

The Totem Poll



*On a national day of mourning,
Fairfield’s staff and students
speak out on our 41st president*

*Compiled by **Tribal Tribune** staff*

George Herbert Walker Bush, the president who managed the end of the Cold War and forged a global coalition to oust Iraqi forces from Kuwait, died at age 94 on Friday, Nov. 30.

Bush – nicknamed “41” to distinguish himself from son George W. Bush, “43” – was honored with a national day of mourning Wednesday and a funeral

ceremony attended by all living presidents was held at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C.

In honor of his passing, the Tribal Tribune staff conducted a Totem Poll, asking staff and students of Fairfield City Schools what they remembered or what their impressions were of President Bush.

The following is what they had to say:

➤ **Billy Smith**, superintendent: Since President Bush's passing, I have read many articles, watched tributes, etc. I am extremely grateful for his service to our country. When he accepted the nomination for president in 1988, he referenced the need for a "kinder, gentler nation." Those words really hit home with me. Those words were spoken from the heart, and I believe the need for a kinder, gentler nation has never been greater than it is today. He was ahead of his time. RIP, 41.

➤ **Jay Muldoon**, English and theater teacher: In '89 or '90, right around his first year in office, I found myself in Kennebunkport, Maine. A friend and I decided to go up the coast from Boston for the day. We meant to head to New Hampshire, but went right on I-95 instead of merging on to the NH Turnpike. We found Kennebunkport within a half hour of our mistake. ... I remembered, "The president has a house up here." The next suggestion was, "We should try to find it and check it out." It was mid-fall, so darkness came early on the East Coast. So with high-beams on, we drove the coast. There on our right we saw a beautiful white house on a rocky peninsula, and decided, That's got to be it. So we turn into the drive. Suddenly we were surrounded by bright lights, and a voice echoed, "Can I

ask what you are looking for?" With that, a heavily armed man wearing a suit approached my Chevy hatchback. I'll admit I stammered, "First time in Kennebunk, and wanted to see the president's house." As he stared at me, I added, "I am assuming I found it." He quickly told me to back my vehicle up and head back to Kennebunkport center. I stopped to add, "Is the president here for the fall season? The Secret Service agent simply repeated his directions, and then added, "The President is not here this weekend." Hoping to have a moment with the President, instead got a memory for a lifetime.

➤ **Cindy Jones**, French teacher: They did skits about George H.W. Bush on "Saturday Night Live" and Dana Carvey had this running skit with him and they actually became really good friends over it. George thought it was funny. He'd be very conscious of it and referred to it a lot. He'd tried to keep his hands down during speeches because Dana always made fun of it all the time and I thought he just had a great sense of humor. I also loved Barbara Bush.

➤ **Mike Browning**, English teacher: He was the last president from what's called the Greatest Generation ... the people who lived and fought through World War II. He was the last president who fought in



Former President H.W. Bush in the Oval Office in 2009, along with then President-elect Barack Obama; his son, former President George W. Bush; and former President Bill Clinton.

AP file photo

that war. Most people remember well of him, from both sides of the aisle. I didn't vote for him, but I admired him. I thought he was a respectable man. You couldn't feel the separation of left and right when he was in office. When he and Bill Clinton ran against each other, it wasn't a battle. They were both like moderates. A lot of people spit when they hear Democrat or Republican, but not with him.



Getty Images file

Former President George H.W. Bush and his wife, Barbara Bush.

➤ **Roger Martin**, assistant superintendent: Several things stand out in my mind concerning this great man. The first is his love for his family. He was a devoted husband and father. Second, in whatever position he held in life, he was busy doing something to benefit others. Third, I loved his emphasis on “A Thousand Points of Light,” which highlighted nationally what normal, everyday people were doing to make their communities better. He was an outstanding man!

➤ **Laurie McCoy**, FHS secretary: The thing I remember most is his love of family.

➤ **Mike Napier**, FHS security: His 1,000 Points of Light.

➤ **Bridget Lartey**, sophomore: I don't really know much about him, so there is background information that needs to be known, like what important things did he do? Or, how did he affect society, any achievements or goals?

➤ **Gina Gentry-Fletcher**, School & Community Relations director: Years ago, as a very young and green reporter, I had

the opportunity to join the press pool awaiting the arrival of President George H.W. Bush at Wright-Patterson AFB. I was immediately intimidated by the veteran reporters surrounding me, but following their lead, I pushed my way to near the front and threw out a question, thinking full well he wouldn't hear me, see me, or even respond. To my surprise, he did, he did, and he did! I can't remember the question or the answer (LOL), but it is still a great memory for little old me. RIP, 41...

