



American Conversation

BARBARA BUSH

Family and Friends in a Public Life

January 25, 2008

Archivist of the United States Allen Weinstein welcomes former First Lady Barbara Pierce Bush in an American Conversation. Since leaving the White House in 1993, Mrs. Bush has continued to serve others with tireless energy and good humor. She has supported many causes and authored several books—including the best-selling *Millie's Book*, whose profits benefited the literacy cause. Her most recent book, *Reflections*, documents her life after the White House.

American Conversations is a series of informal conversations between the Archivist and people who've shaped the dialogue about the interpretation and use of American heritage.

ALLEN WEINSTEIN: Good day, ladies and gentlemen.

Welcome to The National Archives. I'm Allen Weinstein. I'm the Archivist of the United States and it's a great privilege to be here tonight with our special guest but first, a few announcements. The usual one. Please take the cell phones out take the pagers out take anything else that rings out and close it.

[Ding]

Closed. Welcome to the William McGowan Theater at The National Archives and a special thanks to our good friends from C-SPAN who basically make these -- from time to time make these events -- give them a much wider distribution. We're very grateful to you. Um...I'll tell a brief story before we get started because it relates to what we're going to be doing for the next hour. The widow of Calvin Coolidge was making a European trip or so the story alleges. Could be apocryphal. You never know with historians. But in any event, she said she didn't want any fuss made over her. She just wanted to do this very simply and so she traveled around Europe very simply. People didn't know who she was until one time she went into this town and obviously there was some excitement there. People seemed to know they had a special visitor coming. She went into this hotel, and



the staff was lined up hotel manager moved forward toward her and said "I know who you are. You're the First Lady -- was the First Lady of the United States of America and I would like to welcome you to my hotel, Mrs. Lincoln."

[Audience laughing]

Today's different however. Please join me in welcoming to The National Archives for our American Conversation unmistakably, unmistakably Barbara Bush.

BARBARA BUSH: Did you refer to me as Mrs. Lincoln? Did you refer to me as Mrs. Lincoln?

WEINSTEIN: No.

BUSH: No. OK. Thank you. You know, we couldn't hear the introduction. I thought he referred to me as Mrs. Lincoln

[Audience laughing]

I have been -- years ago, I gave the graduation speech at Texas A&M, and a woman wrote me right after that "Great news. You'll love this. I think it will amuse you. I took my granddaughter, and she ran home opened the door, and said to her mother You won't believe this. I saw the mother of the president. I saw George Washington's wife."

[Audience laughing]

WEINSTEIN: Mrs. Bush, if I had referred to you as Mrs. Lincoln or anything but Mrs. Bush, I'd be halfway to Toledo by now. And I was once introduced as the Alchemist of the United States so I know exactly what you're talking about. Let's get to work.

BUSH: OK.

WEINSTEIN: You were raised in a family with a father as a media person.

BUSH: Well, if you think publishing is media person. Well, it used to be media. He was a wonderful man. Next to George Bush, he was the greatest man I ever knew.

WEINSTEIN: Which George Bush?

[Audience laughing]

BUSH: The -- I would say the real George Bush. You figure that out.



[Audience laughing]

WEINSTEIN: I'm not going there.

BUSH: Nor am I.

WEINSTEIN: You went to a school that has some relationship to my life, as well, Smith College.

BUSH: Did I? Your wife went to Smith?

WEINSTEIN: No.

BUSH: Your mother went to Smith?

WEINSTEIN: No.

BUSH: Your sister went to Smith?

WEINSTEIN: No.

BUSH: You worked at Smith?

WEINSTEIN: My former wife went to Smith.

BUSH: I attended Smith College. I'm not going to lie to you. I married George Bush my half a sophomore year.

WEINSTEIN: OK. That's true, and then in the course of a career, one of your books you put out that you moved 29 times before you reached The White House. That's quite a record.

BUSH: I did. I'm a good mover.

WEINSTEIN: I'll bet you are. He goes into the military of course. He's shot down in the Pacific during the Second World War returns, and you move from east to west. There are 4 children -- 5 children, one --

BUSH: 6.

WEINSTEIN: 6 children. One does not make it. How many grandchildren you were telling me?



BUSH: 17.

WEINSTEIN: 17?

