



All the Best Podcast
Episode 74: “Telling Their Stories”
Featuring New York Times Bestselling Author Brad Meltzer

Brad: February 25th, 2002. Dear Mr. Meltzer, I recently read "The Millionaires" and loved it. I now write for a favor. Would send me a signed bookplate for the front of my copy of "The Millionaires?" Should you not have your own bookplate, I'm enclosing one of mine. Barbara and I have a nice collection of books signed by the authors. It is located at our apartment at Texas A&M University, the site of the George Bush Presidential Library. Many thanks in advance. All the best, George. And the P.S. says, "I'm thrilled 'The Millionaires' does so well on The New York Times Best Seller list."

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."

Brad Meltzer is the number one New York Times best-selling author of "The Escape Artist" and 11 other best-selling thrillers, many that he researched with the help of President and Mrs. Bush. He also writes non-fiction books like "The First Conspiracy," and "The Lincoln Conspiracy," and the "Ordinary People Change the World" kids' book series. In addition to his fiction, Brad is one of the only authors to ever have books on the best sellers list for non-fiction, advice, children's books, and even comic books. Brad is also responsible for helping find the missing 9/11 flag with his History Channel TV show, "Brad Meltzer's Lost History." We are honored to have Brad with us today in "All the Best."

Brad, how are you?

Brad: I am good. I'm happy to be here, and I love the fact that we get to start hearing his words. I know you're used to it, but, to me, it's fun to have him back.

Sam: It is a great way to start. And, you know, I heard briefly the letter, and I think that's one of the ways you kind of became friends with my grandparents. So, I have to start with this. How did you initially become friends with my grandparents? It sounds like they reached out to you.

Brad: Yeah. And the great part is it started with this letter. I mean, it's a fan letter from the President of the United States. I remember when I got it. I was living in Washington, D.C., at the time, and this letter shows up. And I should tell you that I thought it was fake. I did not believe for one second it was real. And I had gotten the letter...President Clinton, when he was in office, actually wrote me a letter because someone had sent him one of the books, but I thought, "This is fake," because...I'm gonna tell you all the ways this letter was fake. So, one, he was like, "Can you send me a signed bookplate?" I was like, "You're the president. You can have a free book," right? Two, he's like, "If you don't have any bookplates, I have one of mine." And then he's, like, referring to himself at his own library, which, I mean, like, who do you know that has their own library? So, the whole thing, I was like, "Okay, this is..."

And the key part of this story is that my first job ever in Washington, D.C., as an intern...I was an intern for the Senate Judiciary Committee when I was 18, 19 years old. And what we used to do is we used to take the pen signing machine that you sign all the letters with. And I used to write to all my friends on judiciary stationery, and I would write them letters telling them they were being deported and then, you know, use the pen signing machine. And I'm from

Florida now, so, deportation letter, that was serious stuff, right? People, like, would say... So, I thought for sure someone got the pen signing machine and wrote me this fake letter as kinda payback for what I had done all those years earlier.

And I was so convinced that it was fake that I called the office in Houston. There was a phone number at the bottom, 713 number, and I remember calling it and I said, "Yeah, there's someone there who wants a signed book, and whoever it is, just let me know who to make it to." Because I was like, "You don't have to hide. It's okay." They said, "Oh, you got the President's letter." And I was like, "Oh, my gosh, it's real. It's actually real." So, that was how we met. Of course I sent, you know, a book and sent everything they needed, whatever they would want, it was great, but they quickly invited me to one of the literacy events in Houston.

And I will never forget going to their house in Houston walking in, and President Bush spent the first five minutes we were there trying to convince my wife that he invented the phrase "You the man." And my wife was so...she's like, "Brad, did you know President Bush invented the phrase 'You the man?'" And Mrs. Bush was like, "No, he didn't," and we're all like, "He's lying to you." But I remember thinking that's such a good joke. Like, and I know it came from this time that he was at the baseball park and they did this great video from, but I was like, "That's an affirmatively great joke."

