

Sen. Susan M. Collins
President George H.W. Bush Statement
Dec. 4, 2018

On Ocean Avenue in Kennebunkport, Maine, stands a simple yet powerful monument, a gift from the people of that small community to a friend and neighbor. The monument is a United States Navy anchor; the friend and neighbor was President George Herbert Walker Bush.

It is a fitting tribute. President Bush often called the family home at Walker's Point his "anchor to the windward," a special place of unsurpassed beauty in a caring community. Through the years, it has been the place that gave him the strength to face the many challenges he took on in dedicated service to our country.

And indeed, every summer of his life, George Herbert Walker Bush spent at Walker's Point, except when he was defending our country during World War II.

It is fitting tribute in another way. As a Navy aviator in World War II, as a member of Congress, as a Special Envoy to China, as Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, as Vice President, and President, George H.W. Bush consistently and vigorously demonstrated the values that are the anchor of American society. Courage, duty, honor, and compassion defined his life. As he encouraged Americans to be a "thousand points of light" through service to others, he shone the brightest himself. He always answered the call to serve our country.

I had the pleasure to visit President and Mrs. Bush at Walker's Point many times over the years and how I looked forward to those annual visits in Kennebunkport. The very first time I remember so well. It was in 1994 and I had just won the Republican Primary for Governor of Maine. I received a call from President Bush's staff inviting me to have lunch with him and Mrs. Bush at Walker's Point.

The last time I saw the president was on September 7, just months after President Bush had lost his beloved Barbara and as his own health was declining rapidly. Yet as the Presiding Officer well knows, the President remained incredibly positive and warm. The qualities that made him such an inspiring leader were undiminished. Throughout our long friendship, President Bush, by his example and by his words, was always so encouraging, kind, and thoughtful. He taught me that you must always do what your heart tells you is right, regardless of the consequences, and he demonstrated that every difficulty must be met with strength and determination.

George Herbert Walker Bush was so kind to others. I so remember one year when I visited him, and he had completely shaved his head in solidarity with a young boy who was the son of a Secret Service agent who was part of his detail. This young boy was undergoing cancer treatments and had lost all of his hair, so President Bush shaved all of his hair off too. That's the kind of individual he was: caring, compassionate, and committed.

The end of a life so devoted to the highest ideals of the human spirit brings to mind the Parable of the Talents in the Bible. The master, leaving on a journey, entrusts a servant with a portion of his treasure. Upon his return, the master is delighted to find that his wealth was wisely invested and multiplied.

George Herbert Walker Bush was entrusted with the great treasure of principles, determination, and courage. He invested that treasure wisely and multiplied it to the benefit of all, not just here in America, but throughout the world. Like the master in the New Testament, to him we say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." May God bless him and may his memory always be anchored in our hearts.