

For Bush, Solemn Ritual, Emotional Goodbyes

By Bill McAllister and Ann Devroy
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Minutes after he had received a standing ovation for "his half-century of service to America," George Bush stepped yesterday into the world of former presidents.

A military honor guard lined the way for Bush and former first lady Barbara Bush from the otherwise deserted East Front of the Capitol to the waiting helicopter that would take the Bushes to Andrews Air Force Base and away from the city where they had lived for the last dozen years. A few close aides and the

new president and vice president were on hand to say goodbye.

But the big crowds were gone, a reminder of the sudden, swift transition to private citizen that can make a former president seem lonely and adrift.

Bush's final hours as president were, in the words of former White House press secretary Marlin Fitzwater, "pretty emotional. There were a lot of goodbyes." And the ending that once seemed to be so painfully slow to Bush came swiftly as he bade farewell to telephone operators, declared 10 Arizona counties a flood disaster area and then left the White House.

"He's fine, a new life, looking forward

to a new life," Fitzwater later told reporters as the former president left Andrews for Houston. The Bushes will live there in a rented house until their new home is built later this year.

Bush was stoic and solemn as he left Washington. He had advised some friends not to show up at the airport for his departure but he seemed delighted that several hundred youthful White House aides appeared anyway. "This is beyond the call, by golly," Bush said, as he grasped a few hands before climbing aboard the presidential jet.

The Bushes returned there with what Fitzwater called two dozen

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supporters—what Fitzwater called "the early group" of Bush supporters who were with him in 1979 when he made his first run for the presidency. They traveled in the huge Boeing 747 that had carried Bush all over the world during his one-term presidency. Yesterday, in another reminder of his return to private life, it was called "Flight 28000"—no longer Air Force One—because Bush was no longer president.

"We love the Bushes and we want to say goodbye to them," said Cheryl Chrisman, an Army wife from Fort Belvoir who was among more than 2,000 people who gathered at Andrews to see the Bushes off. Chrisman came with her two daughters and a corsage of roses she wanted to present to Mrs. Bush.

"I wanted to send the big guy off," said Kathy Maney of Waldorf, Md., whose husband works in the Air Force One crew.

Some came to Andrews with a practical view. "I wanted to see history, I guess," said John Carrigg of Boston.

"We wanted to see something, and we did not want to be in long lines," said Carol Kuz of Arlington. She said she hoped to return "to see Clinton depart in four years." Was that a political state-

ment? She paused and said, "Well, yes."

"I'm a diehard Bush fan," said Pam Scarbro of Annapolis, who brought the same "God Bless George Bush" sign to the airport that she and her son had carried to Bush's inaugural parade four years earlier.

"Our hearts are making the flight," said Margery LeTourneau, who described herself as a Navy wife from Alexandria. "We support him to the end of his tenure."

Bush's helicopter circled the Capitol and then the White House before flying to Andrews. The former president said nothing to the crowd there, but he stopped by an area where the White House aides were waiting as his two dogs, Millie and Ranger, scampered up a carpeted stairway and into the jet.

He had graciously asked his old friends aboard, but the reporters who traditionally make such flights with former presidents were not aboard, a reminder of



BY JAMES A. PARCELL—THE WASHINGTON POST

A day of reflection, farewells:

Former White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater sits on Capitol steps puffing on a cigar as he waits for former president George Bush to come out of the building and board helicopter; right, the former president gives a thumbs up to the Clintons, and Barbara Bush waves to supporters as they walk toward helicopter for a flight to Andrews Air Force Base. From there, they flew to Houston.



BY LUCIAN PERKINS—THE WASHINGTON POST

Bush's bitterness toward the media from his unsuccessful reelection campaign. Hugh Sidey, the Time magazine reporter who has been an unabashed admirer of many presidents, was among the guests.

Members of the ground crew of Air Force One presented Bush with a plaque and a baseball cap with the unit's logo. A Navy band played a Sousa march as Bush bade farewell to a one-star Air Force general. His brother, Prescott Bush, and several children greeted him with a hand-lettered cardboard sign: "G&B, we love you."

"George Bush is a Texan, and I figured he needed a Texan to tell him goodbye," said Rep. Sam Johnson (R-Tex.), sporting a dark black Stetson hat.

The Bushes climbed aboard the jet, turned to wave and joined a group of friends and political aides for the flight to Texas and a luncheon of what one Air Force spokesman said was "Texas-style

barbecue." Among those aboard were former secretary of state and White House chief of staff James A. Baker III, former treasury secretary Nicholas F. Brady, former transportation secretary Andrew Card, former White House counsel C. Boyden Gray and Republican National Committee Chairman Richard N. Bond.

Bush was all smiles when he arrived at Ellington Air Force Base in Texas. "It's been one helluva ride," he told an airport crowd. "Barbara and I have been very lucky."

Yesterday morning as the Bushes took a last stroll around the White House grounds, they waved to a group of tourists. "A big booming voice yelled out, 'We love you, Mr. President. You did a great job.' I think that made his day," said Fitzwater.

