



All the Best Podcast
Episode 64: “Amplifying the Legacies of George and Barbara Bush”

*Featuring the new CEO of the George and Barbara Bush Foundation,
Maxmillian Angerholzer*

Maxmillian: July 26th, 1997. Life has been great for Barbara and me since leaving the White House. We spend about seven plus months based out on our small but wonderful home in Houston. The rest up here in Maine, where this place seems to be able to take a deep breath and then accommodate thousands of kids, brothers, cousins, guests, and various unidentified straphangers. Bar and I try to do our part in various ways, helping various charities. My Presidential Library opens November 6th, at Texas A&M University. Hooray. And a huge book on foreign policy and changes in the world when I was president, that I'm writing for Knopf with General Schwarzkopf, is all but finished. Hooray for that too. George H.W. Bush.

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

Barbara: And life really must have joy.

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

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."

Maxmillian Angerholzer III is the newly appointed CEO of the George and Barbara Bush Foundation. Max has extensive experience in the nonprofit world, serving as Executive Vice President of the Institute of International Education, and as President and CEO of the Center for the Study of the Presidency and Congress in Washington, D.C. He most recently served as a Senior Adviser to EntryPoint Capital, a New York-based investment manager focused on publicly-traded health care equities. Max, thank you for joining us on "All the Best" today. We are so excited to welcome you to the George and Barbara Bush Foundation family.

Maxmillian: Thank you so much, Sam. I'm so honored to be part of the team.

Sam: Well, Max, I want to start with this. Can you tell us a little bit about the process of applying for the role? And more importantly, why joining the Bush Foundation team was important to you?

Maxmillian: Thank you, Sam. That's a great question. First of all, you know, I'm honored to be here with you in my new role, which is very humbling. I know it's a big responsibility. Today's day 35, so, you know, I still have a very steep learning curve, but I feel like the curve is flattening a little bit every day. You know, this is one of those amazing experiences. I didn't even know that the position was open. And I found out about it last spring and was very honored to be part of the process. You know, I went into it with my eyes wide open. And honestly, I didn't expect that I'd be sitting here with you at the end of the process. I was just so honored to be a part of it. I was a teenager when your grandparents were in the White House. And I was really inspired by the ideals and values that they stood for. You know, their leadership helped inspire me to want to study political science in college, to want to study government, to get involved in public policy in Washington.

And so when I first found out about the search, I was just excited to be included. And as I went through the process, I got more and more excited about the opportunity. And here we are today. But it really is an extraordinary turn of events for me.

Sam: Well, Max, the unique thing about you is that you didn't work for or know my grandparents, but you were steeped in nonprofit leadership, including an organization that focused on the U.S. presidency. Can you talk about those experiences and how they might help benefit the foundation's mission?

Maxmillian: You know, as you mentioned, I have studied presidents and President Bush was certainly somebody that I looked up to. And I feel like I had a chance to learn a lot about during my educational experiences and during my career. You know, I didn't have the honor of working for President Bush, but as I said, I always looked up to him. And I think that there's a real opportunity now for the foundation to turn the page. You know, I'm excited to play a role helping us to attract new stakeholders, to share the stories and lessons of President and Mrs. Bush with more people. And I think particularly, with a younger generation of Americans and folks around the world who were not adults when they were in the White House, this is an opportunity to tell their story a new and to draw lessons from that. The values and ideals that they lived every day are more important now than they've ever been. And if we're talking about hard work, if we're talking about putting others first, if we're talking about volunteerism, all of those things I think are things that we need more in America right now and certainly around the world. So, I'm excited to play a role in that.

I did have an opportunity on a couple of occasions to meet President and Mrs. Bush briefly and interact with them. And while I didn't know them, those brief interactions, to me, I was able to see what they're really like. And so that was extraordinary. And I can think back to those moments with a lot of pride and memory.

Sam: Well, Max, for those who might not be familiar, what does the Bush Foundation do? It seems like every foundation of a former president has its own area of focus. Why does ours place such an emphasis on service in its many forms?

