

**HEARTBEAT: GEORGE BUSH IN HIS OWN WORDS (SIMON & SHUSTER, 2001)**

*2001 Review from "Library Journal": Heartbeat is a "...collection of short excerpts from letters, speeches, public papers, and interviews by former president George Bush (that is an attempt to define his 'heartbeat' by presenting a version of who Bush is through his written and spoken words)...If Bush's words lack a certain flair, imagination, or drama, they present a portrait of a man deeply rooted in American values...Recommended for public and academic libraries."*

—Michael A. Genovese, Loyola Marymount Univ., Los Angeles

**EXCERPT** | As the chief executive and chief diplomat of the United States Government from 1989 to 1993, George Bush's values, his heartbeat, greatly influenced the rhythm of our national life and indeed the world. History will surely note that the breadth of his perspective, combined with the surety of his ideals, helped shape the dramatic times in which he led — when the tectonic plates of geopolitics shifted decisively in freedom's direction.

More important than history's verdict to him, however, is a timeless legacy of values he inherited from his parents — and today is helping to pass down to his children's children. Not the kind of values that find their ultimate expression in the fleeting approval of electoral politics or comfort of material wealth, mind you, but in the quiet, enduring strength of family, faith, and friends — and an occasional good joke or two.

In a letter written to his five children in 1998, George Bush confided, "Last year there was only a tiny sense of time left — of sand running through the glass. This year, I must confess, I am much more aware." But as much as any person, he has fully appreciated the imposing frailties of this world much longer than that statement suggests. Indeed, if — as it has been suggested — his heartbeat was tough for some to read, it might very well be because few could appreciate the totality of experiences that dictated its pulse. He saw friends die in war as a teenager, and nearly gave his own life. As parents, he and his wife watched a precious little girl slip painfully away, taken by illness at an innocent age. And after a grueling climb to what he calls the "mountaintop of American politics," he passed through the crucible of world leadership at a time of great risk — only to suffer an unlikely defeat at the polls 20 months hence. As much as any person, George Bush recognizes that tomorrow is promised to no one.

Perhaps, just maybe, this explains why the man is always in a rush — always in a mode of "Come on, let's go, there's still so much to do." Perhaps this helps explain why, at age 77, he still works some Sundays — or, when he's suffering from jet lag in the wee hours, decides to go into the office and catch up on the mail. Perhaps it begins to explain why he's always saying "on to the next event" — if not in word, then certainly by his manner. In sum, perhaps this helps us better understand the innate drive and decency of one of the great statesmen of the 20th century.

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