And so, what happened was I was fascinated by the idea that here was a man who had been the most important person on the whole planet, and he was writing to me, just a random author. And I was working on a book at the time. It was supposed to be about gossip columnists and reporters, and I was like, "That's all boring. What I wanna write about is former presidents. I wanna know what it's like to be someone who had that job and then now has to stop at red lights like the rest of us." And so, I wrote him a letter and I said, "Can I come see what your life is like?" And we had hit it off at the literacy event and he said, "You know what, why don't come for the week?" And it was so generous, and so kind, and so nice. And I remember sitting in their house and they would just be like, "Jump in the car with me." The Secret Service were like, "Who is this guy? What's he doing?" And we had this incredible week together, and it became the basis for my novel, "The Book of Fate." But our friendship was really born because of this letter that he wrote me all those years ago.

Sam: As you, I'm sure, learned, he's a prolific letter writer. And, to your point, I have gotten a fake letter or two from him as pranks. So, luckily, yours wasn't that way and I'm glad that it kind of spurred on this amazing relationship.

Brad: Oh, I do have to tell you though, when you asked and you said, "Do you have a letter," and I pulled that, I have...and you can almost see it over my shoulder behind me, there's a stack of letters that we've exchanged over the years. But I looked, there was also some great ones from Mrs. Bush who, when I was launching our kids' books, wrote to me. And it was what I thought was a prank letter because it said, "I saw your first book is about Amelia Earhart, and I want you to know, you know, I met Amelia Earhart. Everyone thinks I met Martha Washington, too." And I was like, "That's just a..." And she, of course, had the best sense of humor, so our friendship was built on that.

Sam: Brad, when did you fall in love with writing?

Brad: For me, I can always blame my ninth-grade English teacher, a woman named Sheila Spicer. And when I was in ninth grade, Miss Spicer changed my life with three words. She said to me, "You can write." And I was like, "Well, everyone can write," and she said, "No, no, no, you know what you're doing." And she tried to put me in the honors class, I had some sort of conflict. She said, "Here's what we're gonna do. You're gonna sit in the corner for the entire year, ignore everything I do on the blackboard, ignore every homework assignment I give. You're gonna do the honors work instead." And what she was really saying to me was, "You're gonna thank me later."

And, sure enough, a decade later, I went back to her classroom when my first book was published. I knocked on the door, she said, "Can I help you?" I said, "My name is Brad Meltzer. I wrote this book, and it's for you." And she started crying. And I said, "Why are you crying?" And she said, "You know, I was gonna retire this year because I didn't think I was having an impact anymore." And I said, "Are you kidding me?" I said, "You have 30 students. We have one teacher." And Miss Sheila Spicer, God bless her, changed my life and was the first person who ever told me, "You can write." We all know that first person who tells you you're good at something, you never forget that. And so, that was really, I think the first reason why I started on that path.

Sam: Brad, as you're well aware, the Barbara Bush Foundation works to provide access to literacy, believing that the ability to read, write, and comprehend is the key to transforming lives. You have been active in your

support of the foundation throughout the years. What does reading mean to you?

Brad: For me, listen, it's very easy for any writer to come on here and be like, "Well, I want someone to read." I have a vested interest in wanting people to read, but the reality was is reading changed my life. I didn't grow up in a house of books. In fact, there were no books in my house. The only things that my parents read was my mother used to read *The Star* and *The Inquirer* because she thought that's where all the real news comes first, and my dad read the sports page. There were no books in my house, not a single one that I can remember.

But my grandmother had this magical object that's more powerful than Harry Potter's wand. She had a library card. We didn't have money growing up, but she had this library card. I remember her taking me to the public library and saying to the librarian, "Can you find something for him?" And the librarian took me into this room and she said, "This is your section." And I literally thought she meant, "All these books are yours," and I treated it like that. But that introduction...I've tried to track down that librarian. I actually went back to the library, tried to track her down because I didn't know her name, but that woman changed my life.

And the single act of giving me books made the world bigger. It gave me my best new friends, Judy Blume and Agatha Christie, but it also let me see parts of the world I never saw before. Agatha Christie took me to the UK to go to see Great British, you know, universe. Suddenly, I started finding things that I never, ever thought of visiting, much less that they even existed. So, for me, reading changed my life. It made the world bigger than it ever was.

When I was a volunteer for Big Brothers, they used to say, "If you teach a kid to hit a single, they'll hit a single. But if you teach them to aim for the fences, they'll hit a home run." And books were, for me, someone saying, "Hit the home run," because they moved the whole fence from a single, it went all the way to the outfield. And in honor of your grandfather, I feel like I gotta do a sports analogy. But, as I said, when you change someone's life like that, it's amazing how powerful a book is. Because the most powerful thing in the whole world is an idea, and what's a book but a collection of ideas? So, how could you not put that in more people's hands and expect anything less than the whole world changing from it?

