

Former First Lady Laura Bush 'On the Record'

Tuesday, June 09, 2009 **FOX NEWS**



FNC - Former first lady Laura Bush

This is a rush transcript from "On the Record," June 8, 2009. This copy may not be in its final form and may be updated.

GRETA VAN SUSTEREN, FOX NEWS HOST: Now former first lady Laura Bush goes "On the Record." We took a road trip to Dallas, Texas, to talk to Mrs. Bush about her new life in the private sector and the hard work she continues to do promoting women's health issues.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

VAN SUSTEREN: Mrs. Bush, it's awfully nice to see you.

LAURA BUSH, FORMER FIRST LADY: Thank you. Thanks, Greta.

VAN SUSTEREN: Lovely to be down here in Dallas. And you've got a big project.

BUSH: That's right. Today is a very big luncheon that is going to talk about women's health issues, three really important organizations that work on women's health that I've been a part of. One is the Komen Foundation for the Cure, for breast cancer. And you traveled with me to the Middle East when we took Komen there in partnership with the State Department to reach out to women there about breast cancer.

Another one is the Heart Truth, which is a national heart, lung and blood institute, and their little symbol is the red dress, the Red Dress Project, and that's -- the purpose of it is to get the word out to American women that heart disease is the leading cause of death among American women. And then the third is a really fun one for me, and that is the Laura Welch Bush Institute for Women's Health at the Texas Tech University in Lubbock. And their focus is west Texas women, but they're also doing research that I think could mean a lot for everyone, for women everywhere.

VAN SUSTEREN: Your institute, as I understand it, has three parts. It's the research. It's the clinical. And it's also the education.

BUSH: Education. And they do a lot of education especially among women that they serve in west Texas, which is - would be from Amarillo on the north, El Paso on the far west, Abilene on the east side, and then all the way down into the Big Bend of Texas. It's a very wide, mainly rural area with a lot of women who they want to educate and want people to know about what they can do to protect their health.

VAN SUSTEREN: No, I was here lending your name to it, but I suspect that you're very much involved, because, as you noted, you know, I followed you, stalked you all around the Middle East on breast cancer.

What do you anticipate actually doing with your new institute?

BUSH: Well, the Laura Bush Institute that's at Texas Tech is the only Texas research institute that's uniquely focused on women's health. And so they'll do research that can have implications for people worldwide.

They're going to research the issues, the health issues that are particular to women. For instance, better diagnosis of ovarian cancer, or new treatment for breast cancer, or just all the other ways -- women and aging, something that's becoming more important to me.

VAN SUSTEREN: Aging? Aging? Who's aging?

BUSH: Exactly.

VAN SUSTEREN: I remember when we were in the Middle East, that there was a partnership -- I think it was with M.D. Anderson -- where they would actually watch the surgery being done in the Middle East. Do you anticipate partnerships with your institute with overseas?

BUSH: Well, we hope so. I hope that that will be part of their research.

But right now they're just doing different research and education. You know, they're serving their local population, west Texas, but they're also doing research about a lot of things that women face that can really have implications worldwide.

VAN SUSTEREN: You know, it's sort of interesting, is that first ladies, their hard workers. They don't stop when they leave the White House. I mean, you're taking this project and still going.

BUSH: Well, it's something I've worked on forever. I was the invitation chairman for the Komen Foundation years ago when I lived in Dallas, when George and I were here back in the '90s. And I worked on what then were the very first big fundraisers for Komen, which a big luncheon that was held here in Dallas.

So it's something that I've been interested in. My mother is a breast cancer survivor. My grandmother also had breast cancer. So it's something that I've been interested in for years. And, of course, I want to continue it for the rest of my life.

VAN SUSTEREN: You mentioned the women's heart project. Your mother-in-law told me that she got a pig's valve.

BUSH: Right.

VAN SUSTEREN: She also told me...

BUSH: She's been very hilarious, saying things like now she's noticing she's been craving corn.

(LAUGHTER)

VAN SUSTEREN: Well, she also told me that -- I don't know if it was your father-in-law or your husband who goes "oink, oink" around her because she has the pig's valve.

BUSH: I think that's my father-in-law, not my husband. But that's right.

But she feels great. And we are so fortunate there are so many great treatments for any type of heart disease here in the United States. And that's why women need to know that heart disease is the leading cause of death, because we think of heart disease as a man's disease.

And so often women are too late to get to the hospital. They just think, well, I'm going to go lie down and I'll feel better, when, in fact, just like they send their husbands to the emergency room, or take them to the emergency room, if they show any symptoms of a heart attack, they should also get treatment immediately.

Because if you get right to the hospital, a lot of times you can protect yourself from the damage that a heart attack might cause.

VAN SUSTEREN: And sometimes just simple aspirin.

BUSH: That's right.

VAN SUSTEREN: They all push -- the doctors always talk about aspirin.

When we traveled to the Middle East, I thought it was stunning how different the women approach the health issues compared to here in the United States and because of their cultural background.

BUSH: Well, that's right. And that's the way we were in the United States, too. People didn't mention breasts. They didn't talk about breast cancer 25 or 30 years ago. When Betty Ford and Nancy Reagan made their bouts of cancer public, that was a huge service for American women.

