



GEORGE H.W. BUSH

A life of public service

*Ellen Warren reminisces
about a remarkable career*

Ellen Warren was a reporter at The Daily News and later a Tribune senior correspondent and a White House correspondent during the presidency of George H.W. Bush. She covered his campaigns from 1980 until he lost his bid for re-election in 1992. Here she offers her memories of Bush the man.

By Ellen Warren *Chicago Tribune, Dec. 1, 2018*

The ones who knew him best use words like “decent,” “caring,” “patriotic.” Former President George H.W. Bush, who died Nov. 30 at 94, was a good man.

He stood on the U.S. Capitol steps on his inauguration day and said his purpose, America’s purpose, “is to make kinder the face of the nation and gentler the face of the world.” He meant it.

He was sentimental, loving, brave. His wife, Barbara, once told me that her husband didn’t get the credit he deserved for being “caring and sensitive and funny.” She was right.

For many years I traveled the country and the world covering Bush, and that proximity gave me a sense of the 41st president that others might not have seen from afar. In hindsight, his virtues, his sense of duty, bipartisanship and, yes, even his respect for the journalists who covered him, seem charmingly old-fashioned—and passe.

From Day One, as he strolled the White House lawn with his big family, it was clear he just loved being president. After eight long years in enforced vice presidential obscurity, Bush’s move to 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. in 1989 couldn’t have been sweeter.

Mind you, he was good-natured about his understudy job. “You die, I fly,” he’d joke about all the dignitaries’ funerals he’d attend as the expendable No. 2.



Five former presidents—Jimmy Carter, George H.W. Bush, Barack Obama, George W. Bush and Bill Clinton—at a hurricane relief concert at College Station, Texas, Oct. 21, 2017. *Chicago Tribune*

Much of his adult life was spent in elected or appointed public office so his list of friends was mammoth. He and Barbara kept a fabled Christmas card list accumulated over decades, and his friendships were tight and enduring.

Many of those friends stopped by to see the vice president when they were in Washington. They'd sit in his office and gab with their pal. Bush would open a bottom drawer in his desk, stacked high with his trinkets—boxes and boxes of vice presidential tie clasps. He'd reach in, grab a few and toss them to his visitors. They'd scramble to catch them midair.

When he became president, the gift store expanded. You'd often see him turn to his aide for a presidential penknife or a stickpin to give away. He once fished around in his pocket to find a tie clip to affix to the Army-issue pajamas of a wounded soldier he visited in Texas on a New Year's Day long ago.

As for his wife's assessment that he was "caring and sensitive and funny," there was ample evidence of all three.

Sensitive: Well-known in his family as a crier, Bush fretted he'd get teary in public. So, he'd usually have his wife along when he'd visit hospitals or children with disabilities, letting her handle the hard part. It wasn't a surefire solution. When the Bushes visited the bedsides of wounded soldiers at Fort Sam Houston, I saw his eyes fill with tears after he turned to leave.

Caring? When Bush got word in the early 1990s that Jerome Watson, the respected Washington bureau chief for the *Chicago Sun-Times*, was very ill, Bush called me at my desk at the *Tribune* to ask for Jerry's phone number. He was offering to use the considerable Bush clout for a consultation with some of the country's best oncologists at Houston's MD Anderson Cancer Center. Then Bush called Jerry to tell him how much he respected his journalism. In today's bitter climate when the president denigrates the press daily, sometimes hourly, that seems almost unimaginable.



Vice President George H.W. Bush holds five-year-old Rafael Thompson as they march with Mayor Harold Washington and Barbara Bush at Chicago's Columbus Day parade in October 1986. *Chicago Tribune*

Bush was funny—in his own way. He was not a natural storyteller like Ronald Reagan or Bill Clinton, but he had a sense of humor, often at his own expense. He picked up comic Dana Carvey's signature line from his Bush imitation on "Saturday Night Live"—"wouldn't be prudent"—and mocked himself. Carvey even got an invitation to a sleepover at the Bush White House.

Bush liked to tell corny jokes: "Did you hear the one about the duck that went into the bar? Bartender looked at the duck and said, 'Your pants are down.'" On a campaign trip in 1992, he told the joke to the folks at the Waffle House in Spartanburg, S.C. When they looked at him, puzzled, the Most Powerful Man on Earth gamely explained: Ducks? Covered in down? Get it?

Presidential perks include lots of gear, gizmos and electronics, and Bush reveled in them. His limo had a loudspeaker—he called it "Mr. Microphone"—and he'd gleefully issue orders to his grandkids (and errant reporters) from his talking car.

