

# Meeting the President

It isn't every day that a person gets to meet the President of the United States. My wife, Lola, and I had that opportunity this past Tuesday evening. During the years that I worked for a newspaper, I was present at a number of functions attended by the President, but never had a personal encounter. A few years ago, we – along with Forrest and Kathleen Preston – met and chatted briefly with Gerald Ford at a golf tournament carrying his name in Beaver Creek, Colorado. But, of course, he was a past President at that time.

This week, the event to which we were invited was the President's Dinner, held at the Washington Convention Center. Don and Carole Giardina, Cathy Murray, Cami Baughman, Lola and I flew up from Cleveland, Tennessee, to attend through the invitation of our congressman, U.S. Representative Zach Wamp. It was, all of us agreed, a very impressive affair, indeed. About 6,000 people were in attendance in the great hall.

About 500 people were selected to actually meet President George W. Bush and have individual photographs taken with him in a reception preceding the dinner. Lola and I were picked for that privilege. In the days leading up to the trip to Washington, as I contemplated what would happen, meeting the President and having a picture taken with him would be nice, I thought, but it didn't seem to be such a big deal.

As we stood in the receiving line, however – jammed into a relatively small part of the convention center – and as the procession moved slowly toward the private, curtained-off location where Mr. Bush stood, all of a sudden meeting the President WAS a big deal. I told Lola that it is awesome to realize that we were about to meet face to face and shake the hand of the most powerful person in the world – an individual whose decisions affect not only the lives of Americans, but people all around the world. The anticipation heightened as we moved toward that private area.

“What does one say to the President of the United States?” I kept wondering. I knew there would not be much time, because there were many men and women in the line, and he had a speech to make to the larger assemblage.

Finally, the moment arrived. Lola and I stepped through the curtain, and there stood President Bush, along with the photographer and a photo assistant, and several Secret Service men. We walked over to Mr. Bush, he greeted Lola warmly and moved her to one side, then shook my hand and motioned for me to stand on the opposite side for the picture of the three of us.

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He was friendly and open in his reception, and there was no sense of arrogance or self-importance.

“God bless you, Mr. President,” I said.

He smiled, and said: “Thank you. He has, and for that I am grateful.”

We moved on – to the large assembly hall and the dinner that awaited.

But I did so with a renewed pride in our country and the man who leads us. I believe that George W. Bush genuinely seeks the leadership of God in his life and for the will of the Creator in the life of this country. I felt more secure that this nation is in good hands, and I renewed my determination to pray often for God’s direction of the President, and for the protection of him and his family.

--Beecher Hunter