Sam: Why did you keep coming back to the Barbara Bush Foundation? Was it your connection with Barbara and George, was it kind of learning about the organization, or was it all of the above?

Brad: It definitely was all of the above. I mean, first and foremost, everyone that works for the Barbara Bush Foundation Family Literacy, I mean, every person I met from the PR people to the people who run it to everyone in between were obviously amazingly wonderful people who cared about it. Let's be honest, George and Barbara Bush did not have to do that event all those years. They could've just had some peace and some quiet and said, "Let me go play golf, and let me go on my boat, and let me just read." The last thing they needed was to go out, and do a line, and shake the hands, and take the pictures. That's a giant headache for them. I know it's not...but they did it every year. Why?

They could've met us without doing that. They didn't need to meet authors. They could meet anybody they want. But they did it because they were putting good into the universe. And, every time, they ask me. Every time that I could make it, I was there. I think I'm one of the...I think there's, like, two or three now, authors who have done every single event, and I'm one of them. And it wasn't because, like, I needed the free flight. The truth is I had kids and I didn't wanna travel that much, but I said, "These are people committed to an important task, and they're doing it really well, and they're doing it efficiently. I will always be there."

And then, beyond that, this friendship, what I loved about President and Mrs. Bush, when my mom died from breast cancer, I never get to tell this story, but one of the last great memories I had was bringing her to meet the President and First Lady. My mom, before she was sick years ago, when the big bookstore Borders was still around, the head of sales of Borders said to me, "Guess where your books sell more than anywhere else. Straight sales, not every per capita." And I said, "I don't know. New York City, 8 million people in one place." He said, "Nope." I said, "Washington, D.C. I write thrillers set in D.C." Nope. The number one place where my book sold was the Boca Raton Florida borders, one mile from the furniture store where my mother used to work, and that means my mother single-handedly beat 8 million New Yorkers. And Mrs. Bush, God bless her, never forgot that story. I told her one time at the beginning of my career back in, like, 2003 or 2004, and every time I would see her, she'd say, "How's your mother?"

And every time when... She knew my mom was sick. I brought her to meet them finally. Because my mom never traveled with me to all the different ones, but when they did the one in Naples, I brought my mom. And I will never forget Mrs. Bush, how kind she was, how much time she took. I can't tell you a dozen times before that just get us through the receiving line. I never wanna bother them. I was like, "I'm not taking pictures anymore. I'm done." I just wanted them to have a shorter night because they were getting older and they were tired. She spent so much time talking to my mother. And even when my mom died, she was like, "I still think of your mother and that story about her selling books for you." And I think that the reason I was always bonded to Mrs. Bush, especially, was she knew the power of a strong mother. She understood that inherently. And how could I not go back to see someone who reminded me of some of those great memories?

Sam: Well, I wanna dig in a little bit deeper because you and my grandmother kinda became a comedy duo at times with all of your videos you'd make. And I remember I was doing some research before talking to you and I rewatched a video with my Ganny reading your book, "I Am Lucille Ball." And I couldn't stop laughing at your re-enactment of the famous chocolate conveyor belt scene from "I Love Lucy." Not to mention, you were dressed as Lucille Ball yourself. Many thought she would be dressed as Lucille Ball, but, no, you took that on. Believe me, I recognized the look she gave you when the chocolates kept going in. I may have gotten that a time or two over the years, maybe insert tacos or whatever we were having at the time. Do you have any other favorite memories with my grandmother? Because I know you guys were hilarious.

Brad: Well, I know, first of all, the real question you're asking is how the hell did that happen, right? I mean, how did I wind up in drag in your grandfather's office with your grandmother eating a thousand chocolates? I mean, go put in Brad Meltzer, Barbara Bush, "I Love Lucy" or chocolate conveyor belt. Put it into YouTube.

Sam: You will not be disappointed.