BUSH: Mm-hmm.

WEINSTEIN: f I asked you to recite all their names and their birthdays.

BUSH: Easily. I don't want to bore you and I can tell you all about them.

WEINSTEIN: How did you get interested in literacy and where does that come from in your life?

BUSH: Well, when George first ran for president I decided that -- I'd always worked in hospitals as a volunteer, and I love doing that but I decided I ought to pick a project that would not be controversial, that would not really cost the government a lot of money, although we do have the Literacy Act of 1991 thanks to George Bush -- the other one. And I just decided if everybody could read, write and comprehend, so many of our problems, Allen would be solved. I mean, so many of our kids have no one at home to encourage them to read, to get them started to get them reading ready and also so many of them go to school hungry so if they could get into school reading ready and be encouraged by parents and teachers why, then, they would not have to result to dropping out of high school. 30% of our children drop out of high school. That's huge. I mean, it's terrible.

Hello, Wendy.

It's getting worse, not better, or am I wrong? It's terrible, and it's a disgrace that we let that happen. We should be mentoring children, we should be going into the schools and helping the teachers. I read this wonderful thing the other day about a young teacher who'd gone to a school and she was applying for a job and she said sort of, "Now, wait. You want me to teach these children to read you want me to be sure their clothes are appropriate you want me to be sure that they're not abused or abusing you want me to" -- she went through this huge litany of things that people wanted her to do and then she said, "And I can't pray?" That's a little political. Sorry.

WEINSTEIN: Well, on that theme, you've -- according to the statistics that I have -- you've been involved in literacy programs in 44 states.

BUSH: 48.

WEINSTEIN: 48?



BUSH: Mm-hmm. And Guam and the District of Columbia. Mm-hmm.

WEINSTEIN: -OK. Should the government be spending more on literacy?

BUSH: I beg your pardon?

WEINSTEIN: Should the government be spending more on literacy?

BUSH: The government -- it does have a Literacy Act. I don't think they spend -- I honestly feel that that should be done on the local level. I really think that we have to take care of our education on the local level, and I think Houston's trying very hard to do it.

WEINSTEIN: So I should ask that question of your daughter-in-law a former librarian, who happens to be first lady.

BUSH: Yes. Definitely ask her. She's much smarter, too. Yes, she is.

WEINSTEIN: I won't stop to ask you -- perhaps a bit later -- but how interesting it is to have a first lady daughter-in-law.

BUSH: Well, she was a librarian. She's educated.

WEINSTEIN: I see. Unlike yourself?

BUSH: Unlike myself.

WEINSTEIN: What reading do you enjoy yourself? Who are your favorite authors?

BUSH: Reading?

WEINSTEIN: Reading, reading.

BUSH: For my own reading?

WEINSTEIN: Your own reading. Pleasure.

BUSH: Well, this week, I'm -- well, I love Jodi Picoult. I love her books, and I've read a lot of those but I'm reading Elizabeth -- I knew we shouldn't have done this. Gask -- she wrote about 1700. She's sort of a poor man's Jane Austen and I love Jane Austen, so I'm reading a lot of her books and you wouldn't know it because I can't tell you her last name



at this moment but she wrote "North and South." What's her name? Oh, that's all right. You don't read either.

[Audience laughing]

Let me see. She wrote "Mothers and Daughters" and I'm really enjoying her books but I'm a mystery reader because I can relax when I read a good bloody mystery.

WEINSTEIN: I was told that your favorite heroine when you were growing up was Amelia Earhart.

BUSH: Well, I saw her when I was a little girl in Rye, New York, and everybody in Rye was very, very concerned about her. I only saw her once, but everybody was concerned and I remember that was one of the childhood memories I have. The Lincoln -- the Lindbergh kidnapping was another one but those were the news when I was little just the other day.

WEINSTEIN: And the story goes this way that you went into a bookstore because you wanted to buy some more books of your own books for a trip as presents and your asked a clerk if there were any in the back of the store and to your horror, the clerk got on the loudspeaker and announced to everyone in the bookstore and presumably everyone in the neighborhood "Mrs. Bush is here and wants to buy her own book. Do we have any left?"

[Audience laughing]

You were stampeded by customers, and you walked out of the store.

