

George H.W. Bush

ARTICLE TWO OF THE CONSTITUTION SPELLS OUT IN DETAIL THE DUTIES OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE – BUT LEAVES THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE OFFICE REMARKABLY VAGUE. IT SAYS ONLY THAT A PRESIDENT MUST BE AT LEAST THIRTY-FIVE YEARS OLD AND BORN IN THE UNITED STATES. ASIDE FROM THE FOUNDING FATHERS WHO SERVED IN THE CONTINENTAL CONGRESS AND WROTE THE CONSTITUTION AND BECAME PRESIDENT, ITS HARD TO IMAGINE A PRESIDENT WITH MORE GOVERNMENT EXPERIENCE THAN GEORGE HERBERT WALKER BUSH. WHEN HE BECAME PRESIDENT IN 1989, HE CAME DIRECTLY FROM EIGHT YEARS IN THE JOB AS VICE PRESIDENT, ONCE DESCRIBED BY A FELLOW TEXAN, JOHN NANCE GARNER, AS A JOB NOT WORTH A BUCKET OF WARM SPIT. IT WAS A SENTIMENT ECHOED BY ANOTHER TEXAN, LYNDON JOHNSON.

Bush: Things have evolved even since Lyndon Johnson was vice president and what's happened is that the vice president can be, can fulfill useful functions and not just simply sit waiting to break a tie in the Senate if he has the confidence of the President and if the President assigns the vice president certain responsibilities and I think more and more you're seeing that the vice presidency that used to get ridiculed all the time is something quite real and you can do useful things...

And I accepted certain assignments willingly from Reagan - the Anti terror task force, going to Germany to help convince the people of Europe to deploy the Pershing II missiles – even the funerals that people ridicule.

I made the first contact with Gorbachev. I was the first official to see that we had a very different leader in the Soviet Union. Now that wouldn't have happened in the old days and that wouldn't have happened unless the president had confidence in the vice president because there's no constitutional power for the vice president except presiding in the Senate and breaking a tie.

But you know, Cokie, I've noticed something about being the Vice President all these guys running for president say "I'd never accept the vice presidency". I was one of them. "I'd never accept the Vice Presidency" and Every one of them would die that was running for President and didn't make it to be Vice President thinking Ah there but for the grace of God go I, one heartbeat away, you know. So it's changed, the role of the Vice President has changed since John Nance Garner made his famous statement about it.

Since Lyndon Johnson When Lyndon became Vice President he wanted to keep the chairmanship of the caucus on the democratic side and wonderful Mansf – Mike Mansfield said OK but then the old boys in the Senate said no – this is an encroachment

of the executive on the legislative branch and it didn't work. even a powerful figure like Johnson who had run the Congress as his own fiefdom.

VOICE OVER:

IT WAS A TIME GEORGE BUSH KNEW WELL AS THE SON OF A SENATOR AND AN OLD WASHINGTON HAND HIMSELF, FIRST SERVING AS A MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES FROM HOUSTON, TEXAS

VOICE OVER:

TWO FAILED BIDS FOR THE U.S. SENATE WERE FOLLOWED BY A STINT AS AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND THEN BUSH TOOK ON THE THANKLESS JOB OF HEADING THE REPUBLICAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE DURING THE WATERGATE SCANDAL

Cokie Wasn't your most fun time?

Bush makes a stricken face.

No – Watergate – No they should have given me combat pay. It was the worst job in the world. Bob Strauss, I'll clean this up for you Cokie.

Cokie: I read it in your book.

Bush: Oh then forget it then.

Cokie: No tell it.

Bush: They should have given me combat pay; it was the worst job in the world. Bob Straus, I'll clean this up for you Cokie, Bob Strauss called me once on – And today another shoe dropped – it would go on and on another shoe dropping some horrible new revelation. And my job was to try to keep the party out of the Watergate mess because it wasn't a party effort and yet try to defend the President where I could. And so Strauss called me up and in a great lack of sympathy I might add, and said your job reminds me of making love to a gorilla. I said Straus that's very interesting. Why? He said well you can't stop until the gorilla wants to and so he's always reminded me of that and I always felt there was a lack of compassion in the phone call. But it epitomized – he was head of the Democratic Party, loving every minute of it but he made a pretty serious point because the party was in an extremely difficult position. I had two stacks of mail. Why aren't you supporting the president more and why are you keeping the party so close to this guy - Nixon– and it was not the happiest time in my life.

