign a treaty, prohibiting the youth and deployment of intermediate nuclear force weapons.

So I went back and talked to your grandfather about it. And he said, okay. Chris and I wrote the letter and at that point in time, Sam, the only persons that knew about it were your grandfather, Arthur Burns, myself, Chris Buckley. And when he looked at it and said, this would be very good. Obviously went to Jim Baker, went to George Schultz, the secretary of state, and of course the President. They were the only people that knew about it. And remarkably that letter was never leaked. A week or so later, we went to Germany. We flew into Bonn in the evening. It was about eight o'clock when we got there. I don't mind telling you that the staff was very upset about going to Bonn on that particular day.

That was the day of the Super Bowl and the Washington Redskins were playing. As it turns out that when we landed at night, the game was just beginning because the time difference and the advanced people had all sorts of things hooked up, that you could hear the game, etc., etc., so that worked out fine. The next day we had this very important dinner. It was the reason why we were there. Vice President talks about the inequalities going on between what

the Soviets were doing and what we were not doing. And then unveiled the letter to Khrushchev from Reagan. It got headlines all over the world. Rick Burt was with us at that time, who was the assistant secretary of state for European affairs. He did not know about it until your grandfather read the letter.

And I remember Robert Pierpoint at CBS at the time, he had read the speech. He said to me, he said, "Pete, this is really a hell of a good speech, but there's really no news in it." I said, "Well, don't leave." It was an insert in the middle of the speech that was not in the speech itself because your grandfather had the letter. We had a huge press conference in Germany. We went to Belgium, we went to France, Italy and Britain. All of the leaders of those States supported what the Vice President was doing and what the American policy was doing. We came home on a Sunday and the late Editorial in the Washington Post was "George did it." And what happened was that the Soviets withdrew their weapons and missiles. And that led to the treaty in 1987, between Gorbachev and President Reagan. That was the intermediate nuclear force treaty, banning those particular weapons. I am convinced and I think a lot of other people are, Jim Baker would agree with, Boyd would agree with it, Don Gregg would agree with it, that if that trip was not successful, that treaty would never have taken place. It was a really, really interesting time.

And there's kind of a sidebar to this also that I would like to mention. I went up to the United Nations really as a part-time person, as a U.S. Representative to the United Nations Children's Fund. While I was there, when you're in session, you're in session, but then there would be a break and you could talk to people and one thing or another, and I'm sitting at my desk and this man comes over to me, a very short man, Russian. And he was one of their diplomats and he said to me, he said "Can we have a drink after the session?" And I said, "Well, yes." We went across the street to the UN Plaza hotel and had a drink. And I'm wondering to myself, well, what is this all about? He said to me, he said, "What I want to talk to you about is personal." And I said, yes. He says, "I want you to help me find a job." And I thought, well, wait a minute, is this man defecting? Or what he's doing? I said, "Are you defecting?" He says, no. He says, "I want to stay where I am, but our country is falling apart. The Soviet Union is falling apart. We will not be what we are today very soon. And I would like to come to the United States and live and work."

So we both left. I went right next door to the U.S. Mission and I called your grandfather. And we talked and I said, "Look, I've just had this meeting with the Soviet official and this is what he had to say. And your grandfather said to me, he says, "You know, Pete, that is really interesting. I had a similar call a couple of days ago from someone in the far East. And it was really kind of a... not really a tip. It was an indication that things were okay, really, really going

well for us and they were not going well over there." And I asked him, "What has brought you and others to this conclusion? He says, "Well, the government's come to the conclusion basically and there are three things. One of them was absolutely shocking. He says, the first reason was the war in Vietnam, which actually didn't end well for us." And I said, "Why was that?" He says, "It showed us that the United States was willing to go anywhere to establish and preserve democracy."

That was really quite a statement. The second was your technology. We can't compete. We can't compete with Star Wars. Star Wars criticized by all sorts of people in the United States but it was a really, really critical point. And thirdly, he just said your economy and your technology and your business, he says, we're just falling further and further behind and we'll never catch up. Those were the three reasons that he gave to me. Now, in terms of background of this man, his father was an officer in the Czars Cavalry and went to the communist side. And the family had been communist ever since. When he was a boy, when the Germans were threatening Moscow, he never went home. He was working in a factory and I said, "Why didn't you go home?" He says, "There was no heat. There was really no food. I could stay at the factory. I could sleep next to my machine because it was warm from the electricity." And I thought that was really a fantastic story, but he was the one that came to me wanting to come to the United States.

Sam: Pete, given your experience and expertise in the media realm for decades, how has the media coverage of politics and elections changed in your view?