Maxmillian: You're right. You know, I think every Presidential Library and Foundation has a different focus and, you know, has different competitive advantages and things that they really need to push forward. And I think honestly, the fact that you created this podcast to focus on the service of your grandparents speaks volumes about that. They set an example for Americans for many years that we should still be following. And, you know, whether that is public service, and the great work of the Bush School at Texas A&M, you know, whether that is volunteerism with a great organization like Points of Light, leading the charge there, whether that's literacy, and you think about the Barbara Bush Foundation for Literacy. You know, there's so many opportunities there to share those stories and share those ideals. And I really do think that partnerships are the way to go. I think we should be working with even more organizations. And I think we should set a tone. I think we have a responsibility to do that.

Sam: Max, as we know, 2020 and the pandemic has challenged our foundation and so many nonprofit organizations in unprecedented ways. As a foundation, what have we learned? And what's the path forward from COVID-19?

Maxmillian: That's a great question, Sam. I think first of all, you know, our hearts go out to everyone who has suffered and is suffering because of COVID-19. You know, I think those of us who are fortunate enough to be doing well, it helps to put things into perspective. The opportunity to spend more time with family, the opportunity to kind of take a step back and better evaluate where our priorities should be. You know, I certainly had an opportunity to do that and I know many others have. I'm glad to see that we're on a good path now, and we have the vaccine. And hopefully, as many people will take it as they can, as soon as it becomes available. And I think what the foundation learned during this period was we had to adapt. Right now the Presidential Library is closed. You know, we cannot sadly welcome visitors right now. Everyone understands why.

So one thing I think we've done, and frankly, building off of the great work of this podcast is, how can we do things more virtually and remotely. And I think that's been a really exciting opportunity. I think we've been able to sharpen our tools there and have had some really great events the last few months. And, you know, we're planning some in the coming months. And so we're having to work through what do virtual celebrations look like, with the hope that maybe later this year, we can convene in person. I think one of the things we're going to take away from this is the importance of being able to convene in different ways. And whether that's in person, whether that's virtually, whether that's a hybrid model. You know, I think in the end, we have learned a lot of lessons from this. And from the work of the foundation, I think we're going to be stronger for it.

Sam: Well, you mentioned at the beginning of your answer there, that the Presidential Library is still closed. You know, a big part of legacy sharing or legacy building for us is getting people to physically get to College Station, visit the library, visit the burial site, and all the wonderful things that we have going there. Have you talked to Texas A&M or Warren Finch, who's the Director of our library, about when we can expect the doors to be opened again?

Maxmillian: Texas A&M is taking this very seriously, as we would expect, and they have important protocols in place. And, you know, a lot of what we do at the library is connected with the guidance we get from National Archives. And so, you know, right now, what is impacting us is impacting the other

presidential libraries. You know, I think that we're being optimistic. And Warren is as good as anybody at putting events together, and making sure we're all rowing in the right direction. And so, fingers crossed, I think we're hoping that this summer, we'll be able to start moving toward a semblance of normalcy. And that would be great, because that's usually one of the most popular time for friends and tourists and others to come to the library. So, fingers crossed, I can probably give you an update in a month or two.

But, you know, honestly, I think a lot of it has to do with just Americans coming together and continuing to take this pandemic seriously. And the quicker we get through this period, and the better care we take of each other, then the more quickly we can reopen the doors of the library.

Sam: Well, Max, just because the library is closed doesn't mean the foundation doesn't have a ton of projects they're currently working on. Can you tell our audience about the big plans the foundation has in the works, including some major changes to the footprint of the Bush Center at Texas A&M? I understand the Marine One helicopter and Union Pacific train engine 4141 are a big part of the future. Where do things stand and what's in store?

Maxmillian: For our listeners who haven't been to College Station and haven't come to visit the library, we have this great location, we refer to it as the Bush Center at Texas A&M. But we have the Bush School there for public service, which is a real extraordinary place. There are so many talented men and women that go through that school. And that's a real important legacy, I believe, of President Bush. Then we have the foundation offices a conference center there. And then we have the Presidential Library, and they're all right next to each other. And the good news is, there's a lot of space there. And so we can think big. And as you said, Marine One and engine 4141 are on the horizon. So, engine 4141, working with our great friends at Union Pacific, was coined 15 years ago in honor of President Bush. And it actually brought him to his final resting place at the gravesite there in College Station. Union Pacific is donating that to the foundation.