BUSH: That's a true story, and of course, they didn't it was such a popular book.

[Laughter and applause]

But it was humiliating.

WEINSTEIN: I was curious about one rather interesting episode in Mr. Bush's life that you shared. When Lyndon Johnson leaves Washington in 1969 George Bush was the only Republican, you say to have seen him off at Andrews Air Force Base --

BUSH: That's right.

WEINSTEIN: -- and L.B.J. remembered his kindness all of his life. Why?



BUSH: Well, because he—instead of going to the Nixon parade George did that out of respect for a Texas president and because he's that kind of man. George really felt it was—he said the crowd was so small that a small wonder Lyndon saw him but people really weren't very nice about that. We're good to our former presidents but still, I think he needed a push and he was always nice to use later truthfully. We stopped by to see him at the ranch once when George was wanting to ask him about running for the Senate or something or other and we had a hair-raising ride all through that ranch which was fun, with Lady Bird and Lyndon and the thing I sort of remember is I kept thinking "Where are the rocks on this ranch?" Because we just rode roughshod through the hills and there were deer and whatever and he stopped, and suddenly, someone ran up. He said, "What will you have?" "What do you mean?" And I said I'd have bourbon. Never drank bourbon. That's what they had, so I had it, too and then we went shooting off again and he gave George some good advice and told him that he was building his library and he hoped George would come and speak at his library. So 40 years ago -- or was it 400 years ago -

WEINSTEIN: 400 years ago? No. My point is that 40 years ago a generation ago, Republicans spoke to Democrats and Democrats spoke to Republicans outside of their need to do battle in Congress or on the stump, on the trail as we now say.

BUSH: We need that now, and I think that's one reason that when George W. asked his father and Bill Clinton to raise money for the tsunami relief -- I think that sent a huge message across the country. They didn't seem to get it, but I think it sent his message around the world that we are different that we can get together for a good cause and raise money and then they did it again for Katrina and I always -- my boys tease me and they say, "Well, you act like Bill Clinton's your son." And you know what Bill says, don't you? He says, "The Bushes want another president in their family." Not true.

[Audience laughing]

Not true.

WEINSTEIN: Hold your judgments. I happened to be in Houston an evening when the two presidents announced some of the grants they were getting to—because of the money they raised in the tsunami, and as I recall you turned to --

BUSH: Did I turn to whom?

WEINSTEIN: Well, I turned, I think, first to -- they were sitting in the same place. You turned to the two presidents and said "My third son is not here but my other two presidents were here."



BUSH: That's right.

WEINSTEIN: And President Clinton was quite eloquent. He got up and said "Every family needs a prodigal son. Another son. A project." But he then said, "Thanks, Mom."

BUSH: That's what he said, "Thanks, Mom." Mm-hmm. The other boys aren't so crazy about that.

[Audience laughing]

But that's the way we should be. And I think they worked together this week on -- according to the papers, I guess on the financial things and I think we should do that more. Shouldn't be so bitter and so hateful.

WEINSTEIN: Let me just get this straight. George Bush asked Lyndon Johnson for advice on whether he should run again or not.

BUSH: Mm-hmm. Those were earlier days. Well, I think he probably told him "Don't run," but anyway. No. I don't think that. I think they had good times.

WEINSTEIN: Who are the real influences on your life? Who are the people who helped shape your attitudes?

BUSH: My mother-in-law a lot. My father of course and my own mother, but particularly my father. I was much closer to my father and he was the most decent, honorable man I've ever known except for my own husband truthfully. He never hurt people or never, uh - - he had no dark side. He was a wonderful man. And George's mother was -- you should hate her because she played wonderful golf and wonderful tennis, and she could carry the yule logs in. She could do anything and she had 4 daughters-in-law and she acted like she loved us all. I know perfectly well she didn't when she got us but she -- have you ever known anyone who loved you that you didn't love back? So we all adored her. She was great.

WEINSTEIN: That's extraordinary. What is the greatest difference between being wife of a president and mother of a president?

BUSH: There's a huge difference in being wife of the president and mother of the president. It hurts much more if your son's president. My husband would tell you that, too. He's in agony half the time over it and it is -- when you hear people say things that aren't true and are unfair, it really hurts. George W. doesn't watch the press and he'll call us in the morning and say, "I hear the TV. Turn it off." I know he must peek occasionally.

