

PRESIDENTS OF THE UNITED STATES

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George Bush

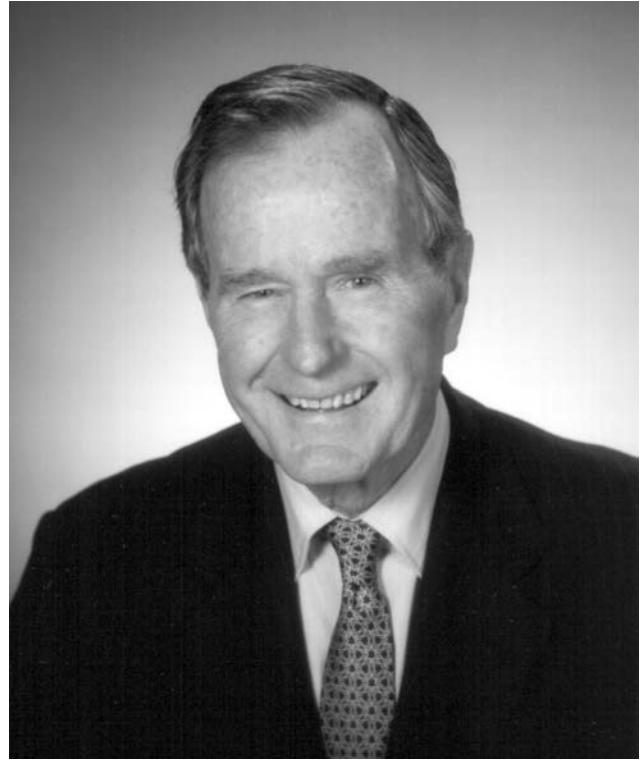
Born: June 12, 1924, Milton, Massachusetts.

Occupation: Businessman, public official.

Wife: Barbara Pierce. Children: Four boys, one girl.

President: 1989-1993. Republican party.

Vice-President: J. Danforth Quayle.



George Herbert Walker Bush was born in Milton, Massachusetts, on June 12, 1924. His parents were Prescott Sheldon Bush and Dorothy Walker Bush. His father was a Wall Street investment banker and later served as a U.S. senator from Connecticut. Four other children, three sons and a daughter, were born to the Bushes. George was named after his maternal grandfather, George Herbert Walker, who established the Walker Cup trophy for American and British amateur golfers.

When George was still an infant, the Bush family moved to Greenwich, Connecticut. There he was raised amid wealth. Three maids tended to the needs of the family. A chauffeur drove young George to the Greenwich Country Day School. The Bushes spent the summers at their vacation home in Kennebunkport, Maine, where George loved to go boating and fishing for mackerel in the waters of the Atlantic Ocean. Bush still maintains a summer home in Kennebunkport.

Bush attended an exclusive prep school, Phillips Academy, in Andover, Massachusetts. He was captain of the basketball and soccer teams, played on the baseball team, and was elected president of his senior class. During his senior year, on December 7, 1941, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, drawing the United States into World War II. Bush was impatient to graduate in 1942 so that he could volunteer for the Navy air service.

On his 18th birthday, Bush enlisted in the Navy as a seaman second class. Following flight training, he was commissioned as an ensign in 1943 and became a torpedo bomber pilot. At age 19, he was the youngest pilot then serving in the U.S. Navy. During 1943 and 1944, he took part in 58 combat missions in the Pacific. His worst wartime experience occurred in 1944, when his plane was hit by Japanese anti-aircraft fire over Chichi Jima, one of the Bonin Islands. His two crewmen were killed. Bush parachuted to the water. He lay helpless in a rubber raft until he was rescued by a U.S. submarine.

In 1945, while still in uniform, Bush married Barbara Pierce, the daughter of a magazine publisher. The Bushes had five children who lived to maturity, George W., John, Neil, Marvin, and Dorothy. Another daughter, Robin, died in 1953.