In the family living quarters on the second floor of the White House, Bush's study had five televisions, 11 remotes and the mother of all remotes, one the size of a paperback book. Barbara Bush once held it aloft and pronounced, "This is why wives leave their husbands."

Bush was a prep—Andover, Yale—from a prominent, wealthy New England family. Unlike many ego-heavy politicians with his background, he never thought he had hit a triple. He knew he'd been born on third base.

Despite the elite upbringing, he didn't like what he viewed as the more effete world of sailing. His preference was his cigarette boat, *Fidelity*. Manning the throttle, Bush took a special thrill in making a ride along the harsh Maine coast a test of courage for his passengers who had to hold on for dear life as ocean spray whipped their faces.

Bush's mom, Dorothy, had drilled in him from boyhood that it was impolite to be boastful. That kind of

modesty is a handicap for any politician. Having trouble bragging about himself was one reason he was a lousy campaigner. Another was that he often would get lost on the way to the end of a sentence. He was renowned for garbled syntax and stepping on his applause lines.

It was during the 1988 presidential primary in New Hampshire when I saw firsthand how a man of good manners gives someone the finger. Looking around to make sure there were no cameras, Bush opened his suit jacket to shield his hand from all but a small group of reporters, then playfully flipped them off.

The presidency gave Bush the perfect place to throw a party, and he and his feisty wife entertained frantically. There was a gathering of some sort almost nightly at the White House or the presidential retreat, Camp David.

Bush didn't fully retire until the end, before illness forced him into a wheelchair. He would put on a starched shirt, a tie and a navy blazer about once a month, sit in front of a camera crew at his Maine home and tape various public-service spots for good causes that asked for his support.

He looked presidential—from the waist up. Out of camera range, he wore khaki shorts and moccasins so he could quickly hustle over to his boat or to the golf course where he would play 18 holes so fast it came to be known as aerobic golf.

In Washington, Maine and his final home in Houston, Bush was never happier than when surrounded by family—his five children, their spouses, 17 grandchildren (they called him “Gampy”) and eight great-grandchildren.

George Herbert Walker Bush was a good and decent man with a ferocious love of family who served his country with unvarnished patriotism and felt privileged to lead his remarkable life.



Ellen leads Bush, Lee Atwater and two Secret Service agents on a run in a photo that appeared on the cover of Sports Magazine. The president autographed the page for Ellen.

‘Hello, Ellen, it's George Bush. Wanna go on a boat ride?’

The ever intrepid Ellen Warren adds this personal recollection from a decade after George H.W. Bush's presidency:

It was the summer of 2003 and the Tribune was putting together a keepsake book and CD on Pope John Paul II. They were trying to get famous people who had interacted with the Pope—no matter how slightly—to appear on the CD video. One of those people was President Bush 41.

Whoever was in charge had given the chore of wrangling the president to somebody in the Washington bureau who had been unsuccessful. So at some point somebody remembered that before I came to the Trib, I too had been a White House reporter covering the senior Bush. So, in desperation, they gave me the assignment.

I called his flack, who turned me down promptly. Undeterred, I wrote a personal letter to the president saying, in part, “I can’t believe you’re screwing me out of a trip to Maine in August.” I immediately got the presidential OK to come to his house on Walker’s Point to interview him on video.

I took my son, then 21-year-old Ted Nelson, along as an “assistant” and we flew to Maine (a few days early, of course, for Tribune-funded preparation time—and a couple of lobster dinners. We showed up at the appointed time. Bush had his own camera crew (to do some public service announcements). And I quickly dispatched my assignment by lobbing a couple of inane softball questions about the Pope.

Then the president insisted on giving us a tour of the grounds and buildings. That took most of the rest of the day. We spent time in the house with Mrs. Bush, plus seeing every building on the estate including his well-stocked fishing “shack” and the gym. There, hanging over the treadmill, was a photo of the 70-plus-year-old Bush, shirtless in a Speedo on the yacht of a friend in the Greek Isles. Not his best look.

We ran into his former national security adviser Brent Scowcroft, tootling around on a golf cart at the Bush compound. And we took rides on a pair of Segways—one of which son and future President George W. had fallen from that summer, making quite a news story at the time.

Bush Sr. said he was sorry he couldn’t take us out on his boat, which was in the shop but was to be fixed and returned the following day. No problem, said I. We’ll stick around.

The following morning, the phone rang in my darkened room at a lovely downtown Kennebunkport Inn. I stumbled around and picked up the receiver: “Hello, Ellen, it’s George Bush. Wanna go on a boat ride? I’m on the way to give a speech, so come by the house at 11.”