Sorry.



[Laughter and applause]

WEINSTEIN: When did the term Silver Fox start being applied to you?

BUSH: One of my rude boys called me that -- Silver Fox.

WEINSTEIN: One of your --

BUSH: One of the 4. I suspect it was the one who's turning silver right now.

[Audience laughing]

And I want to tell you, I don't think that's because the job is so hard. I think it's because he picked the wrong mother.

WEINSTEIN: "I understand my mother better now than I did then" wrote a certain Barbara Bush. "I certainly did not appreciate all the pressure she must have felt until I also became a mother. She taught me a great deal, although neither of us realized it at the time. Probably her most important lesson was an inadvertent one. You have two choices in life. You can like what you do or you can dislike it. I've chosen to like it."

BUSH: That's true. I had a younger brother, who was very sick for a long, long time, and I suspect now that I probably wasn't a very nice little girl but I think she spent so much time worrying about him that I didn't really appreciate what she went through but my mother made the world more beautiful. She was a little irritated with me a lot and I deserved it but now I learned a lot from her truthfully. I did. That you can choose what you really -- she always thought her ship would come in. Well, it had come in. I mean, she had a husband who adored her she had healthy children at that time -- now. I mean, my brother is great. She just never realized that you ought to enjoy today because who knows what happens tomorrow particularly when you're 82.

WEINSTEIN: You're 82?

BUSH: Yep. Going on 83.

[Applause]

BUSH: I'm married to an older gentleman.

He's 83.



WEINSTEIN: "I sometimes find retirement so exhausting that I think I'll get a job." From your latest memoir.

BUSH: Well, that's because George is so full of it. He just does everything. Today, he was down at his carrier watching them test the new catapulting on the carrier that's coming in and he just loved it. I just saw him. As I walked out of the door, he walked in but he does a lot of things although he just had a back operation and he's recuperating, and I used to always say I wanted more quality time with him. Not anymore.

[Audience laughing]

WEINSTEIN: Parachuting.

BUSH: Parachuting.

WEINSTEIN: Let's talk about parachuting. I was there at the library.

BUSH: Well, he parachuted this time dual which he really doesn't like as much but with a bad back and two hips I think the doctor decided that he shouldn't do it alone and they're not going to let him be hurt and it's a joy for him. I mean, he loves doing it, and it shows people, I think that even old guys can do good stuff and I think that's important.

WEINSTEIN: You're not going to find me parachuting.

BUSH: Never going to find me parachuting either but you're not an old guy.

WEINSTEIN: Well, thank you.

BUSH: Don't -- I don't even want to take that. How are you, girls?

WEINSTEIN: "I had not realized how much worse it seems when your children run for office than when your husband runs."

BUSH: That's right.

WEINSTEIN: "That's pretty stressful." In what ways?

BUSH: Much worse, although I am really proud that our children chose to go into public life, public service. They worked hard for a living they made enough money to support their families and both Jeb and George have certainly served and we have 4 grandchildren now who are doing public service in a way. I mean, Jenna went to South America and Central America, and then she wrote a book the money going to UNICEF,



and she spent a year doing that. Barbara spent a year in South Africa working with AIDS patients. Our granddaughter Ellie is in Tanzania, as I told you with the orphanage and our great -- our first grandson George P has just joined the Naval Intelligence. He's a businessman, and he knows full well after he's trained he may well be called to go for 4 years. I'm proud of those children. They're doing for other people. I think that's great.

WEINSTEIN: That's fantastic. I want to play a game with you called word association.

BUSH: Ooh.

[Audience laughing]

OK.

WEINSTEIN: I'll mention a word, usually a name. You tell me what associations it brings to mind.

BUSH: All right. I'm long-winded so maybe we won't get through too many.

WEINSTEIN: Mikhail Gorbachev.

BUSH: Mikhail Gorbachev. I like him a lot. He's visited us in Maine and in College Station and he's become a good friend. He came with his daughter and granddaughters so we know them pretty well.

WEINSTEIN: Mao Zedong.

BUSH: Mao Zedong. Never met him.

WEINSTEIN: Oh.

BUSH: Sorry.