When the war ended in 1945, Bush was discharged from the Navy with the rank of lieutenant, junior grade. He had won the Distinguished Flying Cross and three Air Medals. Bush resumed his education at Yale University, where he majored in economics. Still interested in sports, he played first base on the Yale baseball team. In 1948, during the home game against Princeton University, Bush got a chance to meet one of his baseball heroes, Babe Ruth. In one of his last public appearances before his death that year, Babe Ruth presented Bush, then the team captain, with the manuscript of his autobiography, which he was donating to Yale.

On his graduation from Yale in 1948, Bush was offered a job in his father's investment banking firm. But Bush preferred to make it on his own. With his wife and young son, he headed for Texas. His first job was painting oil rigs. But soon he was selling oil drilling equipment. In 1950 he and a partner formed a company that bought land in hopes of finding oil or natural gas. Three years later, Bush merged the company with the operations of other oil speculators, founding the Zapata Petroleum Corporation. From 1953 to 1966, Bush was the head of the Zapata Off Shore Company, which was a supplier of the drilling equipment used to explore for oil beneath the ocean floor.

Meanwhile, Bush had settled his family in Houston, Texas, and had become active in Republican Party politics. In 1964 he ran for the U.S. Senate but was defeated. Setting his sights elsewhere in government, Bush won election to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1966. He was the first Republican to represent Houston in Congress. He was re-elected in 1968. In 1970, Bush again ran for the Senate and again was defeated.

In 1971, President Richard M. Nixon appointed Bush U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations. It was a crucial time for the world organization. The United States had agreed to allow the admission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations for the first time since 1949, when the Communists took over the mainland of China. Bush argued forcefully for a so-called two-China policy. Under this compromise, a special seat would have been created for the Republic of China (Taiwan), which had held the China seat since the founding of the United Nations in 1945. But the United Nations rejected the two-China plan and expelled the Taiwan government in favor of the People's Republic.

In 1973, Bush was named chairman of the Republican National Committee. At this time, President Nixon and the Republican Party were under the cloud of the Watergate scandal. For a long time Bush defended Nixon. But when the White House tape recordings exposed Nixon's illegal activities, Bush, acting for the Republican Party, asked Nixon to resign. Nixon did so on August 9, 1974.

The new president, Gerald R. Ford, appointed Bush to what was then the top diplomatic post in the People's Republic of China, chief of the U.S. Liaison Office, in 1974. Bush remained in China until he was called home at Ford's request to become director (1976-77) of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

Bush lost the Republican presidential nomination to Ronald Reagan in 1980 but was named as his vice-presidential running mate. The Reagan-Bush ticket won easily in 1980. They were re-elected overwhelmingly in 1984.

On March 30, 1981, President Reagan was shot in an assassination attempt. While Reagan was recovering, Vice President Bush met regularly with the cabinet, White House officials, and congressional leaders. On July 13, 1985, the powers of the presidency were transferred temporarily to Bush while Reagan underwent cancer surgery.

In 1986 it became known that presidential aides had secretly sold arms to Iran in exchange for the release of American hostages in Lebanon. Some of the arms profits were used, illegally, to help contra guerrillas in their war against the government of Nicaragua. Bush's role in the affair became a point of controversy.

In 1988, Bush again sought and won the Republican presidential nomination. He and his vice-presidential running mate, J. Danforth (Dan) Quayle of Indiana, easily defeated the Democratic candidates, Governor Michael Dukakis of Massachusetts and Senator Lloyd Bentsen, Jr., of Texas. The Bush-Quayle ticket won 54 percent of the popular vote and received 426 electoral votes to 111 for the Democrats.

One of Bush's first measures as president was to propose legislation to bail out the nation's financially troubled savings and loan institutions. Congress passed a \$159 million ten-year plan to rescue the ailing industry, but the scope and cost of the problem grew. The large federal budget deficit, inherited from the Reagan years, was a major concern. In 1990, contrary to a campaign pledge, Bush agreed to raise taxes to help pay down the debt. This policy reversal cost him considerable popularity, particularly among conservative Republicans.