In the Oval Office, Bush wrote a note to President Clinton. "It's a confidential

letter," Bush said later as he welcomed his successor to the White House. "But I'd like to take this opportunity to wish . . . all the best and Godspeed."

Thomas "Lud" Ashley, a former Democratic congressman from Ohio who has known Bush from their days at Yale University, said Bush was in good spirits but had told a small dinner party Monday night that the goodbyes were hard. "One of the toughest things for him was to say goodbye to the staff at Camp David," Ashley said. "He had a bad time responding, talking to those people."

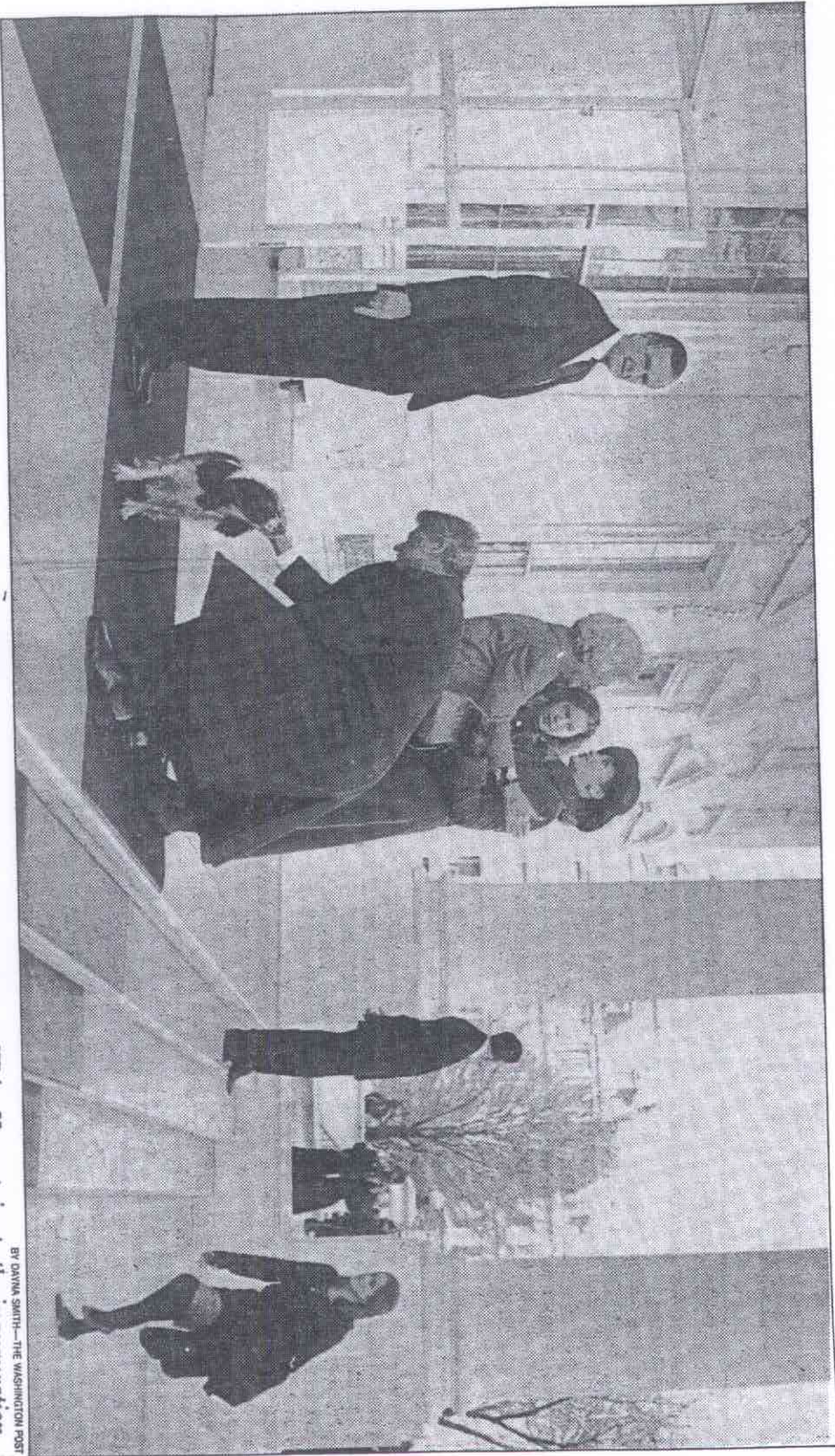
But at Andrews it was former vice president Dan Quayle who had the last word. After the Bushes climbed aboard their jet, reporters shouted: "Mr. Vice President, a few words?"

Quayle, who was shaking hands with White House staffers in a nearby area, waved, smiled and said: "Goodbye."

THE INAUGURATION OF WILLIAM JEFFERSON CLINTON



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A change of tenants: Clinton pets "Millie," as Barbara Bush greets Hillary Clinton and Chelsea at White House prior to the inauguration.

BY DANNA SMITH—THE WASHINGTON POST