WEINSTEIN: OK. Arnold Schwarzenegger. You've met him.

BUSH: I like Arnold Schwarzenegger. He's the one that at Camp David told me to break a leg and I went in the sled and broke my leg.

[Audience laughing]

But I like him a lot. I think he's very courageous.



WEINSTEIN: Tony Blair.

BUSH: I like Tony Blair very, very much and I think he suffered a lot because of his support of the United States, but he to this day feels he did the right thing, and I think he did, too.

WEINSTEIN: Rhymes with --

BUSH: Who?

WEINSTEIN: Rhymes with.

BUSH: Rhymes with. Oh, don't even say that.

WEINSTEIN: Boris Yeltsin. Boris Yeltsin.

BUSH: Oh, I like her very, very much and she was very gracious to me and now I can't remember her name but she ran against George, and she was -- what was her name?

WOMAN: Geraldine Ferraro.

BUSH: Geraldine Ferraro. I like her a lot and she was very gracious after I was so ugly.

WEINSTEIN: Congresswoman, do you hear that? I think you just got an announcement of affection. It was very nice. Boris Yeltsin.

BUSH: I loved Boris Yeltsin. I really did. He was like a big teddy bear. A little bit too much

[Audience laughing]

But I'll tell you a funny story about Yel -- I think a funny story about Boris Yeltsin which I did write about in my book but Boris Yeltsin came to a state dinner at the White House, and he sat next to me. I put a really lovely looking lady on his right and he leaned over and sort of whispered to me "I don't know the protocol, but what do I do if a lady has her foot on my foot?" I said, "Well, Boris, I don't know." Before I could get it out, he lifted his foot and mine went up through the table.

[Audience laughing]

Now wait. Then Boris said, "In Russia, that means the woman loves the man." I said, "It does not mean that in America." And the next night, we went to the Russian Embassy for



dinner, the return dinner and I asked him to sign my menu and he wrote in Russian on it, which was translated for me "Dear Barbara, you knew what it meant when you put your foot on mine. I feel that way, too. Love, Boris."

[Audience laughing]

I really liked him, and I loved her, Naina. She was wonderful, and she was the kind of person that when our little granddaughter came in the room who she'd never met before -- Ellie, I think it was at that time went racing up and threw her arms around her. I mean, she was that kind of warm, wonderful lady.

WEINSTEIN: Boris Yeltsin -- I think very fondly of him. I hosted a dinner for him back when your administration was not talking to him. Gorbachev was still in power and we had a dinner at The Kennedy Center. Everybody in town came because they were interested in meeting this new fella and he was drinking a glass of water, plain water.

BUSH: Looked like a glass of water?

WEINSTEIN: The moment -- it was water because I sort of poured it. The moment the vice president came in who was our guest at that dinner he shoved the water in my hand. I said, "Mr. President, it's water." And he said, "Tell that to the camera."

BUSH: Ah. Ah. You know, she did something, too at our state dinner. They did not wear black tie, but we decided that we should do the same that we did for every head of state, so we wore black tie and she had a very sweet dress that came to about here very pretty lace dress and the next day, she apologized to me and said, "Oh, I'm so embarrassed." And I said, "Why? You looked wonderful." And she said, "Well, we were going to be late and so I rushed in to take a bath and turned on the shower, and my hair got wet and I came with wet hair to the White House" which in truth she looked beautiful. Nobody noticed it, but now her predecessor would not have rushed over. She'd have had her hair

done and come later because they were always late but she was purposely trying to be polite, to be on time.

WEINSTEIN: Lady Bird Johnson.

BUSH: Oh, I loved Lady Bird. You know that.

WEINSTEIN: We went to her funeral together.

BUSH: Everybody in Texas loved Lady Bird and everybody in America, I suspect. But she was great.



WEINSTEIN: Do you find with the years that some of the old political arguments back and forth, controversies rather slide off the plate?

BUSH: Yeah, but we didn't have any truthfully with Lady Bird or the Johnsons. We may not have agreed politically with them but we had no disagreements. We had a lot of mutual friends and he was a little much, but she was a lady.

WEINSTEIN: My staff warned me not to discuss comparisons of two recent administrations.

BUSH: Don't.

WEINSTEIN: Not to discuss these, but is there anything you'd care to say about that?

