



**All the Best Podcast**  
**Episode 70: “Playing Through”**  
*Featuring Head Golf Professional at George H. W. Bush’s home golf course  
in Cape Arundel, Ken Raynor*

April 12th, 1987, flew late Saturday night to Maine. Had a totally non-political day in Maine. Door came down and left Eli and Sam in my charge when she and Barr went downtown. Eli woke up, Doro predicted she wouldn't. I picked her up, warmed up her bottle and tested it on my wrist just like the old days and fed her. Three enormous burps. Ken Raynor, the golf pro was over and he knew less about it than I did. He said, "No, no you don't have to burp them anymore." But after she showed a little discomfort about one-third of the way through, I put her on my shoulder and it came up right from her toes, the most enormous burp with some kind of after wave formula. It just about knocked me out. Sam came in after he got up. His mother had gotten home by then. He's so sweet, he loves Eli, all in all it was just heaven. 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."

Ken Raynor has had the honor distinction as the President's Pro for most of his golf career. Ken has hosted numerous golfing presidents during his time as the head golf professional at the Cape Arundel Golf Club in Kennebunkport, Maine, and the head professional at the Coral Creek Golf Club in Placida, Florida during the winter season. Ken has played more golf with the president than any other PGA professional in history. Ken has been honored by the Maine Chapter PGA with numerous awards, which include twice Professional of the Year and recipient of the Horton Smith Award for contributions to continued education of the golf professional. In 2003, Ken was honored by the New England PGA section as their professional of the year. And in 2005, was inducted into the Maine Golf Hall of Fame. Ken is also an author who documented his friendship with my grandfather, George H.W. Bush in his book, "I Call Him 'Mr. President.'" Ken, how are you? Great to have you on "All the Best."

Ken: Wonderful to be here. Thanks for having me.

Sam: Ken, I'd like to start with this. For those listening at home who do not know your long history with my grandparents, can you take us back to the beginning? When did you first meet them?

Ken: Well, Kennebunkport has been in my life a good portion from college on and of course, but in the Bush's life, almost all of President Bush's life since day one, I think. I became head pro at Cape Arundel Golf Club in 1979. I had worked there since 1974. And that was about the same time that President Bush was coming back to the States after all his different positions that he held and he was gonna make a run for the nomination of the presidency for the Republican Party. So he came to Kennebunkport obviously a little bit of a think tank organizing his structure and I had just become head golf professional, and he realized that. So in true fashion that I learned many years later, he reached out to me and one of his first rounds, I think he was playing with his brother, Prescott Bush, who I knew well as a student of mine. I knew all his brothers but I never saw George Bush, because he was always busy. So he invited me for a round of golf. Forty years later, I was still playing with him and enjoying a friendship that was beyond belief, one I cherished and really became my second dad to me.

Sam: Ken, golf has always been a very important part of my grandfather's life, as you well know, especially in Kennebunkport, Maine at Cape Arundel Golf Club, where you served as the head pro for 38 years. Even the clubhouse is named The 41 House. Can you talk about that special relationship my grandfather had with golf, and specifically Cape Arundel?

Ken: Well, it was a place he loved. It was his getaway. We know how much he enjoyed coming through, he enjoyed sharing it. It really started as family. As you grew up, Sam, as you know, you used to cherish coming over to play golf and you did it with all your cousins and your grandfather certainly, and your dad. You started with the Walker Cup and the Walker Point, and then of course with his dad being president of the USGA, his brother being on the executive board of the USGA, on the rules side of things like that. Golf had been in his bones and then you add the specialty of Kennebunkport to that, to have his love of the game, seeing him out there, the true joys, it gave him a combination of family, competition, the needle, you know. He enjoyed giving that needle to everybody, as you grew up, you know exactly what I'm talking about there. And it was a place that we know how important it was for him to play fast, get his exercise, get his competition, and play quickly and go onto the next activity. It's a great combination of values that he cherished.

Sam: Ken, I wanna touch on something that you said, and that is that my grandfather played fast. That's the one word that always came to mind when describing his golf game. You've played with him more than anybody probably ever. Can you talk about the speed in which he played?