➤ **Mindy Montgomery**, art teacher: What I remember most about him is how friendly he was. Dana Carvey, on “Saturday Night Live,” did imitations of him and, through that, they became really good and unlikely friends.

➤ **Matt Reisner**, social studies teacher: I remember when he was in the primaries against Ronald Reagan.

➤ **Brooke Begley**, senior: I think it is important to know that he's genuinely a good man. He was kind and he cared about his presidency and the impact he made. I

think he had a good heart and his intentions were always to help people.

➤ **Piper Zepf, junior:** I don't know anything really. He was vice president before he was president.

➤ **Dana**

Staggs, social studies teacher:

The Gulf War, because that was the first time I had to see friends go to war.

➤ **Michelle Dickhaus, math teacher:** He must've done something right because his son became president, too!

➤ **Kim**

Savage, FHS secretary: Well, I don't remember anything specifically, but I do remember he was one of my most favorite presidents.

➤ **Tracy Steelman, FHS attendance office:** My first time voting in a presidential election, I voted for President Bush's second term as VP in the Reagan Administration. So much was made of the fact that he didn't like broccoli. Why did people make such a big deal about that? It doesn't seem that his term as president was very popular; I wasn't really paying attention then. I was in college and starting a life for myself. Big government wasn't relevant at that point. But, he REALLY made people MAD when he campaigned "No New Taxes" and THEN ... he (Congress) RAISED TAXES!!!! Something I've always wanted to do is jump out of a plane. Mr. Bush jumped out of his burning plane as a Navy pilot in

WW2. He didn't make another jump until his 75th birthday, followed by jumps on his 80th, 85th and 90th birthdays. On that jump, he had a tandem jumper attached to him and they landed on Bush's property in

Maine. So cool. And, in later years, former President Bush had a penchant for wearing "colorful" socks!

➤ **Stacey Robinson, government teacher:** He demonstrated strong character in the White House. Most of the things he did



AP and Getty Images file photos

Just four sets out of a huge assortment of crazy, colorful socks that former President George H.W. Bush was famed for wearing in public.

was for the good of the country and its people.

➤ **Carol Nance, special education teacher:** I'm from Houston, and I lived in the Houston area for about 20 years. In Houston, the Bushes are very, very popular. The thing that I love about George Herbert Walker Bush? He's just a decent man. He led the country in a unique way. He didn't let the political hierarchy of just being somebody special get to him. He was for common people.

➤ **Jason Printz, math teacher:** He was commander in chief when I was in the war. I put my trust completely in him.

➤ **Ta'Vonna Ishmon, English teacher:** I have no memories of him because I was like 2 when he was elected!

➤ **Harvey Stansell**, educational assistant: I disagreed with what he did with the “no new taxes” thing, because taxes are good for things that are needed, like education. Other than that, he was a man of good class.

➤ **Randy Johnson**, FHS security guard/Naddi’s handler: He was a good man. And I think what he did with the “no new taxes” (actually raising taxes after promising not to) was the right call, even though he didn’t want to do it.

➤ **Dan Jacobs**, AP government teacher: My memories: Dana Carvey on “SNL,” 1,000 Points of Light, not choosing to get rid of Saddam Hussein in the first part of the Gulf War. My thoughts: Since he was 94 and had a spectacular life of public service, this is a thing to celebrate and be proud of.

➤ **Christine Annarino Eastlake**, English teacher: I remember us going into the Gulf War in elementary school. He treated other people respectfully and I really admire that in a president.

➤ **Michael Chacksfield**, social studies teacher: I was less than 24 hours old when he was sworn in.

➤ **Kate Sanicky**, social studies teacher: He’s the last president of his kind; there will never be anybody as distinguished or experienced as he was.

➤ **Elias Perdue**, informational technology instructor: My favorite memory of George Bush is when he shaved his hair off for a kid with leukemia. The child’s father was a Secret Service agent, and all of the agents were going to shave their hair off, so Bush went ahead and shaved off all of his own hair.

➤ **Diana Ivkovich**, athletic trainer: He was a great man, and so was his wife. His wife was awesome; I actually met his wife. He was the last president from World War II. I think he was



Former President George H.W. Bush calls for a question in a 1988 White House press conference.

genuinely liked as a person ... he was a hero.

➤ **Mindy Reed**, French teacher: When I was growing up, both my grandfathers passed away before I was born, so I never had a grandpa. So, he was like my grandpa. When he would do things with his kids or grandkids, I was like, “That’s what a grandpa should be.”

Story Contributors

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