Voice Over:

PARTICULARLY SINCE BUSH FOUND HIMSELF PART OF THE PUSH TO CONVINCING NIXON TO LEAVE OFFICE. AS PARTY CHAIRMAN HE WROTE A LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT TELLING HIM IT WAS TIME FOR HIM TO GO.

Bush: I think it brought about change between the press and the executive branch or the press and the Congress too because the press felt they had been lied to – a lot of people did and so there's been, I think, an increased cynicism I believe between the press and others in government, be it Congress or the Executive Branch.

THE NEXT TOUR OF DUTY—AS AMBASSADOR TO CHINA—WAS A WELCOME RESPITE BEFORE RETURNING HOME TO ANOTHER STICKY SITUATION—HEADING A CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY THAT HAD BEEN RAKED OVER THE COALS BY TWO CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES

Bush: In terms of the Constitution, I always felt there was an intrusion on the right to keep something secret. I think a President has to have the best intelligence in the world and all of that cannot be revealed to the Congress or anyone else in my view.

So as Director I came in there right after a very stormy period when the Church Committee and Pike Committee came after the agency and supposedly doing their oversight but they unleashed a bunch of people on the agency – these clerks that none of them had clearances - and they went out there and treated career people in the CIA like they were a bunch of crooks and that kind of froze the CIA's ability to get, to recruit assets abroad because nobody wants to sign up to help the CIA if they think their name's going to appear in the paper or be – have their cover blown by some 22 year old kid from the Pike Committee and so I was outraged when I got there. I realized the agency had done some things wrong.

But I also know and found this to be true particularly when I was President that it was the executive branch and you have to have a certain amount of secrecy if you're going to get the best intelligence. You have to deal with bad guys if you're going to get the best intelligence. I have worried in terms of the Constitution about encroachment on that Presidential authority over the CIA.

Cokie: How do you balance that? How do you get some sort of accountability in a tripartite system?

Well, you report to I'd say as few people as possible in Congress and let them do the necessary oversight but you got to protect against some guy – well this is immoral and rushing out and blowing the cover and getting a bunch of people killed. How do you protect? You err on the side of Executive authority when it comes to the Central intelligence agency

VOICE OVER:

WHEN HE REACHED THE TOP JOB BUSH FOUND THE EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY CHALLENGED IMMEDIATELY. HIS NOMINEE FOR SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, JOHN TOWER, WAS DEFEATED

Bush: That was political, pure politics. Some of the senators didn't like him. I remember Sam Nunn coming down and telling me it wasn't political and it was political. Maybe not with Sam. But I think the Majority Leader made it political just as they made the president's right to use force in Iraq political. And I found that quite offensive because the vote on whether to approve the president's authority to use whatever means necessary almost to enforce the UN resolution was on party lines and George Mitchell, the leader with whom I've always had friendly relations but he made it a party line vote and subsequently a couple of senators have said that and maybe with regret, that troubled me and troubles me still in terms of the constitution.

Cokie: But was it the right thing to do to go to congress and get that vote?

Bush: Probably, otherwise – the best example I had of that is when Danny Inouye – a very respected democrat who did oppose the war in the Gulf came to me and said if you do this and it doesn't work right you'll be impeached. Dan, I said, you got to do what you got to do. You've got to do what you think is right sometimes. That was before the vote I think, but I have such respect for him I must say I thought about it a great deal.

Cokie: You wrote in your diary, I read, the day of that vote that "The big burden was lifted from my shoulders, this constitutional burden, and the threat of impeachment. I never thought about that.

Bush: Well I thought about it because it's the congressional right to declare war, declaration of war. And then you had the war powers act and then the gulf of Tonkin and all these other things. The executive branch has always opposed the war powers act. By going to congress you had kind of an ok a stamp of approval even if it was a close vote – 53 to 47 , who's counting these many years later. So I felt in my heart of hearts that given the precedents, the president's use of force without congressional sanction, I could have sent American troops into battle without – but it did lift the threat of impeachment or of revolt of the congress or second guessing by the congress. I think we did the right thing. It was close – we were worried about it.