Pete: Well, in some instances, it hasn't. What's important, The Washington Post, the New York Times, the networks, the Associated Press, Reuters, etc., etc., all those things are pretty static. What has really changed is the internet and social media. Those are the things that are really driving a lot of opinion in the country and some of it baseless, but what the big change is, as important as those major networks and newspapers are, their influence is dwindling because of social media. People are getting all kinds of ideas, some nutty from what they're reading and what's been put out in terms of false information. The one thing that troubles me to some degree is the lack of influence of the press today in terms of shaping policy and politics.

Sam: Pete, in 1992, my grandfather appointed you as our U.S. Ambassador to Canada. What did you learn from your service as our ambassador to our neighbor to the North at such a productive and cooperative time?

Pete: I learned a lot, believe me. And this was interesting as it involves your grandmother and your grandfather. In September of 1991, I was experiencing a

pain on my right side and it wasn't terrible, but it didn't go away. And I went to see three doctors and they weren't sure what it was. And the third doctor said, well, look, I'm going to have a CAT scan and see what's going on. So the next day I had the CAT scan in the afternoon, about three o'clock. I left the hospital and got home and as soon as I got home, the phone rang and it was the doctor. And she said to me, "I want you to go back to the hospital. Your appendix is ready to explode. You need surgery immediately." Okay. So I went there, I woke up about 13 hours after the surgery began. And literally, you know, the old saying, you feel like you've been run over by a truck?

That's the way I felt and I knew something was wrong. Having your appendix removed, doesn't take 13 hours. The next morning the doctor came in, he said, we got your appendix out. We took 18 inches of your colon out. You have stage three colon cancer. So, okay, here I am in the hospital, I've got stage three, colon cancer. Where do I go from here? Well, what happened was after the operation, there was a part of my intestine that twisted and it created a blockage. And after about three days, and quite the standard and one thing, another, the doctor came in, he told me what was wrong. He says, we have to go in again and just untwist it. It's easy, it'll be fine. I went in to have the surgery, but what the doctor didn't know, the fact that leading up to that point, I had been vomiting.

And during the surgery, I started vomiting during the surgery. Now it got into my lungs. I had what was known as aspirational pneumonia. And then finally I wake up, I'm on a respirator and there's a nurse standing at the bottom of the bed. And she looked at me. She saw that I was puzzled. And she said, Mr. Teeley, it's Friday. Well, Friday was the day I went in for the surgery. And she said a week later. So they had induced me into a coma for that particular week. They took me to another area of intensive care where I was actually right outside the nurses station. A friend of mine, talked to the doctor and the doctor said, "I think he's going to die." That person got Patty Presock at the White House, who was your grandfather's personal secretary, tell the President. The next morning, Larry Moore, who is one of the White House physicians for your grandfather was sent over to talk to the doctors, which he did.

I was not aware of this, even though I wasn't in a coma at that time. But the nurses told me later, "You were in horrible shape. You would not have survived, but when the President's doctor showed up everything changed. Your medicines changed, everything changed and that was the reason why you're here today." It was a very, very difficult two weeks. And the last week I was there, when I was awake, I was there, the phone rings and it's the White House operator calling for your grandfather, the President, to talk to somebody about how I'm doing. So the nurse that answered the phone, yelled out to another

nurse, "The President's calling, I can't talk to him." And the other one says, well, why not? And she said, "Because I'm afraid to," and then yelled at it, the head nurse and said, "You have to talk to the President."

She says, "I can't do that." And she says why? She said, "Because I'm a Democrat." As it turns out that the nurse did talk to your grandfather a couple of days after watching the hearings of Clarence Thomas as a matter of fact, and then there's all this rustling and one thing and another going on outside and boom, your grandmother walks in. She came over and gave me a big hug. She looked up at the television set and she says, "Well, I can see that you're getting better." We had a great conversation. When I went home, the doctor that had gone to the hospital at your grandfather's direction, Barry Moore, came to my house and we talked about going forward and what was going to occur. And he said to me, "There's a new clinical trial that's going to begin at Georgetown University Lombardi Cancer Center, and here's what it's all about. And he explained it to me and he said, what do you think? I says, well, I think I'd like to do that. And he says, "Okay, but you have to enroll tomorrow. It's the last day." And I'm not in very good shape at this point in time, I couldn't drive. I called a cab, the cab came and picked me up. I'm sitting in the backseat and it was really a filthy thing.