After China's rulers brutally crushed massive student demonstrations in the spring of 1989, Bush—who knew the aging leaders personally—deplored the crackdown but maintained communication with the leadership. His stance angered human rights activists and appeared to have no effects on China's policy toward internal dissent.

A series of summits with Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev resulted in the signing of treaties on arms reductions and agreements on other issues. As communist governments collapsed in Eastern Europe, Bush became to some degree a bystander, watching as nations redefined their futures. In August 1991, only weeks after Bush and Gorbachev had signed a strategic-arms—reduction treaty in Moscow, the Soviet president was nearly ousted in an attempted coup. Thanks to



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Boris Yeltsin's resistance to the coup, Gorbachev was able to return to power, however briefly. When, in December 1991, the Soviet Union dissolved into a loose confederation of independent republics and several unaffiliated states, Bush quickly recognized the new states and sought a rapprochement with Yeltsin, now president of Russia. In the spring of 1992 Bush and Yeltsin agreed to substantial cuts in nuclear weapons.

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 provided Bush's most serious crisis and his finest hour as president. His masterful

diplomacy fashioned a broad international coalition against Iraq. Justifying the U.S. response, Bush cited the unprovoked invasion of defenseless Kuwait, Iraq's desire to control a large portion of the world's oil reserves, and Iraq's growing nuclear-weapons potential. In January 1991 Bush asked Congress for "all necessary means" to expel Iraq from Kuwait. He received congressional approval to use force, and the U.S.-led allies launched a punishing aerial assault on strategic sites in Iraq. In a ground war in February, lasting just 100 hours, allied forces drove the Iraqis from Kuwait. Bush's popularity rose to historic highs for a president, but he drew some criticism for ordering a cease-fire before Iraq's president, Saddam Hussein, was ousted.

Following the war, Hussein quickly crushed internal postwar revolts by Kurds and Muslims. Bush sent relief aid to refugees fleeing Hussein's forces. Then, in 1992, as Hussein's troops continued to attack Shi'i Muslims, Bush enlisted France and Britain to support a "no-fly zone," enforced largely by U.S. aircraft, barring Iraq from sending planes into the disputed territory.

The last American hostages being held in Lebanon were freed in 1991, and hopes for a general Middle East settlement brightened when peace talks orchestrated by Bush were initiated between Israel and its Arab neighbors. Bush declined to support \$10 billion in loan guarantees to Israel unless Israel halted settlements in its occupied territories. When Yitzak Rabin succeeded Yitzak Shamir in 1992, the new Israeli government suspended construction and financing of most new settlements; soon thereafter Bush and Rabin came to an agreement on the loans.

The Bush administration held extensive discussions with Canada and Mexico. The talks resulted in the approval of a draft North American Free Trade Agreement in 1992.

Bush's successes in foreign affairs were offset by an economic recession at home, which became a decisive issue in the 1992 election campaign. Bush's Democratic opponent was Governor William (Bill) Clinton of Arkansas. H. Ross Perot, a Texas businessman, also ran as an independent candidate. Clinton won overwhelmingly, with 370 electoral votes to Bush's 168.

During his last months in office, Bush dispatched U.S. Marines to Somalia, to ensure that relief supplies reached its starving people, caught up in civil war. He signed the second Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, or START II disarmament treaty, with Russian president Boris Yeltsin. He also authorized new air strikes against Iraq for violating United Nations agreements.

After leaving office, Bush published two books, *A World Transformed* (1998), written with his former national security adviser Brent Scowcroft, and *All the Best, George Bush: My Life in Letters and Other Writings* (1999).

In 2000, his eldest son, Texas governor George W. Bush, was elected president. They became the first father and son to occupy the White House since John Adams and John Quincy Adams.



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