Cokie: And it was a very fine debate despite the fact that it was a partisan vote the debate itself was a good debate.

Bush: I think so, although I didn't listen to anybody except on our side because I knew what I had to do. I remember some of the voices. Mr. President, how many lives are going to be lost? How many body bags will be there waiting. The American citizen and the people in the Congress, in the Senate, still worried about Vietnam and our inability to declare a course, fight and win and come back and I can understand their anxiety. We sent General after General up to say no, we're going to lose lives. Every life is precious but it's not going to be 50,000 body bags. Yet that was the argument. They were

concerned because of their anxiety over Vietnam and their lack of confidence in the military's ability after Vietnam to fight and win cleanly and that's what we did.

Cokie: But the other thing I remember about that debate was that after it was over there was a sense of OK, the elected representatives of the people have signed on and there was a sense that this is better.

Bush: Oh I agree with that – totally agree that having the support of the Congress, even though it was a narrow vote in the Senate, at least made it much better in terms of support of the American people, support around the world. If we had gone into that battle with the Congress passing a resolution that we shouldn't do it and the President still ordered it anyway we would have had more difficulty forming a strong coalition.

VOICE OVER:

THAT VOTE ON THE PERSIAN GULF WAR, TWO YEARS INTO HIS PRESIDENCY, WAS A VICTORY FOR GEORGE BUSH, A RARE ONE FOR A REPUBLICAN PRESIDENT FACING A CONGRESS CONTROLLED BY THE OPPOSITION

Bush: I was facing a democratic majority, a huge majority in the house and the senate. So every time I sent a proposal to the Congress for the most part some guy would say dead on arrival. So I had to start trading with them on their agenda.

Cokie: But separation of powers – there it is – the first thing.

Bush – The ultimate

Cokie: The ultimate and you as you say had this big democratic Congress so you were called upon to use the veto power of the President.

Bush: That's a power that's given the president in the constitution and that's something that you have to exercise if you're going to try to do for the American people that what you told them you'd do when you were running for office.

But without trying to whine about it – it got pretty difficult when leadership of both the house and the senate opposed everything you wanted to do. We got some things done but it was through compromise and working behind the scenes – taking care of this guy's interest – and that person's interest. And it's quite different than when you have a huge majority in both houses and are president.

But - I didn't, I didn't, I didn't really like that part of it so much because - and I'll make this point, there's quite a bit of difference, Cokie, between foreign affairs as president and what you have to do with the congress and domestic affairs. It's much easier to be president over international affairs. The Congress doesn't have quite the same right to challenge control of the money and all that and so it makes it more fun. It's more fun

VOICE OVER:

IT WAS NOT MUCH FUN AT ALL ON THE DOMESTIC FRONT WHERE THE DEMOCRATS FORCED THE PRESIDENT TO BACK DOWN ON A CAMPAIGN PROMISE (Read my lips, no new taxes)

Bush Convention: Read my lips – no new taxes.

Cokie: But on domestic affairs you did have to keep cajoling them, and of course that famous budget summit in 1990.

Bush: Absolutely, and they made me, if we wanted to do a deal at all, accept a revenue increase – you see, we don't use taxes anymore, a revenue increase and in return I got a cap on discretionary domestic spending. The result, that all resulted, I think, in handing over to President Clinton an economy that was growing over 5%. It killed me politically. I knew at the time it was going to hurt. I just didn't know how bad – that I'd be unemployed.

Cokie: they really pushed you to say uncle on taxes.

Bush: yeah – oh yeah. 24:18 there was no question about that. The democrats knew they had me politically if we were going to do anything about the budget. Do I have any regrets about it looking back? I don't think so for 2 reasons. One, I think what happened really did have a stimulative effect on the economy not the tax increase part of it at all – but the concept of fiscal discipline over discretionary domestic spending. That was one part and the other has nothing to do with the Constitution and that is that if I'd have won that election I would not have a son who is the President of the United States of America nor probably one that is in his second term as Governor of the fourth largest state in the nation, Florida and Cokie, that's what matters to me now.