And there was a woman driving it, we're driving. Then she says, "Do you mind if I smoke?" I said, "You can do whatever you want. Just get me to the hospital." I got on that trial. It was a six month trial. During that time I was thinking about going forward in life and one thing to another. And I had a consulting firm at that time. I was doing extremely well, but I thought, you know, I don't want to do this forever. I want to do something else and I'm going to do something that I thought I'd never do again. I called up Jim Baker and I told him, I said, "Jim, I really want to come back to the government." He said, "Well, come on over and we'll have lunch." We had lunch. And he says, "Would you be interested in being an ambassador?"

And I said, "I don't think so. Not really." And we talked and we talked. I left, went back to the office and shortly thereafter Margaret [00:33:35] called. She says, "Pete." She used to call me Petey. "Petey, I just talked to Mr. Baker. Here are the posts that are open." And she read all the posts and she says, "Which one do you want?" And I said, "I'd like to have Canada for two reasons. It's one of the largest embassies that we have in the world. It's an extraordinarily important ally and trading partner. And because I have cancer, if I had to get back to the hospital, it's just a simple flight from Ottawa into Washington, DC." So that was it. I talked to Baker. Two days later, your grandfather and he we're meeting at the United Nations for the annual meeting and Baker raised it with your grandfather and boom, that was it.

I was nominated. It was one of the easiest things that you could ever imagine. But going up to Canada, it was a really, really interesting experience for me. First of all, the staff at the embassy treated me wonderfully well. And one thing I learned very early, all of these professionals who are dedicated to our country, were working like hell. I'm thinking to myself, you know, some of these people really need to be rewarded. So as much as anything, I started looking out for their interests as much as I was looking out for our country's interests. I'll give you an example. I was reading some cables going back. I was struck by the writing. I said to Todd Stewart, who was the deputy chief of mission, "Todd, who is writing these cables?" And he said, "Oh, it's a young woman. Who's, you know, so and so. And I said, "I want to meet her."

They called her into the office, I came up and I talked to her for a bit. And I said, "I really admire your writing and what you're doing and what I would like you to do for me, I have an important speech to give next week. I'd like you to write that speech." She did one hell of a good job. And there were about a thousand people that I gave the speech. There's a piece of humor to this. The big issue was NAFTA, North American Free Trade Agreement. A lot of Canadians were opposed to it, etc. So after I gave the speech, I took questions from the audience. This woman in a very hoity and imperious manner says to me, "Mr. Ambassador, why is it that the United States is so intent on doing extended trade with the worst violator of human rights in the hemisphere?"

I gave her the answer, which is basically the standard administration agent. And I said to her, I said, "Now, can I ask you a question?" And she said, yes. I says, "Can you tell me the nation that is Canada's fastest growing trading partner?" She said, no, no, I don't know. I said, "Would you like to know?" And she says, yes. I said, "It's Iran." At that point, the whole place exploded. So put it this way, kind of a wonderful put down. But there was so many people that came to see me at the end of that speech and they said, "Mr. Ambassador, we are so happy that you did what you did to that person that asked you that question. And the only thing I could figure out is that she was a local who had alienated a lot of people. They were happy to see her get some of her own medicine, I suppose.

The one thing that was really important for me, Sam, is that being up there, I really had a special relationship that very few ambassadors had. And that was a relationship with your grandfather, with Jim Baker, with Bob Mosbacher, the whole array of the people that were running the government at that point in time. And the one thing that was really both upsetting and pleasing was that your grandfather lost the election and I had to come home at a certain point in time, which was, I think March. The day before I left, Todd Stewart, the DCM

gave a speech at the embassy and he was a career foreign service person and said to the group there that I was the finest ambassador he ever served under. And it really brought tears to my eyes. And the next morning I was flying out, I had like a 6:30 flight. It was about eight below zero and every head of every division at the embassy showed up for my departure, which I thought was awfully nice. The one thing I really, really learned is that when you have a position like that, it's not all about you. It's about everybody that you're working with. And if you can help them, encourage them, help them in their career going forward. Loyalty is such a wonderful thing to have, as I say, that was important as anything that I learned, it was a wonderful experience.

Sam: Well, Pete, this has been a wonderful experience for me hearing all these amazing stories. So I'd like to end with this. Our podcast is based on this legacy of service that my grandparents have left behind. So I have to talk about your service. In 1994, you helped launch the Children's Charities Foundation, helping at-risk children in Washington, DC. Twenty-six years later, that wonderful organization is still going strong. What does this group do? And why was it important to you to get involved on the ground floor?