Brad: We recreated the conveyor belt. And the reason we did it is we wanted to do...again, for literacy, we wanted to make a fun video that would get kids interested in literacy, and we had just done "I Love Lucy." And your grandmother had said, oh, she was a fan of Lucille Ball, and I said, you know, "Why don't we read it together? And then we can give it to kids, and they'll always have this video of you reading this book." She was like, "Great." And then I had this idea, I said, "Well, why don't we recreate the chocolate conveyor

belt scene?" And I said to the staff, my favorite Jean Becker who I love and adore, I said, "Why don't we recreate it and we'll eat all the chocolates? And I'm not gonna bother her to dress up. I'll take care of all of it. She just has to sit there and kind of make fun of me and make fun of the fact that I'm a dope." And she was like, "That's fantastic. Let's do it." So, I'm like, "Okay."

I was there for one of the literacy events in Houston, and the event's over, Mrs. Bush and I are going back to the office. And we're in the car, and we're sitting in the car together. I remember her asking me about my mom, and then she said to me, "So, Brad, what are we doing again right now?" And I realized that either she'd forgotten or no one had told her, and now it was up to me to say to her with a straight face, "Well, I'm gonna dress and drag like Lucille Ball in a red wig, and I'm gonna eat a thousand chocolates in your office and you're gonna make fun of me."

And the funniest part of the whole video is that we did all of it in one take. You can hear Jean and everyone laughing so hard in the background. You can hear them. I'm doing everything I can to not burst into laughter. She's the best straight man in all of comedy that ever existed. She said, "What do I do?" I said, "Just look horribly at me." I said at one point, "We're a team. We're like Tina Fey and Amy Poehler. We're like," and I said at one point, "Hilary and Donald Trump," and she gave me this spectacular look that was so good. I'm like, "Okay, maybe not that," you know? And it is, to this day, one of the things that so many people come up and ask me about. I love her for it. I love her because she had that open sense of humor to always never take herself so seriously.

And what I loved about her was the same thing I loved about my own mom. Whether you were the janitor or you were the Queen of England, she treated you the same, and I respect that. They meet the most amazing people in the world, and we have a saying in my family that if you're nice to me and you're a jerk to the waiter, you're a jerk. And I love that they were always nice to everyone. That's what my mother taught me, that always rang true. So, we just always had fun with that, just willing to laugh at ourselves and never take ourselves that seriously.

Sam: Brad, this podcast is based on the legacy of service left behind by my grandparents. Part of my grandfather's legacy is the Points of Light foundation. For those that don't know, it's rooted in the idea that one person's act of service has the potential to change the world. And, Brad, this got me thinking about a series of books that you've written, a children's series to be exact, "Ordinary

People Change the World," where you write about historical heroes beginning with their childhoods and showing them as individuals before they were considered famous. So, I have to ask, Brad, what inspired you to write these books?

Brad: It was my own kids. It's interesting because I was tired of my kids looking at people who are famous and thinking that's a hero. And I thought, you know, I have so many better heroes I can give them from the work I do in history. And I wanna give them heroes of decency, and heroes of kindness, and heroes of compassion. I went to my daughter and I said, "You know what? Here's Amelia Earhart. She's amazing. She flew across the Atlantic Ocean." And my daughter said to me, "Big deal, Dad. Everyone flies across the Atlantic today." She was not impressed at all, unimpressed.

And then I told her the true story that when Amelia Earhart was 7 years old, she built a homemade roller coaster in her backyard. She took a wooden crate, she put roller skating wheels in the bottom. She shoved it all the way to the roof of her tool shed, put two giant pieces of wood down the side, gets into this crate on the roller skating wheels, comes flying down the side, crashes, you know, gets back up again, says, "That was amazing," or whatever she yells at the moment, and that was the first moment Amelia Earhart ever flew. She was 7 years old. She said that feeling she had when her stomach bottomed out from under her, she wanted that feeling back again. And when I told that story to my daughter, she was listening.

So, we started this whole series, "Ordinary People Change the World" series, because it's my core belief. I don't care what school you went to, I don't care how much money you make. I believe in ordinary people and their ability to affect change in this world. So, we started with "I Am Amelia Earhart." We did Abraham Lincoln, we did "I Am Rosa Parks," and Albert Einstein, Jackie Robinson for my son who loves sports. It's like you wanna...forget millionaire athletes, meet Jackie Robinson. And we did "I Am Lucille Ball," as you heard, and Jane Goodall, and Helen Keller, and amazing heroes.