Do you think that partisanship at that time was unusual? Do you think it was worse than, let's say, when you were on the Ways and means committee?

Bush: I think it's gotten worse and worse, particularly when it comes to the confirmation of judges and the suspicion. But I don't know whether historically that's true. I just don't know enough about it to realize that. I know when my father was in the Senate, he's a great role model for me and how to conduct myself in public life, he felt there was a civility there that transcended the aisle in the middle of the Senate, transcended the breach between Republicans and Democrats. I'm not sure that still exists to the same degree.

Cokie: In terms of the Court, you certainly had some interesting fights over court nominations.

Bush: One in particular.

Cokie: One in particular. And when you named Clarence Thomas – you actually invoked the constitution and talked about how he was such a success story that he was protected by the Constitution and he would then protect it. Then what happened.

Bush: And I think he's done just that and he's been an outstanding judge and when I think of the agony I put him through by nominating him I think thank God he stayed the course because I think he's done an outstanding job. You might not agree with the decisions. Some people on the liberal side might not or even on the moderate side might not. But I think most recognize he is a Constitutional man. He knows the Constitution and had the courage to stand up against this huge political assault on him.

And I remember, Cokie, walking with him on the south lawn of the white house during the height of the debate and he came down there with Jack Danforth for whom I have great respect and he was saying "well do you think it would be better for you sir if I withdrew? Don't you think this is hurting the presidency?" I said it was just the opposite if I withdrew you're my support for you it would be terrible thing and we have every right to see you confirmed and you will be confirmed.. I wasn't overly sure at that very moment; I walked around the south lawn with my arm around him and said Clarence you've just got to stay in there. I think of course, he was pleased to hear he did have my support and the rest is history.

Cokie: were you surprised by what happened in the senate?

Bush: yes I was – the last minute assault on him by this woman coming out and all these groups coming out – maybe not so surprised. By then the confirmation process of judges, certainly for the Supreme Court, had gotten so polarized that maybe I should have expected the women's groups and the others to attack him but I was surprised at the vitriol, about how unfair the attacks seemed to me all it did in the long run was increase my respect for him. What it's done to the confirmation process of Supreme Court judges I n the future I don't know.

Cokie: The nomination process has become awfully hostile. That was not what was envisioned I think in the Constitution. Is there any way to fix it?

Bush: I think there's an encroachment on presidential power by the congress citing advise and consent meaning you've got to ideologically agree with me Senator Jones, or you're not going to get your man passed and I think it can happen both ways. I think it's a clear example of where the reality of today goes far beyond what the founding fathers thought when they talked about advise and consent there's another change – I don't think they ever envisioned filibusters. Filibusters used over a presidential nominee to the federal bench so yes there's a big change and I don't think it's a change for the better. But I was the president so I would like to have seen the president's, the executive power not be eroded through I think kind of entangled logic on the senate's right..

Cokie: It's very hard to see a way around it though because each party sees those nominations as true belief. As one Senator said to me once about the Bork nomination you can't do any compromising. You're either for me or against me so that the people who feel so strongly about it, the groups on each side don't allow for any kind of middle ground.

Bush: That's true and that's a very good example

Voice Over:

IT'S THE SUPREME COURT'S POWER TO INTERPRET THE CONSTITUTION THAT MAKES JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS SO CRITICAL, BECAUSE THE ONLY WAY TO OVERTURN A COURT DECISION IS BY AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION, WHICH HAS ONLY HAPPENED SEVENTEEN TIMES SINCE THE BILL OF RIGHTS WAS RATIFIED IN 1791

Cokie: There were some amendments that you, that were very popular at the time, the balanced budget amendment, an amendment for the line item veto, amendment to overturn Roe vs. Wade. What do you think about those now?

Bush: I think be careful but I think some of them, you know it depends on my view, my view of an issue. Some of them ought to be passed. Desecration of the flag is near and dear to my heart. And I don't see it as the ultimate right of free speech and so I'm sure Constitutional scholars would disagree with me but I'd like to see it happen. It's not going to happen in my view. There were some I felt very strongly about and others where I might have a party position and feel less strongly about.