Pete: When I was in the hospital with cancer, there's a lot of things that go through your mind. I mean, am I going to survive? Am I going to die? But there's a lot of retrospective things that you think about. And I thought about your grandparents and the type of people that they were, and about the fact that they always talked about helping others. And your grandfather used to quote de Tocqueville. When he was asked the difference between the people in Europe and the people in the United States and de Tocqueville said "The propensity of the American people for one person to help another." And I thought about that a lot. I basically made the decision that if I get through this at some point in time, I'm going to become really involved in the community and try to help children.

And part of that is because of my work at the United Nations, UNICEF. And if I can just back up a little bit from that. On one day, there was a resolution introduced by the ambassador from Egypt and the ambassador from Syria, criticizing the treatment of Palestinian children in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Well, how, you know, what that was all about? It was an effort to embarrass the Israelis and one thing and another. The executive director of UNICEF at that time was a man called Jim Grant. He was really a Saint. And I said to him, I said, "Jim, we're going to veto this. UNICEF tried to operate under a unified front, no other sanction... He said, okay, that's fine. But I said to him, I said, "This is not anything to do with UNICEF. This has everything to do with politics, and we're not going to go along with it."

He kind of left and I'm sitting there and this young man is walking up the aisle and he is the representative of the PLO. We were not at that time supposed to be talking to the PLO because of the agreement we had with the Israelis. So he's walking up there and I thought, I said, well, hell, I'm going to go talk to this guy. I walked up to him and I introduced myself and I said, "I know who you are. Why don't we go outside and have a cigarette?" So we went outside and had a cigarette. And I said, "Here's what I'm going to do. I'm going to introduce a resolution that talks about the condition of Palestinian children throughout the Middle East. That includes Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria. I went through the whole thing, but I'm not going to do it unless I have your support."

He says, "I'll back you." So it was introduced. The ambassador from Egypt came over. He was quite upset about it. The ambassador from Syria came over. He was even more upset. I'm certain that he was stoned on hashish at the time. But anyway, it went through, that was the first resolution adopted by the Israelis and the Jews in history of the United Nations. And I really felt that was a special thing. And during that time I worked with Jim Grant and the ambassador from Canada, we put together the first world summit for children at the United Nations. We had well over a hundred heads of state, including your grandfather. There were things like that. I really got things done where you would think that working in the UN was really a bureaucracy and one thing or another. And when UNICEF had to move some of its offices and one thing or another, they were moving to either West Chester or to New Jersey.

And I found out that they were being charged \$36 a foot for rent. A friend of mine, a man called George Kline was a developer in the city. I called him up. I said, "George, UNICEF wants to move either here or there, they would be paying \$36 a square foot." He says, "You go back and tell them that if they paid me \$36 a square foot, they can have offices in my building on Park Avenue." As it turns out, that was not the case. They worked out a deal. And at a reception a few months later, that was put on by Katherine Graham for Jim Grant and UNICEF. When I walked in the door, Jim Grant looked at the publisher of the post and said, "Kate, this man saved me a quarter of a billion dollars." When I left the UNICEF position to go to Canada, I thought to myself, you know, this was a job I really enjoyed immensely.

I was able to solve some problems. That was really kind of a spectacular time for me. So I had the experience with UNICEF. I thought about your grandparents and about social responsibility and that's when I decided that we should try to do something in the community. It's great to want to do something, but it's also better if you have money to do it. I had this idea that we could have a local basketball tournament and the money raised would go to charity. And that's exactly what we did. We could never get Georgetown to play

until the very, very end, but Maryland, Georgia, Washington, and then we would bring in two outside teams to play. We'd have two double headers. They were on national television every year. At one point in a five-year period, we had three teams that were national champions. We had great teams, great games.

We would have 16, 17,000 people at the games. The very first one we put on was at the Old Capitol center. Umass was number one in the country with John Kyler Perry and they played Maryland. We had 19,000 people there. That's a lot of people. And we made a lot of money for charities. We've given away over the years, probably about \$15 million in cash and other things. But in the last six years, we have put brand new winter coats on 28,000 impoverished kids in the metropolitan area. And we're in the process now trying to do it again this year, we're hoping to be able to put out another 4 or 5,000 coats for the kids. We've also raised some money because of the pandemic in terms of getting supplies into the inner cities, food, etc., etc. But I must tell you, it's becoming more difficult to do, partly because of my age, you lose contacts and you lose influence too. So I'm not sure how much longer we can do this. Quite frankly, I'm hopeful somebody on the board will step up and move it forward. 27 years is plenty. That's how it all came about.

Sam: Well, thank you so much for all the work you're doing with children's charities and sharing your amazing stories about my grandfather. Thanks for being on "All the Best," Pete.

Pete: All right, Sam. Thank you very much. It's been a pleasure to be here and if I can do anything else in the future, just let me know.

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.