And in the coming months, with a whole lot of help from our friends at Union Pacific, and an extraordinary amount of help from our friends at Texas A&M, we're going to be able to bring the train to College Station and it will be right near the Presidential Library. It's going to take a little time to build it out. But it's going to be a great opportunity in the future for folks to come and see the train. We're also moving into, later this year and into next year, we're going to have an opportunity to bring Marine One, also to the Bush Center there. And as everybody knows, you know, that's an iconic symbol of the U.S. presidency. And we've all seen the videos and photos of Marine One on the South Lawn. So

we're going to be bringing it to the College Station lawn. And if all goes well, there's going to be a restaurant that's paired with that. And, you know, I think this is just going to add to the experience of the library.

I think one of the things that I've learned in my career is that history cannot be static, it's got to be dynamic. And that's why we're so lucky to work with Warren at the library, because we've always got to be trying to find ways to tell the history in a different way and to bring it to a different audience.

Sam: Max, you just talked about all the amazing growth that's happening at the Bush Center in College Station. We also have the Bush School in D.C. opening up with Jay Silveria at the helm. As the Bush Foundation continues to grow, where do you see it five years from now?

Maxmillian: You know, I really do think that there's an opportunity for us to pull back the curtain on President and Mrs. Bush, and share their legacies with more people. And I think that is with the Bush School and encouraging more men and women to go into public service. And, you know, General Welsh and Jay are on the cutting edge of that. So, really excited to be working with them. It's continuing to work with Warren at the library and add more to that. I think there's also an opportunity to bring more people together. I think there's an opportunity to convene more people around the lessons of President Bush's administration. Whether that's looking at challenges internationally and foreign conflicts, whether that's looking at how he led us out of the end of the Cold War, thinking about the leadership that he showed in Asia, and then also the things he did domestically. There are so many great lessons from the presidential administration, but also from the President's entire career, that need to be shared with more people.

So, if I'm thinking about where we're going to be in five years, we're going to have built out the Bush Center even more. We're going to continue to help that evolve and bring more people to Texas A&M and College Station. But also to tell the story more widely, and to bring more people together, and to amplify the legacies of your grandparents.

Sam: Well, Max, thank you so much for joining me on "All the Best" and sharing all the amazing things that are going on at the foundation. We couldn't be more thrilled to have you on board. I want to end with this. What's the one thing you're most looking forward to accomplishing in your first year?

Maxmillian: I think a lot of it is trying to continue the great momentum that we've had. You know, I follow in the footsteps of some really great leaders of the foundation. I think that's important, is not to lose that momentum, but it's

also to come out of this pandemic stronger. You know, I think that the pandemic gives us a little bit of an opportunity to rethink how we do things every day. Not to throw the baby out with the bathwater, not to make huge changes in the foreseeable future, but to think, okay, what are our strengths and weaknesses? And how do we double down on our strengths? And how do we minimize our weaknesses? And I think, as we talked about before, doing things more virtually is really important. And, you know, I'm excited, once we get through this pandemic, to bring more people to College Station and to build that momentum.

And it's amazing to think that, you know, it's been 30 years since President Bush was in the White House. And in some ways, it seems like it was only a few years ago. So a good year is going to be a year where we continue to raise the money we need for the foundation. And I encourage people, if they got any questions about this, they can track me down, go to our website, happy to talk to anyone about that because, you know, we have really important educational programs that need to be funded. And I think it's also continuing to make sure that we're bringing new people into the circle. I think that's really important. You know, I love our board and I love all of the friends and stakeholders of the Bush Foundation right now, but we need more people. So, to me, if we had more stakeholders at the end of this year, that would be a huge plus.

Sam: Well, Max, we couldn't be happier to have you on board. And I'll speak for my entire family in saying that, we are thrilled to have you at the helm of the George and Barbara Bush Foundation, and know that we are here to support you in any way you need. Thanks for being on "All the Best."

Maxmillian: Thank you, Sam. Honored to be part of the team.

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.