Cokie: So things like balanced budget amendment not that important?

Bush: well it's important in terms of the threat of discipline but it's not going to, I don't think, I don't think that it'll ever get anywhere frankly.

Cokie: and abortion, it was such an awful issue for you.

Bush – it was and still is. Although I'm basically a pro life person, what I don't like about it is the divisions on both sides, the anger, the meanness, the shootings, the posturing –but it divides right close to the middle pro life pro choice, pro life, pro choice. and our party and me and our president, most in the Republican Party feel we're pro life and abortion people would argue “So am I but I want my right to choose and it's a difficult issue and I'm not sure I know where the constitution comes down on it.

Cokie: do you think was a mistake to make it a constitutional issue?

Bush: You mean like in Roe vs. Wade?

Cokie: Yes.

Bush: I don't remember too much back in when the Supreme Court made that decision. I know it was an extraordinarily difficult decision for some of the judges. Potter Stewart was one of my closest friends then and I remember, on the Court, and he told me a little bit about the agony of getting to the decision. But I don't know Cokie. I'm not a Constitutional scholar and I just don't know – I know what I feel about pro life but I'm not a scholar to say what – how far the Constitution interpretation should go in deciding that issue.

Cokie: You know in looking over some of the things earlier in your terms some things struck me of how things don't change and some things struck me of how much a change there are so you were still arguing about some of the social issues, about drilling in the Alaska wilderness, about dependence on foreign oil. Those things and yet early in your term there was the Soviet Union. Did you have any notion that that wall was going to come down?

Bush: No I did not - come down when it did – I remember I was Vice President when Reagan, President Reagan stood over there in Berlin and said “Mr. Gorbachev tear down that wall.” and you might have thought the New York Times had a conniption fit and a bunch of other liberal papers My God look at this crazy man talking about the evil empire, talking about tearing down the wall. This is going to ruin detente. Reagan stood with his principle.

And a new Soviet leader was there, Mr. Gorbachev and Gorbachev was working tremendous change inside Soviet Union and it all came together when the wall came down and Gorbachev told me in a cabinet meeting that the Germans had a right to self determination. the cabinet room and I was saying to Scowcroft handed me a note and said get him to repeat that. He came back in the room and I said Mr. President did I understand you correctly? Did you say they had the right to self determination? Be a member of NATO, be a was, member of the Warsaw pact. He said absolutely and- I don't remember the date of that meeting but it was a huge turning point and but still it happened, the end of the Soviet Union happened much quicker that I thought possible, I wasn't sure I thought it was possible and the unification of Germany happened much sooner than most people thought and a lot of that was because and I don't want to be bragging here because of the diplomatic work done with the Soviet Leader and please don't take my word for that, ask Chancellor Kohl. Ask the leaders of Germany at that time. It was a wonderful experience and it didn't have a darn thing to do with whether you got a vote in the senate, whether you ought to press for this or press for that. It was wonderful, liberated.

Cokie: I bet.

Bush: Let me tell you something on the Berlin Wall. The Berlin wall came down and when it was coming down – Mitchell, leader in the Senate for the Democrats and Gephardt leader of the democrats in the house, said the President doesn't get it. He doesn't understand the emotion Americans feel. He should go to Berlin and dance on the

wall with these students. I didn't say it at the time I thought it was the stupidest idea I ever heard of for me to stick my finger in Gorbachev's eyes when they were letting this go forward – They had legions in the GDR and I think still Hungary and Poland and we didn't know how soviet army would react. We didn't know if they could overthrow – we'll show the Americans – We'll get rid of Gorbachev. We're no paper tiger and for them to suggest that fine, that's their right but they didn't have any power to make me do something stupid like that. I've often thought back to the fact that the president has a right to make decisions to do something or not do something that the Congress can't really touch things that the congress can't touch.

Cokie: And you feel strongly that personal diplomacy really can make a huge difference?