Ken: He loved cart polo. He went hard all the time. He arrived to the club fast, he arrived to the first tee fast, he pulled that ball out out his pocket fast. He finished the 18th hole fast and he was back in the cart fast. So everything he did, that was his life. He loved it and that's how he lived it. One time we went out and played early in the morning, I think we were out 6, 6:30, which he loved to do especially if he had a busy day, but he got to start the day the way he really wanted to and we ended up playing at, like, 6, 6:30 in the morning. And when we completed the round, it was just the two of us, which made it really special, to go out in there in the beautiful morning, the Kennebunkport River, you know, old Walter Travis Golf Course as we know, link style course. We always looked at the river to see if any fish were rising and things while we're playing golf, you know, cherish moments that I look back and I'll never forget. But we completed the 18th hole and the Secret Service came to us and said, "Sir, do you realize you just played 18 holes in an hour and 24 minutes?" So it was crazy. It wasn't like we were running, but we hit our shots, I went to my ball, he went to his ball, we rendezvoused at the green and then, you know,

if he had a bad score, it was pick up, let's go and we'd move on. He just enjoyed that activity level.

And it was funny the following year, I got a call from "The New York Times" reporter having heard this thing they used to call aerobic golf, you know, all these names were given to the speed of golf that we played so often. He asked if he could come and write an article. He wanted to see if he could play golf in an hour and 24 minutes and write an article for "The New York Times." So I obviously welcomed him to come do that first thing in the morning prior to other play, and he wrote a great article. It was very funny. He had, like, 40 seconds to putt out on the 17th hole. He had, like, 24 seconds more to play the 18th hole. Dipped his ball into the water, end of his saga for trying to play in an hour, 24 minutes. But the president just loved it. You could just tell his passion for getting out there and playing with you and family and quickly.

Sam: Ken, I wanna talk about your fabulous book called, "I Call Him 'Mr. President,'" which details your storied friendship with my grandfather. In it, you reflect on your life lessons learned from your long friendship spent together outdoors playing golf, fishing, and many other activities. I'd love for you to share some of the more meaningful lessons you learned from your time together.

Ken: Yeah, it was always about the other guy. He was never the president first. He was always one of the boys and he enjoyed that aspect and that role. I remember so many times, and he used to say, "Ken, it's just as easy to say yes as it is to say no." And I would think in terms of people that wanted to shake his hand or get a picture, an autograph. There'd be so many times he would invite the people over to say, "Hey, can we do a picture? Hey, can I sign that for you?" And they stood nervously in the parking lot at Cape Arundel at 41 House. He was so genuine and caring about other people. He certainly taught me to remember others. How many letters and notes to him did you and I get over all these years. I mean, I've saved every one of them. Get these things in the mail and I've tried to pass that forward. Anne and I have done that, my wife, reaching out to people that we've met, and it's amazing how that trail, the value that adds to life. I remember getting a calendar, it was a New Zealand fishing calendar. He had known I had just come back from New Zealand and it was a really busy time in the political world at the time in the White House. I got this calendar sent in from his secretary, but it was signed by him saying, "Thought of you. Thought you'd enjoy." You know, gave me this great fishing calendar for New Zealand. But how he had time to think about me at this very moment, just kinda said it all. People were important to him. Service we know is important to him, but he was serving the gooder need of people. I tried to sit back and write a letter occasionally to somebody or quick note to pass that on to

something that he taught me, but the good news, his heart, he really, really truly cared and it really showed. All the people that he touched, we all know that for sure.

Sam: Yeah, he was really the master of the small gesture. But for him, you know, being the president, that small gesture becomes a big one. I've got so many, to your point, hundreds of letters that I've saved that he didn't have to write all those letters. It's truly a lost art form.

