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First Ladies: Barbara Pierce Bush

Lead: Only one other in American history was the wife and mother of Presidents of the United States. In the august company of Abigail Adams is Barbara Pierce Bush.

Intro. : *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: She met her husband at a Christmas dance when she was sixteen. Both were children of privilege and were educated among the Eastern elite. They were married during George's service in World War II, and after his graduation from

Yale, they struck out for the west Texas oil patch and began to build a business and a family. The future President's financial success led him into a prodigious political career and an unequalled resume. Six children and twenty-nine homes later, they moved into the White House.

Barbara Bush always enjoyed a level of popularity that was an asset to her husband's political career. She was refreshingly candid even on the campaign stump as in 1984 when she took on the Democratic vice-presidential nominee Geraldine Ferraro, but for the most part she fit into the traditional role of a political wife and First Lady. A formidable mother and spouse, she was active in

the gubernatorial campaigns of her two sons in Florida and Texas and worked hard in both Presidential campaigns of George W. Bush.

The Bush family endured tragedy in the loss of their eldest daughter Robin to leukemia in 1954 and the First Lady's battle with Graves disease, the debilitating thyroid malady, for which she underwent radiation treatment after the election of 1988. She pressed on with her responsibilities as First Lady, a characteristic that surprised no one who knew Barbara Bush.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

Bush, Barbara. *Barbara Bush: A Memoir.* New York, NY: Scribners' Sons, 1994.

Kilian, Pamela. *Barbara Bush: Matriarch of a Dynasty.* New York, NY: Thomas Dunne Books, 2002.

Radcliffe, Donnie. *Simply Barbara Bush: A Portrait of America's Candid First Lady.* New York, NY: Warner Books, 1989.

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/history/firstladies/bb41.html>

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