BUSH: About the two recent administrations? Like Clinton and Bush?

WEINSTEIN: Say, Bush, Clinton, Bush.

BUSH: Well, I'm big on the Bush side.

[Laughter applause]

Old ladies can't open this. Can you open this? Old ladies can't do that.

WEINSTEIN: Now it's time for some questions from your admirers in the audience.

BUSH: OK.

WEINSTEIN: And not entirely, but here they go. [Reading] I wore Barbara blue today just for you. What is your most memorable moment at first lady and why?

BUSH: My most memorable moment first lady. I think when Lech Walesa came to our country and we had the -- George invited all the labor union people because they were the people who really supported Solidarnosc and supported Lech Walesa and he came to the White House, and he was sort of a little fella, and he cried over -- never thought he'd be here never thought he'd in a free land never thought that this would happen to him and it was so touching. It was very, very moving for people who heard him speak and I think that may be -- there were a lot -- but I think that maybe was. The sort of aftermath of that was that all these huge labor people went in, and we shook hands in the hall with them



and someone sat on the dining room table and crashed down, and the -- you know the big things that are filled with fruit and food—the White House staff is so unbelievable. They propped the table up. The man disappeared. We never saw him again and the table was gone for 4 months but that particular moment was probably the most exciting. We'd been over to Poland several times and it was great. If any of you have seen this gentleman would you please report it?

[Audience laughing]

WEINSTEIN: [Reading] What is your best advice for young women?

BUSH: Gracious. Hmm. Best advice for young women. Do everything you can do the best you can do it. Be honest, be caring, and if you do those things I think life will turn out to be pretty good. I've learned you don't give advice. Nobody takes it.

[Audience laughing]

WEINSTEIN: [Reading] "What has been the most rewarding experience for you in your public and private lives?"

BUSH: Well, I think the most rewarding experiences I've had -- George has had 800,000 more -- but have been to see students who've gone to literacy -- family literacy programs that we have supported who've learned to read and have learned to be independent and support their children and when a mother said to me, "Once I learned to read and I got a job, I stopped tying my child to the kitchen sink, and one of my children said to me, I love you, Mommy. I'd never heard that before." That really moved me, but just seeing all these people who are learning to read and getting into the system is very moving.

WEINSTEIN: [Reading] "What is your favorite thing about Camp David? I'm age 12. P.S. I got to miss school because you're educational."

BUSH: Well, that's good. I'm glad you missed school and my favorite thing about Camp David. Well, it's where our family, thanks to George and Laura get together en masse. They've asked us -- we didn't come this year because George had a bad back. He thought after 5 days of an operation that he would be at Camp David. Well, of course, he was still in the hospital hobbling around but normally they ask us all, and everybody -- all the children and grandchildren are invited and then they come to Maine, which is nice but Camp David is where we are all fenced in and it's wonderful.



WEINSTEIN: There are books being written now and there have been in the past by public figures giving advice to those who would come next. Senator Lugar wrote one years ago. Madeline Albright just published one. There are others. If you were writing – not a book necessarily of that kind but an essay or a letter -- a letter just a plain old letter giving advice on being a first lady.

BUSH: Be yourself. The White House is so staffed with loving, caring people and if you're lucky, you have a great staff yourself and your husband does, so if you're yourself and try to do something every single day that will help an American -- well, maybe someone overseas, but I was a first lady who thought I should really concentrate on America. I love the way Laura has gone to Afghanistan and has gone to help women in Pakistan, all over the world. I think that's wonderful and she's wise enough to do that.

WEINSTEIN: [Reading] "What was it about your husband that first caught your eye?"

BUSH: He was the most beautiful creature I ever saw.

[Audience laughing]

You hear that?

WEINSTEIN: You hear that? [Reading] "How does it feel to be the president's mother?"

BUSH: Well, he was a baby I mean, remember that.

WEINSTEIN: How does it feel to be a president's wife? President's mother.

BUSH: Mother. Well, I love our president and I'm very, very proud of him and he's the most disciplined person I know. I got there yesterday afternoon and he got back to the residence after a very busy day went right upstairs, rode the bike, came down. We had dinner with some friends and then he went to bed early. He was up and gone by the time I got up at 8:00. 7:30. 7:30. He was gone, and he's very disciplined.