Ken: This is our book that we wrote, I'll throw it out at you in a little bit and you can see the president and I are hard at work there running up a putt, kinda fun. But I didn't want the book to be about me. The last thing I wanted to do was capitalize on our friendship, so I was a little leery about doing it. But you know, every time I told a story, people were all ears. They enjoyed it so much. When we used to have golf tournaments sometimes, you know, I'd tell a story, something that the president did, or guests would come into the clubhouse, knowing that the president played here at Cape Arundel and seeing 41 House and so on...they always loved to have some enriching little story. They felt connected to him when I told those stories. And I always heard, "You should write a book." So what we did is we reached out with my co-author, Michael Patrick Shields and we wrote letters to all the people that I've been lucky to touch lives with, and we asked them to write a story too. So throughout the book, our stories from Jim Nantz to Dan Quayle, Brad Faxon and Ben Crenshaw, all these people have taken their time, Jim Nantz, and told some really fun stories so they can really get the heartbeat of what we've all experienced for these 40 years, and really truly what the man really was about as a man, but not as a president.

Sam: Well Ken, I wanted to get into some fun stories. My grandfather has always loved the PGA and has had many PGA tour professionals visit Cape Arundel to play golf over the years. Do you have any favorite memories from those visits? And besides you obviously, did he have a favorite PGA pro?

Ken: Thank you for that. I was always his partner, you know. I remember we played, until Davis Love showed up, then he dumped me as the fourth, you know. It'd be who are the teams, and of course, the ranking committee, as you know, the ranking committee, he always made the teams on the first tee. And I was always his partner until PGA pro showed up, and then he dumped me as a partner very quickly. But it was amazing times. I mean, the honor of playing with Arnold Palmer. We got to play with him two rounds in two days. To play with the King and the President, obviously that was really kinda special, and having him go out. I remember on the fifth hole one time, I think I'm even par after four, but I really haven't hit the ball very solid. I just scraped it around.

Arnie could tell I was a little disgruntled. On the fifth hole, we go down, Arnie comes over to me as we were walking down the fair. He puts his arm over me just as the president walks by. He goes, "Ken, you're hitting the ball just fine. You're just swinging a little fast." I looked at Arnie and I looked at the president as he's walking by again. I say, "You know, I am a little nervous. I'm playing with Arnold Palmer." The president kinda looked up and gave me the evil eyeball in a sense of the important contributor here. But it was a special moment that I'll never forget.

To play with two amazing men that really came from the same ilk, the two funerals had the same feeling to 'em. Jim Nantz's statement to Arnold Palmer when he gave a eulogy, he was talking almost the way that George Bush thought. Same thing, Mikum gave eulogy at 41, could have been talking about Arnold Palmer. They both cared so deeply about the other guy and it really showed. But having Freddie Couples up, how can you not enjoy Freddie, and David Toms and Phil Mickelson and Brad Faxon, Hale Irwin, Ben Crenshaw, I mean, Jose María Olazábal, what a gentleman he was to have up there. I thoroughly enjoyed having him. You know, Dottie Pepper still talks about it a little bit whenever I bump into Dottie. These are 18 hole rounds of golf that every one of these people still remember and how many places have they played in the world. How many awards have they won as they've played? But we've had other people outside the golfing world. I mean, we had Prince Andrew, royalty. Never thought I'd play with royalty, but he was up for when the country club had the Ryder Cup, we had the cabinet, you know, Jim Baker, and of course, my dear friend, Brent Scowcroft, national security advisor, Sam Skinner, of course, Dan Quayle, vice president, Nick Brady. These were all guys that loved the game of golf, and we had cherished moments on the golf course. Kevin Costner, when he was doing *Message in a Bottle* in Maine, we played a number of times. And we had Roger Clemens from the Red Sox at that time. He came up, we were about to have a hurricane and the president called me at 4:30 in the morning when Gorbachev was missing in Russia. He had been on the phone all night dealing with the situation. But he calls me in the morning, early to see whether he thought we were gonna play with Roger because there was a hurricane coming. Just an amazing balance all the way through. You know, Andy Mill, his great fishing buddy and Olympic skier.

