

George H. W. Bush

Desertification
Forty-First, 1989-1993



Nicknames: "Fatty McGee McGaw", "Have-Half", "Ellie the Elephant", "Little Pop", "Poppy", "Papa Bush"

Birth: June 12th, 1924, Milton, Massachusetts

Death: Still living as of the time of writing

Significant Events During Bush's Term: Berlin Wall is Knocked Down ... Valdez Oil Spill ... Rodney King Incident ... Los Angeles Riots ... Ruby Ridge ... Persian Gulf War

Quotes: *"Read my lips -- No new taxes!"* -- George H.W. Bush

"[Bush] talks like Dirty Harry, but acts like Barney Fife." -- Georgia Governor Zell Miller

"Terrorism is a kind of violent graffiti, and simply by capturing headlines and television time the terrorist partially succeeds." -- George H.W. Bush, 1987

"We have no opinion on...your border disagreement with Kuwait...The issue is not associated with America. James Baker has directed our official spokesman to emphasize this instruction."

-- U.S. Ambassador to Iraq April Glaspie, in a communiqué to Saddam Hussein, who had inquired as to what America's response would be if Iraq invaded Kuwait

"For all the credit that President Bush deserves for his magnificent leadership after the Iraqi invasion, the truth is that his administration not only resisted imposing sanctions on Iraq before August 2, but, by giving Mr. Hussein the impression he could invade his defenseless neighbor with impunity, made the aggression more likely." -- Stephen J. Solarz, 1991

"The specter of Vietnam has been buried forever in the desert sands of the Arabian peninsula."

-- George H.W. Bush

"All you hear [from Bush] is Lawrence Welk music, 'wonderful, wonderful, wonderful,' and we're spending \$400 billion of your children's money this year to try to get you to vote for us again."

-- Ross Perot, 1992

"If ignorance ever goes to \$40 a barrel, I want the drilling rights on George Bush's head."

-- Jim Hightower, 1988

"The day will come – and it is not far off – when the legacy of Lincoln will finally be fulfilled at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue when a black man or woman will sit in the Oval Office. When that day comes, the most remarkable thing about it will be how naturally it occurs." -- George H.W. Bush, 1990

How his term ended: Bush Sr. was defeated for reelection by Bill Clinton.

Other Professions: Soldier, Businessman (Oil)

Worst Mistakes: Bush led Saddam Hussein to believe that Iraq could invade Kuwait (who were pilfering Iraqi oil on the border between the two countries) without provoking a violent response from the U.S. (see April Glaspie's quote above). Hussein snapped his leash, though -- instead of simply taking Iraq's misappropriated oil back, he claimed all of Kuwait as Iraq's "nineteenth Province." Then the U.S. attacked with a vengeance, at one point carpet bombing a column of retreating Iraqis.

Bush lied when he asserted that he would not raise taxes (he did).

During the time that Bush was Ronald Reagan's (#40) Vice President, he was a key player in

the Iran/Contra deal.

Bush called himself “The Environmental President,” but during his term, in 1992, a law was passed allowing manufacturers to *increase* their pollution output by two hundred forty five tons per year.

Bush was President during the Ruby Ridge confrontation in northern Idaho, where civilians were attacked and killed by government agents, including a mother who was shot between the eyes by an FBI sharpshooter as she stood in the doorway of her family's home, holding an infant in her arms. Although it is true that Bush was not on the scene, calling the shots (no pun intended), as President he does deserve some of the blame, both for not preventing it from happening in the first place, and for not coming out strongly enough against the tactics and their results.

Saving Grace: Nothing stands out.

Notes: Bush was a good college athlete (but probably not as good as his mother who, like Bess Truman (wife of Harry S, #33), was a multi-sport standout and, just before giving birth to her eldest son, hit a home run in a family softball game), excelling in both soccer and especially baseball. Bush was first baseman on a Yale team that twice went to the college world series. His hopes of receiving an offer to play professional baseball were not realized.

Bush was a navy pilot in World War II. He twice flew his plane into the Pacific Ocean, once after being hit by Japanese fire (that is, his plane was hit by bullets shot by Japanese soldiers). Bush hurt himself bailing out of the flaming and smoking plane, hitting his head on the craft's tail section (two crew members were killed, including a family friend who insisted on going along on Bush's first bombing mission and was serving as tail gunner). To add injury to injury, Bush was also stung by a Portuguese Man O' War before clambering aboard his life raft. He was still not out of harm's way, though: The ocean currents were driving him toward the enemy (whom he had bombed), and so he hastily hand-paddled away. American planes kept Japanese ships at bay until he was rescued by a U.S. submarine three hours later. Bush later claimed that during this harrowing ordeal he had been all the while pondering the separation of church and state.

After the war, the Japanese soldiers on the island Bush had bombed (and almost paid an unintentional visit) were convicted of torturing, decapitating, and in some cases cannibalizing captured enemy soldiers.

While campaigning for the Republican Presidential nomination against Ronald Reagan in 1980, Bush referred to Reagan's economic policies as “Voodoo Economics.” When this was called to his attention later (after Ronald Reagan had received their party's nomination for President, and Bush had been selected as Reagan's Vice Presidential running mate), Bush denied it--but he either had a bad memory or failed to realize that his deprecatory remarks had been captured on videotape.

In the next election, while on the campaign trail running for Vice President (Reagan vs. Mondale, 1984), Bush repeatedly claimed that Mondale's Vice Presidential candidate, Geraldine Ferraro, had said that marines killed in Lebanon by terrorists had "died in shame." This was apparently not true, as when Ferraro challenged Bush to either cite his source or apologize, he was unable to do the former and refused to do the latter. Rather than feel ashamed of himself, as he should have, Bush boasted after the debate about his aggressiveness (many had viewed him as somewhat of a wimp, so perhaps he thought he was putting this reputation behind him with those unchivalrous jabs).

As Vice President, Bush cast the tie-breaking vote for the resumption of the production of nerve gas (a biological weapon). Bush' mother was so upset on hearing about this that President Reagan called her in an attempt to convince her that the step was necessary. But was it?

As a final shot just before leaving office, Bush, reminiscent of the situation with Jerry Ford (#38) and Richard Nixon (#37), pardoned Reagan's Secretary of Defense, Caspar Weinberger (and others) for their role in the Iran-Contra affair.

Bush is a distant relative of Benedict Arnold, Franklin Pierce (#14), Abraham Lincoln (#16), Theodore Roosevelt (#26), Franklin Delano Roosevelt (#32), Gerald Ford, Winston Churchill, Dan Quayle (his Vice President), and Marilyn Monroe.