But this amazing thing happened, Sam. When the 2016 election was happening, as Hilary and Donald Trump were screaming at each other every night on television, two of our books started selling more than any others, and they were "I Am Martin Luther King, Jr." and "I Am George Washington." And it wasn't a Democrat or Republican thing, it was that parents and grandparents on both sides were tired of turning on the TV and seeing politicians. What they wanted to show their kids were leaders. And we all know, especially in your family,

right, there's a huge difference between a politician and a leader. Your grandfather was a leader.

I love the fact that people use our "Ordinary People Change the World" books, the I Am series, to fight back against the cynicism that is currently in American politics, and it always stood for that. It was that Point of Light idea, right, is that none of those books and none of those heroes are about what's being famous, but it was about just doing good and helping another person. That's why we always start with them when they're kids to show them. We make this great mistake, I think, Sam, with our heroes today is we put them up on pedestals and we build these grand statues to them, and then we do them a huge disservice because they're not human beings anymore.

And what I love about this podcast is you're taking your family from the history books and you're bringing them back to life. You're telling real stories with people who knew them and they become human beings again. Everyone we've spoken about today, whether it's Lucille Ball, or Amelia Earhart, or Abraham Lincoln, or George Washington, or President George H. W. Bush, all had moments where they were scared, and they were terrified, and they didn't know if they could go on. But they all can go on. They all did, and they all chose to. If we remind people of that, then these aren't the stories of famous people, this is what we're all capable of on our very best days.

Sam: It's an incredible way to learn about leaders, and it's great for kids.

Brad: I got some Barbara and George Bush ones that eventually are on our list to do, too.

Sam: I didn't wanna mention...I don't wanna put the pressure on you.

Brad: No, trust me, I've been for years. I mean, they're on the list. The hard part is we still haven't done, like, Nelson Mandela. Like, the list is so big, but, trust me, they're on our list for always. When I did "Heroes for My Son" and "Heroes for My Daughter," President Bush is in there. He was really nice to help me correct and work on it, which was really kind of him.

Sam: Brad, after my grandmother passed away and my grandfather was alone for the first time in 70-plus years, we'd have friends, and family, and authors read to him to keep him company. I know you'd made a trip to Kennebunkport to read to him one day. I was hoping you could share that experience with us.

Brad: Yeah. So, in those last months of his life, they were bringing in what they were calling his favorite authors to come read to him, and they said, "We want you to come." And I always have this reaction I can't help, but when your grandmother or Mrs. Bush turned 90 years old, again she took her birthday... She's 90 years old, she doesn't need this headache anymore, right? Just have a nice birthday and blow the candles out. And she turned her 90th birthday into a fundraiser for literacy, and, of course, I was there for it. I would not miss it. And I remember she said, you know, "We're gonna get all these authors to come in and they're gonna answer..." I said to her, "Who are you gonna get? That's awesome. Who are you gonna get?" And she's like, "Dummy, it's you." And I was like, "Oh, okay."

So, anytime they would ask me to do these things, I'm always like, "Why me?" I can't help it, from the moment I got that first letter we spoke about. And so, they said, "We want you to come and read for the President," and I thought, "I'd be honored to do it, of course." And they warned me, they said, "He's only gonna be awake for about 5 or 10 minutes. He's just sleeping a lot of the day. But you'll spend 5 or 10 minutes. It'll be great, and he'll really appreciate it." I said, "Yeah, I'll be there for five seconds and I'd be honored to do it."

So, we're in Kennebunkport, and we go into the room, and the Secret Service leave. I know this is the end, right? I know he's at the end of his life. And, at that point, it's myself and my wife, it's President Bush and his service dog, Sully. On his desk is a stack of half a dozen books that people were reading to him. In that stack, I can see a copy of the book "The First Conspiracy" that I wrote about the secret plot to kill George Washington, a non-fiction book. And I said to him, I brought my own copy and I said, "Sir, do you wanna read this book?" And he says to me, "Uh-huh," because at that point, he couldn't even speak anymore. He was going, "Uh-huh," or, "Uh-uh."