Bush: I'm absolutely convinced of it. I know it was true, at least I felt it was true in our relationship with China. I mean Congress was screaming at me after Tiananmen Square – Cut off relations, do something, you know, more sanctions. Although we put sanctions on military stuff we said no we're not going to do that and you look at China today and I think I made the right decision not to break relations but to tell them we didn't approve and all that. But again that was a clear example of if congress had its will and could override president on a foreign policy matter in my view that would have been much worse. But it's an example of how the constitution gives the president the authority to make a very controversial decision and not be called on the carpet by you know 45 senators.

Voice Over:

BUT EVEN IN FOREIGN POLICY PRESIDENT BUSH FACED CONSTRAINTS. IN THE PERSIAN GULF WAR, FOR INSTANCE, THE UNITED STATES HAD NEGOTIATED A UNITED NATIONS RESOLUTION BEFORE INVADING IRAQ

Cokie Did you feel because the resolution said get Iraq out of Kuwait and that's what it said that you were constrained by that resolution?

Bush: You mean why didn't we go into Baghdad - no not at all. What I felt was that was what the objective was. And we tried to do it peacefully. We tried diplomacy. We tried to get the Arab Leaders to intervene with him. We'll say it's going to happen, but let's do it peacefully and that was it.

We told the military – here's your goal – we're going to liberate Kuwait. We told the coalition this is what it is we're going to liberate Kuwait so when the war ended there was no discussion about well you should have gone to Baghdad. Now ex post facto people are saying you made a mistake you should have done it. I don't believe in mission creep. I don't believe in going back on your word to the congress. We told them what we were going to do to the United Nations resolutions that were crafted not to capture Baghdad or not to kill Saddam - to liberate Kuwait – we did it and for the most part we came home. Let the kibitzers worry about it. I think history will say we did the right

thing. we saw mission creep in Vietnam. And now you've got a different circumstance. It's such a different time and I strongly support without reservation what the president did and must do. But I do get a little bit angry at Monday morning quarterbacks saying we did it wrong. We did it right.

Cokie: Aren't there natural tensions there again constitutionally because you have the American constitution laying out certain rights and responsibilities and then you have these international organizations and there are more and more of them as the global world becomes more one, whether it's the Atomic Energy Commission or the World Trade Organization or the International Court, any of those things.

Bush: Totally different than what the founding fathers thought of but I think they'd be flipping over like bowling balls in their graves if they thought anybody wanted to give the Belgian court the right to decide the fate of Americans charged with violations of international law. Maybe they don't understand that in Europe but I understand it pretty well and it would be a huge mistake for the united states to put it's – the fate of it's soldiers, the fate of it's political people in the hands of the court. For a while I was worried about going abroad afraid some nutty guy comes out of an international court in The Hague "Well, just a minute sir – stop your French dinner here. You're coming with us. We've got a mandate to take you off to an international tribunal –." I mean come on. No President and no Congress is going to agree on that encroachment on our constitution. That's what it boils down to although the debate is not always on Constitutional rights. It's more emotional than that.

VOICE OVER:

AND PRESIDENT BUSH FACED CONSTANT CHALLENGES FROM THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH ON OTHER FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES AS WELL.

Cokie: You talked about Congress, it's easier to deal with congress on foreign policy than on domestic policy but one of the areas in going back over this I had forgotten how strong this was – the big fights between the Congress and the executive over Central America that went on and on and on– was congress misbehaving in your view?

Bush: In retrospect yes because you got to look at what the result is. I mean when they had that free election in Nicaragua and the Sandinistas lost and democracy came in I think that said a lot about it. I think the United States was correct to stand against the Marxism of the Sandinistas and for the liberty and freedom of the people it's happened in other places. I was President when we had to go into Panama, restoration of democracy and bringing an international drug lord to justice. I think there have been you know some changes– I'm strongly supportive of what President Reagan felt he had to do in terms of trying to support these people who wanted freedom and wanted to oppose the Marxist system and you look around down there and there are a lot of problems but the problem

doesn't seem to be will Marxist Leninists come charging out of the woodwork in Nicaragua or Salvador or some other place.

Cokie: But that whole fight in Congress, cutting off aid to Nicaraguan rebels led to what we call Iran contra – and the sale of arms to Iran and the proceeds going to support the Contras in Nicaragua. When Casper Weinberger testified about that in Congress he said that was blatantly unconstitutional to support a private army like that without the oversight of Congress and Civilian leaders. Do you think that was unconstitutional?