All these people that we had that we just cherished the moments. He loved sharing what he valued in Kennebunkport, in Cape Arundel, and it was all the good things in life. Brad Faxon was going around one day, and he's playing okay but nothing great. The president always wanted one of them to break the course record, you know. We had gone through number of rounds and course records, and I had it for a short time at 64. Then, another Maine pro, Bob Darling came in, and I had a 64 with a out of bounds on 18. It was leaning on

the white stake. Then, Bob Darling came in and shot 63 with a whiff, so now we got a course record with an out of bounds, we got a course record with a whiff, shot 63. Then, we had our great friend, Mark Plummer came in and shot 62 with one of my past assistants, Eric Higgins shot 62. Then, we had Freddy shoot 62. That was a holding thing for awhile. So here comes Brad Faxon and he's going along okay. All of a sudden, he goes 15, 16, 17, he birdies. So now, he's got a par 18 for 61 and he gets up, it starts raining and all of a sudden, here's the former president of the United States holding the umbrella over Brad Faxon's head on 17, helping him with this putt. Because now it became important, and long story short, he hits a great drive on 18, hits it a little long on 18 green, has a wedge to the green. Of course, he known as the great putter. Rolls it down to about 3.5-feet from the cup and misses the 3.5 footer for the course record. So he ends up tying it.

So many years later, of course, Phil Mickelson comes up and he's going on and on and on. Of course, it was really important that if the home pro held the course record, a touring pro didn't wanna come in, take that away from him. So Ken Venturi used to start that. Phil Mickelson kind of adopted that philosophy. So we're having dinner at Walker's Point one day. The president's talking about Phil breaking the course record. So Phil said, "Ken, what do you think? I don't wanna alienate anybody." So I said, "I know the president would love it, our members would love it." So we decided that Phil's going to break the course record in the morning. So he comes over and comes in my office before we tee off, just to reconfirm, do you think it's okay? The members will be unhappy with me, and all that. Said, "No, the president would love it. Let's go out and shoot the course record." He goes up and hits the tee shot on the first hole a little left, down some long gorse, ends up making eight on the first hole. So hence, there goes the course record. So we were able to give him a hard time about it. A couple chunks out of the lawn, 3, 4-foot high grass. Finally got it over, hit it over the green into the marsh, so on and so forth. I think he shot 64 with an 8 on the first hole. But I think two years later, he came back and shot 60, so he has the course record and the president loved every minute of it. Obviously, you can see the sense that we've had. Andy Mill came up. We had a great round of golf. We instantly went down to the putting green, started casting our flies. Had a stripe bass on probably four or five minutes after we putted out on 18. The president was in heaven and you could sense it, and we were so thrilled to share all those moments with him.

Sam: Ken, I wanna pivot a little bit and talk about how you and your wife, Ann, have given your time and efforts over the years to support the Bush Family Classic Golf Tournament in support of Gary's House. And for those of you that don't know, Gary's House has been providing a safe, comfortable and affordable home away from home for families and individuals with loved ones receiving

medical treatment in any greater Portland area hospital since 1998. Ken, why is it so important for you to continue to support Gary's House and the Bush Family Classic?

Ken: Thanks for asking. I mean, I think the most important thing, there's still a need and it's still making a difference. It's really touching a lot of people's lives that really are in need. People need a place to stay when they have a loved one ill. Moms and dads are there with child that are in the hospital and things, and they can't afford to stay in a hotel and that's how it all started. It was the dying wish of a 19-year-old child, that their mom and dad were sleeping in their car so they could be close to their son who was dying of cancer. And that was his dying wish, that they would not allow that to happen to anybody else. So we remain committed, but the great news is the people who've supported it have also remained committed. We created almost a family around Gary's House, and we have a beautiful house in Portland, Maine. We continue to strive to make it better and better, to touch the people's lives. And President Bush originally, he got involved. And he and I had a chat, and he said, "Ken, I just want you to know that you'll always have a Bush involved in Gary's House." And that meant so much to us, and we appreciate you and Marshall being our hosts now, and makes a huge difference. It's a small effort in our lives that makes a huge difference in everybody else's lives.

Sam: I think the number's up to almost \$2.4 million raised over the life of this tournament to Gary's House, so I know that Gary's House is excited and so happy with the support, and a large part goes to you and Anne for hosting at Cape Arundel. So hopefully it all works out where we can get out there and play in June.

Ken: It's a great charity and we thank everybody for their enduring support of that, for sure.

Sam: Ken, and it wasn't always the golf course where you spent time with my grandfather. You also came a consistent fishing partner over the years. I have to ask, do you have any fishing stories with you and 41 that you could share with us?