And so, I brought a particular chapter to read, and the chapter that I wanted to read to him was the moment where George Washington, for the very first time, has the Declaration of Independence read to his troops, has it presented for the first time to them. And I'm 5 minutes, 10 minutes into the chapter, and, sure enough, President Bush falls asleep. And I'm just like, "Great. This is spectacular. I'm gonna just finish the chapter and we're gonna get outta here because I just wanna make sure he's actually asleep." And I get to those words, those words we all know, "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal." And in that moment, President Bush's eyes pop open wide awake, and he locks on me like a laser, as if it's like he's gotten an infusion of

the Declaration itself is running through his veins. He's Captain America in that moment. He's wide awake.

So, I say, "Sir, you wanna read another chapter?" "Mm-hmm." I get to the end of that chapter. "Sir, you wanna read another chapter?" "Mm-hmm." And another, and I just keep reading. And instead of being there for 5 or 10 minutes, I'm there for an hour, which is incredible to me. And after the hour, I, of course, say goodbye. I know I'm never gonna see him again. I can tell just the shape he's in, I know. I buried both my parents. I know I'm never gonna see him again. And I got to shake his hand and whispered to him and say thank you for everything he's done for me for all these years.

And I remember we went to his funeral. The word that I remember everyone using at his funeral when we were all talking amongst ourselves and even, obviously, the presenters who were talking, this one word kept coming up and over and over, and it was this word, decency. And, yes, it was because he was such a decent man, but I also know it was because as a culture right now, we're starving for decency from our leaders, starving for it, especially these past four years. We're starving. And I love the fact that your grandfather stood for that for so many people, and I owe him forever for that because, to me, that's what George Washington stood for. So, here I was reading about the first president to, at that point, the oldest living president in the United States. It was one of the most humbling, amazing moments of my entire life. I owe him forever for it.

Sam: Well, thank you for sharing that story with us and all your stories, Brad. I feel like we could go on forever because you have such a great relationship with both of my grandparents. And we tie in the literacy and we could talk forever, but I wanna end with this question and, again, say thank you for your time. Listening to this conversation and hearing interviews you've done before, I have to say that a lot of what you do and a lot of the passion that you have for literacy and service seems to fall in line with my grandparents' ethos. Was there something you learned from your friendships with them that inspired you to serve in all the ways that you do today?

Brad: You know, I've met every president from your grandfather to the current. Everyone in between, I know them all. I've met them all, some have read the books, some have invited me to the White House, but I had a relationship with your grandparents I didn't have with anyone else. And, listen, we all wanna have our connections to amazing people, but my connection with them was

different. It wasn't about who they were, it was about something that they stood for.

I mean, our friendship is so unlikely. It makes no sense, right? I'm so much younger and, you know, they had so much more hair than I did, so nothing made sense, right? But we could laugh and we had the same kinda sense of humor. I remember Mrs. Bush going...she wrote in one of her books that she went into a Barnes & Noble, and she's like, "I was looking for Brad Meltzer book and I went to the clerk, and someone said, 'You know, you look a lot like Barbara Bush.'" And, you know, she would just, like, laugh at it. She wouldn't be like, "Oh, great, let me sign you an autograph," she was like, "Yeah, but I'm better-looking." Or, you know, she was just...I forget even what the joke was, but I appreciated how they saw the world.

And I appreciated one of the most important things, again, for me, personally, that I know was so important to them, it's something your grandmother told me once, and she said to me... She knew when I had kids, and I actually found the letter today that she wrote me when my kids were born. And she gave me advice that I'll never forget where she said to me, "Read to your kids." And she said, "It doesn't matter what book you read. They'll never remember the book, but what they will remember is sitting on your lap and your arms around them. And that moment and that time you have together, they'll never forget."

And I took that advice to heart raising my children. My son who was born when I met them is now in college. That's how long our friendship lasted. But I took that to heart with my three kids, and I think it says everything about them. It says that you have to do good. It says the power of literacy, but it also talks about being a good parent and putting your kids first and foremost. And whatever else they did, I felt like they were always trying to do that no matter how big and distractive things can get. And of course they did because of the jobs they had, but when they talked about their family, that's when they would light up, and that's when I would light up when I talk about my family. So, I owe them forever for that advice. It was some of the best advice I got as a parent.

Sam: Well, Brad, thank you so much for coming on "All the Best." It really means the most to us that you shared all of these amazing stories and you're continuing to kind of push on their legacy in your own way. Thanks for being here.

Brad: Oh, thank you so much for having me. And you know I'm gonna continue to tell their stories. That is how you live forever.

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.