Bush: I'm not the Constitutional scholar I'm sure Cap Weinberger is but I don't know that there's anything in the Constitution that says you don't support a foreign army without telling the Congress about it or the American people about it.

Cokie: But you did think it was wrong.

Bush: Ex-post facto yes. And I was surprised by the fact that the exchange was going on. Not that we were supporting the Contras. I think we should have and did.

Cokie: But the whole Iran Contra thing, of course, became enormous. And Judge Walsh was called in as an independent counsel and went on for many, many years

Bush: I remember the fella.

Cokie: I'm sure you do. And in fact right before your reelection date he indicted Secretary Weinberger.

Bush: Like five days before it and nobody will ever convince me that the man that actually brought down the indictment – a democratic lawyer from California working for Walsh – a big donor to democratic causes out there didn't have politics in mind when this happened. It was the end – the end of me. We were creeping up in the polls and then this happened. I lost all respect for Walsh and he knows it. It was political – I don't know how the Constitution has anything to do with it but I will go to my grave knowing – not that I would have won the election but that pure politics was driving that thing.

Cokie: Well, what the Constitution has to do with it is they created that office saying the executive can't investigate itself. Do you think that's true?

Bush: Special Prosecutors? I don't think there's anything in the Congress – in the Constitution says hey, if you're getting a stand off there have a special prosecutor. And I think they were right to get rid of it.

Cokie: Then after you were defeated, as you were leaving you pardoned most of the people.

Bush: absolutely and there a president does have a constitutional right. It was controversial but I was happy to do it – particularly Weinberger, but the others too.

Cokie: But why particularly Weinberger?

Bush: He's a good man and a friend and he served his country well and if he made a mistake fine. Overall Cap Weinberger's decency and experience I think was worthy of a pardon, a presidential pardon.

Cokie: Of course there were accusations at the time that you were pardoning him not to be called to testify at his trial.

Bush: Which is bull – I'd like to exclaim it really for you but I don't think that entered into any debate. I'd have to ask my general Counsel but that had nothing to do with it. Nothing, I wasn't concerned with my own role at all. I was annoyed about the fact that allegations had been made that hurt me politically but I was very proud of the fact that I pardoned those people. And the Congress couldn't do a damn thing about it. I loved that. I loved it. I loved it. They're doing foreign affairs. They couldn't do it because the constitution is very clear the president has the right to pardon and we didn't abuse it. We didn't do it for people giving money to support the president and all that kind of stuff or..... it was used after a lot of thought. Some will say it was political but too bad. I was president and I was proud to pardon these people.

Cokie: Your pardons were controversial. President Clinton's pardons were certainly controversial. Does it just go with the territory?

Bush – yeah it will just go with the territory especially on high profile cases but there are lots of pardons that go on all the time. Somebody gets his right to vote back, been a good citizen, served time and certain forgiveness which is a charitable thing anyway comes into play – you don't read about those 59:43 you don't read about all the banks that weren't robbed today. You read about the controversy and I understand that.

VOICE OVER:

GEORGE BUSH HAS SEEN THE PERSONAL LIFE IN THE WHITE HOUSE IN A WAY THAT NO PRESIDENT HAS SINCE JOHN ADAMS, WHOSE SON WAS ALSO ELECTED PRESIDENT. AND HE'S SEEN THE ROLE PLAYED BY THAT POWERFUL BUT THE NEVER EVEN MENTIONED IN THE CONSTITUTION OFFICE OF FIRST LADY, BOTH AS A HUSBAND AND A FATHER-IN-LAW

Cokie: But wives do play a role in these very important jobs.

Bush: No question. No question a very important role. And whether husbands will play the same role when we have a woman President I don't know.. But the big thing is – the behind the scenes thing is that, at least in the case of the Bush family is Barbara was

terribly supportive of me - totally and Laura is supportive of the president, but both of them fell totally free, as they should to say well you ought not do that or you make a stupid thing going out there and saying what you said. She was even mad about my forthright statement on broccoli. You're a liberator to every four year old and my wife balled me out at first till she saw how popular it was except for the broccoli growers.