Ken: My passion is certainly fishing. I love the game of golf and its history, but I love the wilderness, I love the outdoors, just like your grandfather did, and our great friend, Johnny Morris from Bass Pro Shops, we've shared so much together. I think we went 10 years straight, I believe, up to Labrador, which is one of my favorite places. We'd helicopter into the back country and we'd Atlantic salmon fish for a few days. Just to see the president in his glory, catching these fish, telling a story, but touching people's lives. You know, we



had the Royal Mounted Police, we had the helicopter pilot. We went to the Arctic, you know, up in Inuvik, which is up by Alaska, Coronation Bay catching these amazing Arctic char. You certainly probably seen the Arctic char in his office that he has stuffed. Just the icy cold rivers, permafrost, hundreds and hundreds of miles north. Typical, we're flying in an old DC-3, so where's your grandfather end up? In the co-pilot seat flying the DC-3. And why did he do that? Well, he loved it. But it's the story that the pilot is telling who his co-pilot was for the rest of his life. We had some great hockey friends going up there that were on the trip here also, but catching these amazing fish in an amazing environment with amazing people, I don't know how it gets any better than that.

Sam: Ken, I'd like to first say thank you so much for sharing all your stories today. I feel like we just hit the tip of the iceberg here. I have to ask, and I have to end with this question because I know you and Anne also became close with my grandmother over the years too. Is there anything that you remember most about Barbara Bush, or maybe you can even comment on her golf game.

Ken: Yeah, that's a great thing is her golf game is...41 used to always say, "I break out in hives just thinking about having to practice golf." Your grandmother did not and I'm honored to be able to say I did give her some golf lessons, had a great time. And as we all know, breaking 100 in golf for a lot of people is a milestone, and she did. She broke 100. I learned very early in my introduction to her that her name was Bar, and a I got the evil eyeball every time you'd call her Mrs. Bush by any mistake or things like that. But our connection particularly with Anne, my wife is a school teacher, so a lot of things came out of the education side of things and that camaraderie, their compassion for dogs, their compassion for flowers. One of the things we were so honored for is all through the vice presidential years, I don't know if you know, Anne and I spent our honeymoon at the Vice Presidential mansion in Washington DC, so that was incredible bond that we had. But as we went forward in all of that, Bar was great, so they used to invite us to do all kinds of different things all the time. It's hard, how do you reciprocate to those? You like to give back to them. It's embarrassing to get invited to their house all the time. So here we are, new head golf pro, we're young parents. We got a 1.5-year-old son and 41 and Bar's president of the United States and First Lady. We were playing golf and I invited the president, "Mr. President, we'd love to have you over at our house for dinner." And lo and behold, he accepted. And the next thing you know, here we are having the sitting president of the United States coming to our house in Kennebunkport, Maine for dinner. And he ended up doing it for the next 20 years. Every year, and he'd never let us change the menu because he said, "Ken, it's my favorite meal of the year." Whether it was or not, it didn't matter, but he made us feel good. So that was the relationship

that we had. We had Johnny Morris and Steve and Alicia came every year and all that, so we've been doing that for years. And Bar was always there and she would come in, and it was family first and it was nothing political about it. But it was an amazing association with an amazing lady and amazing man, who happened to be the leaders of the free world for us.

Sam: I have to ask, you said you gave her some lessons. How was she taking criticism of her swing? Were you careful? Did you tread lightly or did you cut right through it and give her the hard details?

Ken: That sounds like a grandson talking. Were you scolded a few times in your growing up?

Sam: -Of course. I wanna make sure she's being reciprocal for everybody.

Ken: I know some of those stories, Sam, so yeah. I think she was better than she ever gave herself credit. She never wanted to give herself credit for that good shot, but she hit multiple good shots. So she was always ready to listen on her terms that she came out and took the lessons, but she was a good listener and I enjoyed the time. Sometimes, we'd hit golf balls, sometimes we'd just talked. But it was quality time and that was the important thing.

Sam: Well Ken, thanks again so much for being on "All the Best." It's great to see you. Hopefully we'll see you in June for the Bush Classic this year. I'm looking forward to it.

Ken: And thanks for all you're doing for a lot of people that you're touching too, Sam.

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.