WEINSTEIN: [Reading]: "Is there one book that you would recommend above all others?"

BUSH: There are so many. You mean, for a good read?

WEINSTEIN: It doesn't say.

BUSH: This last year, I loved a book called "The Glass Palace by, uh, Hall. Let's see. What's her first name? Jeanette Hall. I love that. It really moved me and touched me but I



loved "Nineteen Minutes." There are just -- "The Color of Water" I loved. There are a lot of books I've loved.

WEINSTEIN: OK. So not just one?

BUSH: No. Oh, I'm supposed to say The Bible. I forgot that. I thought you meant fiction.

WEINSTEIN: Your assignment. [Reading] "Have you achieved your life goal? If so, what was it? If not, what will it be?"

BUSH: Have I achieved my life goal? No. I want to keep on getting people to read. I want to keep on getting people to volunteer. Our son Neil is the head of The Points of Light Foundation now and I'm very proud of him, and I want people to realize that you can't expect government to do everything. We have got to get into our communities and we have to take part. We really do. We just can't let this beautiful world slip by without doing our part so I would like to see more volunteering.

WEINSTEIN: OK. [Reading] "Do you miss Roland Mesnier, the pastry chef?"

BUSH: No. I like Roland very, very much but I'm one who likes food, so don't worry about me eating.

WEINSTEIN: [Reading]: Which other former first ladies do you most respect and why?

BUSH: Lady Bird was, I think, my very, very favorite and Pat Nixon I liked a lot. I don't think we really heard what Pat Nixon did and how great she was on volunteering. Such a gentle soul. Lady Bird -- we Texans feel her ever single day because of the beautification of our highways. I mean, she's wonderful. Driving up to College Station -- you must all

come to George's library. It's perfect. But driving up, we have blue bonnets all the way up and it's just beautiful thanks to Lady Bird. Wild flowers all the way up.

WEINSTEIN: We will be dealing on this program with conversations with some of the Johnson people. The 100th anniversary of President Johnson's birth comes up this year.

BUSH: I know that.

WEINSTEIN: And there are all sorts of programs that we're planning so keep tuned to C-SPAN. A little advertising. Well, we're both doing it. In the case of the Nixon Library -- we've just added the Nixon Library in the last year to the Presidential Library System and we now have completed this process from basically Herbert Hoover right up to the present.



BUSH: I've got to go see it again.

WEINSTEIN: The new director Tim Naftali is doing wonderful work. [Reading] "My grandmother would have loved to have been here but since she cannot, I'll ask this question for her."

BUSH: You have a grandmother?

WEINSTEIN: Oh. Someone out here has a grandmother.

BUSH: I was going to say, "Wow!"

[Audience laughing]

WEINSTEIN: Whatever.

BUSH: Sorry.

WEINSTEIN: [Reading] "I'm a grandfather. What is the most amazing trait both you your son, and husband share besides the experiences in the White House?"

BUSH: That my husband and George share?

WEINSTEIN: I guess he means the president there.

BUSH: Yes. Love of country, I would say obligation to serve. You know, George may have gotten my hair but he got his father's smarts. That's the good thing. You have a whole book-length novel here.

WEINSTEIN: Um, what would you like to tell people if you talked about any subject in the world right now for 5 minutes? What most appeals to you just in terms of communicating to particularly younger people?

BUSH: Well, I'd like to tell them that relationships are very, very important. It's a waste of time to be angry at people it's a waste of time to do mean things that making friends -- family and friends and faith are the most important things in your life and you should be building friendships. At our house now the White House at this moment Jenna has 10 girls at the house and numbers of aunts and uncles because we're all going to be here, all the child -- my children are going to be here and then Jenna's—because we're having a



shower for her tomorrow, and she's a perfect example she and Barbara of friends. They have more friends, and they're gonna be friends for life. And value your friendships, value your relationships and realize that there are many, many -- that faith is very important. It is in our family, and I think that's what grandparents do a little bit. They -- the children all eat at the table with us.

Sometimes, George gets grumpy but not much and we always say grace before dinner and the children are -- I think they get a good example for us. I don't know if those grandchildren go to church when they're away from us but they go to church when they're with us. I think that's important to go to synagogue or church or mosque or whatever you do. I think that's important for the young to know. I'm not very good that this. We shouldn't have gotten into this.