Cokie: President Ford talked about how Mrs. Ford though, did give him a little grief on the Equal rights amendment. Mrs. Bush sometimes gave you a little grief.

Bush: Now she never really did. She gets credit for being you, know, different from me on abortion, for example but she never gave me any grief at all. No, she was with me 100% for what I did and she'd say – he was elected not me – and you know that may be a traditional First Lady's role, but she did it with conviction. And I think Laura's the same way with the President.

Voice Over:

THIS PRESIDENT BUSH HAD TO FACE SOMETHING ELSE—DEFEAT—IN 1992 AT THE HANDS OF ARKANSAS GOVERNOR BILL CLINTON

Cokie: One of the things that has struck me in talking to past presidents about the Constitution is the majesty of this document and watching the change. We talk about the revolution of 1800 when Thomas Jefferson took power and there was an orderly change of government. And you look over the last several elections, in several of them the person who defeated the person who's president takes the reigns of power. Or the person who defeated the vice president and they're all there together whether it's President Carter replacing President Ford or President Clinton replacing you or President Bush replacing Vice President Gore. It's a remarkable thing.

Bush: You know we take for granted peaceful transitions. You look around the world and there are a lot of countries that don't know what a peaceful transition – transfer of power is although that's changed dramatically. And so I think we should never take for granted that aspect of our system, you know the peaceful transfer of power from one party to another, one president to another. It's stabilizing and I'm a great believer in the 2 party system. That's not embodied in the Constitution but I think it should get some credit for real stability. These third party things fizzle out and they deserve to in my view.

Cokie: Were there moments in each - you were present for several of those. Were there tense moments as the new president comes in to replace

Bush: Yeah a little tension. I remember, you know it hurts to lose Cokie. It's wonderful to win but it hurts to lose. Thank God my mother taught me to be a good sport – don't blame other people for your own shortcomings. So when I lost to President Clinton I felt I let down a - lot of other people and you stand there at the White House door to greet the new president and his wife and it was not without pain. We loved the people that worked in the White House. But then the Lord works in mysterious ways – 8 years later I walked

back into the West Wing of the White House as the guest of the new President of the United States and we were greeted by that staff with warmth, civil servants, with warmth and affection just like it was your own kids. So out of the sorrow of defeat come wonderful things in the Bush family's case. We could not be happier.

I think the first picture taken of the President at his desk was a picture of him and his father. It was just so majestic for us as a family and so wonderful.

It wasn't about vindication or getting even with the Clintons. You read those reports and it's just crazy. It's the scope of history and the pride of a father and a son. That's what it was about then and that's what my life is about now. You lose and it hurts. Then something wonderful happens to you.

Voice Over:

THOUGH TWO FATHER AND SON PAIRS HAVE ACHIEVED THE PRESIDENCY – THE FOUNDERS WERE ADAMANT AGAINST INHERITED POWER. IN FACT THEY TRIED TO SPREAD POWER AROUND AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE – WHILE KEEPING ORDER.

AS JAMES MADISON WROTE IN THE FEDERALIST NUMBER FIFTY ONE “WHAT IS GOVERNMENT ITSELF BUT THE GREATEST OF ALL REFLECTIONS ON HUMAN NATURE? IF MEN WERE ANGELS NO GOVERNMENT WOULD BE NECESSARY. IF ANGELS WERE TO GOVERN MEN, NEITHER EXTERNAL NOR INTERNAL CONTROLS ON GOVERNMENT WOULD BE NECESSARY. IN FORMING A GOVERNMENT WHICH IS TO BE ADMINISTERED BY MEN OVER MEN, THE GREAT DIFFICULTY LIES IN THIS: YOU MUST FIRST ENABLE THE GOVERNMENT TO CONTROL THE GOVERNED; AND IN THE NEXT PLACE OBLIGE IT TO CONTROL ITSELF. A DEPENDENCE ON THE PEOPLE IS, NO DOUBT, THE PRIMARY CONTROL ON THE GOVERNMENT; BUT EXPERIENCE HAS TAUGHT MANKIND THE NECESSITY OF AUXILIARY PRECAUTIONS.”

THANK YOU FOR WATCHING, I'M COKIE ROBERTS