I quickly ran down to the lobby to get a cup of coffee where the woman at the desk was agog. Bush had called me from the front desk en route to his speech. She couldn’t believe that the former president had just walked through her lobby to call me. And suddenly she came to think that I was a lot more important than she’d given me credit for. The coffee was on the house.



Bush and Ellen in a chummy moment.

Pat Somers Cronin, writer and columnist

By Graydon Megan *Chicago Tribune, Dec. 4, 2018*

Pat Somers Cronin crafted advertising copy and wrote stories for the Chicago Daily News during a lifetime of writing that also included 20 years as a columnist for the Beverly Review on Chicago’s Southwest Side.

The mother of 10, she was staunchly anti-abortion and wrote book reviews and commentary for the Catholic Press and other publications. She often described herself as being “addicted to the printed word,” said her daughter Sheila Cronin, a novelist.

A graduate of what is now Dominican University in River Forest, Cronin was honored in 2003 with the school’s Caritas Veritas Award, for a life reflecting the school’s motto: A search for truth through charity or service.

“Pat Cronin was smart and forthright, a feminist, with a graceful disposition,” university president Donna M. Carroll said in an email. “She was a great observer of people and situations and, as a journalist, she had the ability to weave a story with accuracy, empathy and good humor while remaining committed to the integrity of her words.”

Cronin, 91, died of natural causes Nov. 14 in Smith Village in the Beverly neighborhood of Chicago, according to her son Michael. Cronin moved to Smith Village four or five years ago from the Beverly home where she lived for 50 years, but if asked would always say she was from South Shore, the neighborhood where she was born and grew up.

After attending the since closed St. Xavier Academy in Chicago for high school, the former Pat Somers went to Rosary College, now Dominican. In a summer high school program in Quebec, she learned to speak fluent French, a skill she never lost.

She later received a master’s degree in English language and literature from the University of Chicago, “amazingly, while raising 10 children,” her son said.

After finishing college, she worked as a copywriter for companies including Marshall Field’s and Sears, and also for the advertising agency then known as Young & Rubicam. It was during this time that she also wrote for the Daily News, according to her family. [According to the Beverly Review obit, she was one of the first five copy girls for the Daily News and also worked on the city desk.]

In 1957, she married James Cronin Sr., a widower with four children. Later in her life, she played a role in raising the children of her daughter Ellyn Rose Cronin, who died of cancer in 2004.

Sheila Cronin said her mother went into marriage not knowing how to cook. But she attacked cooking and baking as she did the learning of other skills. “She conquered both,” her daughter said, adding that her mother’s parties were legendary not only for the fun but for the food.

She continued to write and publish after her marriage.

“A story of hers critical of Catholic grade schools was published in America magazine in 1957 and went national that summer when Time magazine reprinted it,” her daughter said in an email. “It caused quite a stir.”

Her non-fiction story of losing a baby shortly after birth, “God Knows Best,” was published in a 1960 anthology, her family said.

Cronin was also a columnist for the Beverly Review for about 20 years, writing “The View from the Hill” beginning in the late 1970s, according to Bob Olszewski, the paper’s general manager. The column highlighted local events and people, Olszewski said. After the column ended, Cronin continued to do freelance features for the paper and submitted letters and opinion pieces.

“She was just so intelligent, articulate and gracious,” Olszewski said. “She brightened up the office ... everybody loved her.”

Her husband died in 1990.

Survivors include three other daughters, Patricia Snead, Emily Chaveriat and Mary Ann; four other sons, John, Walter, Joseph and James Jr.; 33 grandchildren; and 15 great-grandchildren.

Memorials in Cronin’s name may be sent to Dominican University Scholarship Fund, 7900 W. Division St., River Forest, IL 60305.



Pat Somers Cronin

News and comments from our alums

We'll start off our annual spate of holiday newsletters and greetings with these contributions from your editors, Henry Kisor and Jack Schnedler. Be sure to send yours to Henry at hkisor@gmail.com or 2951 Central St., Apt. 305, Evanston IL 60201, and we'll run them in then February issue.



The year 2018 will go down in history as still another era of astonishing overachievement for the Kisors.

Henry's great feat was recovering from ten hours of spinal surgery in May. And, oh yes, his book on traveling with service dogs (written with co-author Chris Goodier) was accepted by the University of Illinois Press and is to be published August 15, 2019.

The highlight of Debby's year was marching in the No One Is Above the Law protest in Alexandria, Va., in November. She swam in icy Lake Superior and survived. And she produced intricate needlepoint smartphone cases on an industrial scale.

