

We are pleased to share some reflections by our Covenant Partner Sichan Siv in honor of Former First Lady Barbara Bush, who left us in April 2018. He gave her the acronym, Barbubbles, which stands for "BARbara BUsh BLESSings." A deacon at FPC, Sichan served under Mrs. Bush's husband George (41) as deputy assistant to the President at The White House, and under her son George W. (43) as an ambassador to the United Nations.

BARBUBLES

Barbara Bush Blessings



Walker's Point, Summer 2017. Photo by Doro Bush Koch.

"...you will never regret not having passed one more test, not winning one more verdict or not closing one more deal. You will regret time not spent with a husband, a friend, a child or a parent."

"Libraries have always seemed like the richest places in the world to me, and I've done some of my best learning and thinking thanks to them. Libraries and librarians have definitely changed my life and the lives of countless other Americans."

Barbara Pierce Bush, 1925-2018

Martha's hometown of Pampa at the Top of Texas is where *wheat grows, oil flows, wind blows*. Since my first visit in 1982, I developed enormous admiration, affection and appreciation for the Texas Panhandle. We got married there on Christmas Eve 1983. It was 7 degrees below with 12 inches of snow and 20 mph wind. After Martha lifted off to be at Peace in Heaven with the Lord on December 14, 2016, I spent my first Christmas there without her. Even with the love and comfort of the Brainard family and others,

it was the most painful holiday. But things got better. On December 1 (Martha's birthday), 2017, her alma mater, The University of Texas School of Information, dedicated its Doctoral Student Lounge to her. On December 20, Pampa High School, where Martha was valedictorian and a Hall of Famer, named its library reading area for her. On January 22, 2018 the City of Pampa adopted a resolution naming its children's library in honor of Martha. We set the dedication for April 20, exactly four months after Pampa High's.

April 15, I left home at 02:20 AM and arrived in Pampa in time for the 10:45 service at First Presbyterian. For most of the eight-hour trip, I was the only person on the road, with plenty of time to pray for family and friends, especially the Bushes (41 and BPB). I transported the first shipment of books I gifted to Lovett Memorial Library where Martha read 100 books every summer. The Tea & Talk Book Club wanted to make *Golden Bones* its 100th book in May. But I would be in Washington for the National Celebration of Reading, hosted by the Barbara Bush Foundation, which I was privileged to address in May 2017. I spoke to the Club and to Pampa High students, and organized contests for the Martha Pattillo Siv Prize. At the dedication of the Martha Pattillo Siv Children's Library on April 20, 2018, Mayor Pingel and I thanked each other for the opportunity to honor Martha, the girl who made it from Pampa to the pinnacle of our society, by following her dreams.

I hesitated at the beginning to drive from Pampa to Houston (600 miles) all night for the celebration of former First Lady Barbara Bush's life. I could hear: *Sichan, if you die for trying to get to my funeral, I will kill you!* But God provides. My good friend Benny stepped in. After traveling through the night, he left me at Hobby to fly to Amarillo and return to Pampa.

I pulled into the parking lot of Second Baptist at 07:00 AM on April 21, four hours before the service began at St. Martin's Episcopal: *Let us pray to God that he will raise her to perfection in the company of the saints.*

For 13 years, I kept on my desk Mrs. Bush's handwritten note of March 6, 2005:

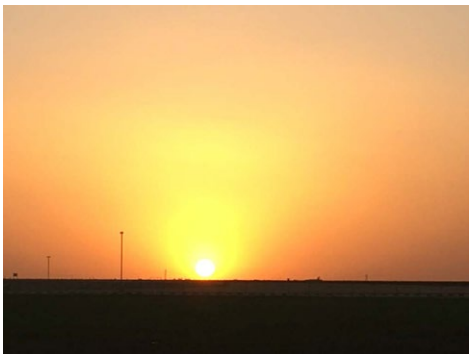
Dear Martha and Sichan, George brought home the lovely candle snuffer that you designed. It is really perfect and will go to Maine where we use candles every night. I am so thrilled to have this lovely piece. You have been so nice to Doro over the years and her father and I are so grateful to you. Warmly, Barbara Bush.

Her December 16, 2016 note touched me the most:

Dear Sichan, Doro told me today the very sad news about your precious wife. We are so sad for you and the world. As I believe in heaven, I know we will all see her again. God bless you, dear friend. Affectionately, George and Barbara Bush

I also believe in heaven. As I savored the last rays of the setting sun from Martha's Lounge at her alma mater, I summoned the beautiful memories of an extraordinary life that had touched all of us. Everybody was a mourner who had now lost something and someone dearest. I envisioned Martha welcoming Barbara at the Pearly Gates: *Let me show you around!* And off they went, hand in hand, two women I have always loved and respected, and will forever do: a librarian and a literacy champion and First Lady of the Greatest Generation. They have gone to *that undiscovered country, from whose bourn no traveler returns, to that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* I know we will all see them again.

I thank God for Martha and Barbara!



Pampa, Apr 17, 2018 The day BPB lifted off.

***Blessed be the day you were born;
Blessed be the day we met;
Blessed be the days we are together;
In person or in spirit;
Yesterday, today, tomorrow, forever!***



*The University of Texas iSchool, Austin, April 22, 2018.
The day after the celebration of BPB's life.*

Surely, I am with you always to the end of the age. Matthew 28:20

Sichan Siv, UT iSchool, April 22, 2018