WEINSTEIN: No. This is good. I'm glad we did. The reason being that we've tried over the last several years to actually talk to people, to see who they are in their discussions, not who the media or their political enemies say they are. We've been -- as one has to be and is by vocation at The National Archives, we've been nonpartisan. We've had as guests, who've been in your chair Hillary Clinton, Harry Reid, Lynne Cheney --

BUSH: Doesn't matter. You had a lot of people. Bipartisan.

WEINSTEIN: Bipartisan, and I think there are people who still expect us to somehow come out with a -- -

BUSH: To come out and what?

WEINSTEIN: To come out with an exposé insight into somebody. They don't exist. These are lives people are leading in this town.

BUSH: This town. This town is not America. That's for darn sure.

[Audience laughing]

WEINSTEIN: But I have a question for you that is very tough and rough and to do this properly, I need the assistance of the person in the booth up there. Can we pull it?

WEINSTEIN: You and I are going to have to get up and look at this.

BUSH: You think I can see it? It's going to be very close.

[Video plays]



GEORGE H.W. BUSH: Now look. This is the last statement I'm going to have on broccoli. There are truckloads of broccoli at this very minute descending on Washington. My family is divided.

[Laughter]

I do not like broccoli and I haven't liked it since I was a little kid and my mother made me eat it and I'm President of the United States and I'm not going to eat any more broccoli.

[Laughter and applause]

BUSH: He's true to his world.

[Audience laughing]

BUSH: We get all sorts of letters from people saying "Try broccoli, and something or other. "He'll love it. He'll eat it. I promise." He can smell it when he walks in the house. We don't have it.

WEINSTEIN: We don't know your position on this. We don't know your position on broccoli.

BUSH: I love broccoli, and I eat -- my dog loves broccoli but we don't have it when George is home.

WEINSTEIN: OK. We have something for you that I hope you'll find of interest. This is a modest gift from this repository of 1.2 billion gifts in this particular building.

BUSH: Can I put it in our library, Mr. Archivist?

WEINSTEIN: Yes, you can. This is a letter from Amelia Earhart to President Roosevelt. Can you -- can you --

BUSH: To President who?

WEINSTEIN: President Roosevelt.

BUSH: Oh, Roose -- what fun.

WEINSTEIN: There it is up there just so the audience can see it.



BUSH: How great!

WEINSTEIN: Basically, talking about her forthcoming trip. Never found her.

BUSH: What a great present. Thank you.

WEINSTEIN: And this is the menu card in the Russian Embassy at the dinner that you were talking about with Boris Yeltsin.

[Laughter and applause]

BUSH: Now where did you get that?

WEINSTEIN: I'm not at liberty to say.

BUSH: You got it from our library. Isn't that wonderful?

WEINSTEIN: It was translated.

BUSH: That's my writing.

WEINSTEIN: Why don't you read it?

BUSH: As the translator told me, I wrote it down. I did that. Don't write very well. "Dear Barbara, I -- remember your foot -- that you stepped on my foot. You did it on purpose. I got the message. I feel the same. Boris Yeltsin."

That's pretty cute.

Signed, "Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin." I liked him a lot. He just was a clown and he was very courageous, too, at times. Now there's an example where two presidents did not get along -- Gorbachev and Yeltsin. No. That's too bad. You know, we treat our former presidents much better than the other countries. Half of them killed them.

[Audience laughing]

and the other half put them in jail or -- it's astonishing to me the British the day of the election they're out and they don't have help. They're just gone. I mean, you're out of the apartment and you have to make plans. We're so generous in our country.



WEINSTEIN: The notion of presidential libraries is spreading.

BUSH: I hope so.

WEINSTEIN: The recent president of Mexico, Mr. Fox is allegedly starting his own library. President Havel --

BUSH: Oh, I love him. Václav Havel.

WEINSTEIN: He's starting his own library and there are various others who are, as well.

BUSH: They'll be hitting us up for them, too. You can count on it.

WEINSTEIN: I think on that note --

[Audience laughing]

WEINSTEIN: -- we'll end tonight. Thank you very much.

BUSH: Thank you very much.

[Applause]

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