As for Trooper, he added a friendly but clawsome pawshake to his service-dog repertoire, which also includes alerting Henry to door knockers, telephones, and the call of his name to do the dishes. Many treats were expended afloat.

All three Kisors visited St. Paul, Minn., in August to pitch Trooper's alma mater, Dogs for Better Lives (formerly Dogs for the Deaf) as well as the upcoming book at the annual convention of the Say What Club.

There was another cruise, this one in March from Fort Lauderdale to San Diego through the Panama Canal (our second transit), during which Trooper stayed on his best behavior and refrained from stealing pies from passing dessert carts. (That's us in the photo at right, at the Aviario Nacional de Colombia outside Cartagena with a veterinary student assigned to keep us out of trouble.)





From **Marcia** and **Jack Schnedler**: Berney (top) and Hali, now more than a year old, showed last year at Christmas that they recognize wrapping paper as the best feature of a gift package. They are our latest cats—following in the cat’s-paw steps of fondly remembered Milo, Spot, Agatha, Bernie, Delilah and Clio. Berney and Hali bid fair to outlive their owners (aka servants).

A feline footnote: One of the kindest deeds anyone has done for Marcia and Jack came in 1976, when the Schnedlers were going overseas for the better part of a year. Martha Groves was gracious enough to keep cats Spot and Agatha in our absence—and more remarkably generous to return them when we got back to Chicago after pattering around the world.



Abe Peck (pictured with another volunteer) recently cleared brush and dug out culverts with the Santa Barbara Bucket Brigade.

"In January," he explains, "the Montecito, Calif., debris flow killed 23, destroyed 100 homes and damaged 300 more. Since then, our Bucket Brigade has fielded 3,000 'second responders' to clean boulders, muck out homes and search for the still missing. Our amiable group lived up to the Brigade's motto—'Moving Mountains One Bucket at a Time.' We were undaunted when dogs flushed a rattlesnake. Community at its finest."

From **Bob Signer**, *metropolitan editor of the Daily News when it closed and who began his work at the newspaper as a copy editor on the midnight shift:*

The story [December issue] about the Blue Streak crew [from 1959] was very evocative for this old Blue Streaker (for my first three years plus a later, shorter stint).

Somewhat surprisingly, there was much I didn't know. Perhaps there was so little chatter back then about anything, let alone the past. Getting the edition published was what we talked about, if anything.

On another matter, it's possible that there's a tiny error in Val Lauder's long and lively article [about the old Daily News Building] in the November issue.

She mentioned a city editor of the Al Capone era named "Roger Craig." Roger Craig was a well-known National League pitcher, notably during the early years of the New York Mets.

Robert Casey, in *Such Interesting People*, paid tribute to a city editor of that era named John Craig. Casey had a little chapter titled "How to Run a Bedlam" devoted to Craig, whom he described as "the best I've ever known." Writing about Craig, Casey quoted Ralph Waldo Emerson's line that "every institution is the lengthening shadow of one man."

From **Myron Beckenstein**: What a tremendous issue [December]. So many great facts and remembrances. But the account of the size of the Record's foreign staff seems beyond belief. [The Chicago Record, a morning edition of the Daily News in the 1890s, fielded 123 staff correspondents, 72 of them in Europe and the rest scattered among Asia, Africa, Australia and New Zealand, South America, the West Indies, Canada and Mexico.]

From **Jerry Ackerman**, our old competitor at the American: I just read the Henry Blanchard reprint plus 20th Century update [December issue] from slug line to -30-. That's a fine way to spend a Saturday morning. Thanks!

(Footnote: the Boston Globe eschewed the "-30-" in favor of "4m", signifying a four-em dash that would mark the end piece of a galley. Copy filed by takes would close each page with "7m"—for a seven-em dash which would signal the makeup crew there was more TK. The practice continued as typesetting moved from lead to Atex, but with the move to Windows-based technology eventually, like MacArthur, quietly faded away.

From **Jack Wilkinson** in Costa Rica, getting ready for Halloween and pumpkin pie:

This from my wife Janet Ward: 'We will be cooking a traditional Thanksgiving dinner for anyone who wants to join us. Come enjoy turkey, mashed potatoes and all the fixins', and watch some football.'

Is this a great world, or what? Thanksgiving in Costa Rica. What a concept, huh? So what am I doing? Watching the Yale-Harvard game.

Yup, I still love sports.



The CDN Newsletter was created, edited and published by Margaret Whitesides from shortly after the closing of The Daily News in March 1978 until her death in August 2002. Bob and Marge Herguth kept the flag flying for the next 11 years until passing the gonfalon to Jack Schnedler and Henry Kisor.