And the Komen Foundation started, and everyone learned what the pink ribbon was.

But in many parts of the world, breast cancer still carries a lot of shame and a stigma, and women don't even mention breasts. And that's why it's important for American women to be able to reach out to our sisters around the world and talk about it, because we can save lives.

VAN SUSTEREN: Do you miss the sort of international travel with these things? I mean, things have changed a little bit.

BUSH: That's right, exactly. Well, sure. I mean, that was really fun. I loved doing that. But I'll be able to do that as a private citizen, too.

VAN SUSTEREN: What is private citizen life like?

BUSH: It's great. I mean, we've really enjoyed it.

We love Dallas. We've loved being home. We love our new house. And we have so many friends here. And it's been very obvious -- everywhere I go, I run into other friends that I hadn't even thought about. And so it's been really fun. We've loved it.

VAN SUSTEREN: Well, I imagine that in many -- at least I thought it was. It's sort of like, you know, you're going full speed for eight years, literally 24/7, and then all of a sudden, one day...

BUSH: It stops.

VAN SUSTEREN: ... it stops, right.

BUSH: Well, that's true, and that's how it happens.

But I think because you always know it -- I mean, you know from the day you're elected that January 20th, four years later, it's either going to be up or you're going to be reelected. Or if you are reelected in that second term, that that's it.

And so I think, because of that, it really was not that difficult to move from this very, very demanding job to a private life again. I think you prepare yourself for it as you, you know, you watch the campaign for the new president, and after the election, when you know who the new president-elect is.

And so I think it's just something you know is going to happen. And certainly we watched it happen with President Bush and Barbara Bush, and we knew that there's life after the presidency.

So I think we were very prepared for that.

VAN SUSTEREN: But it's always interesting, I think, to watch the first ladies, which I always thought is the toughest job, because you watch your husband no matter which party -- get whacked across the head for eight years, or four years. And you don't get paid. And you have to be careful what you say all the time. I mean, it's always a tough job.

And then they leave, and they do great things, the first ladies. I mean, look at breast cancer, women's health. And your mother-in-law has done literacy. And Secretary of State Clinton, what do you think of her? How's she doing?

BUSH: I think she's doing fine, very well. I talked to her about Burma. I'm worried, like so many other people are, about Aung San Suu Kyi and this trial that the military juntas have, this sort of show trial that seems to be going on right now. And that's worrisome.

VAN SUSTEREN: Can you just pick up the phone and call the secretary of state and say you spoke to Secretary of State Clinton? I mean, how do you...

BUSH: No. I mean, sure. I'm sure I could pick up the phone and call her. But, actually, somebody called and told her that I wanted to talk to her, and we arranged it, a phone call.

VAN SUSTEREN: Well, you must have some attention of what's going on in North Korea now with the two American journalists.

BUSH: That's right. And that also is very worrisome and so sad for the two young women and for their families. And I hope that we'll be able to -- that the U.S. government will be able to intercede in some way to get their release.

VAN SUSTEREN: It's been such a problem though -- I mean, that country for us, for 50-plus years. And these women, now they're in 12 years in a labor camp, unless something happens.

BUSH: Really frightening, that's right. I mean, exactly. It's once again a very -- you know, a tyrant that no one in the world seems to be able to make an impact on, even though there's been a number of resolutions out of the U.N. And I'm sure there will be more after the nuclear tests that just were performed in North Korea and now this.

It just shows that it's a dangerous world. And there's these still these hotspots around the world like North Korea, and it's very difficult. And the international community just needs to come together.

But even when they have with resolutions, nothing seems to have happened for the good there.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

VAN SUSTEREN: More with former first lady Laura Bush.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

VAN SUSTEREN: Is it fun for you to watch the women succeed? We've got -- even if it's a different administration, you've got Secretary of State Clinton, who, of course, was a first lady. You've got a nominee for the Supreme Court who's a woman.

Do you enjoy that?

BUSH: I do, and I'm proud of that. And I'm proud that women are taking more and more important roles.

And I think that's one of the things that we'll talk about today, and that is the way women advocates, women health advocates, have been so successful in getting the word out.

Nancy Brinker, who founded the Komen Foundation, who's now been named a Goodwill Ambassador for the World Health Organization to talk about cancer worldwide.

And Dr. Elizabeth Nabel, who's been head of the Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, who founded the Red Dress Project, The Heart Truth.

And already, we're seeing great success for that. Deaths among women decreased as women have found out that heart disease is a woman's disease, and have started getting to the hospital, or doing the other things that they can do to prevent a heart attack and to really promote good hearth health.

And, of course, that's not smoking, watching your weight. If you're obese, doing something about it, knowing what your risk factors are. If you have diabetes, if you have high cholesterol, if you have high blood pressure. Women need to make sure they know what all their risks are and then to take care of it.

And the good news is, when women take care of their own health, usually their families prosper as well, because women still are the ones who are doing most of the food shopping and food preparing.

And so it's important that women know all the ways they can protect their own health, because when they do that, they'll protect their children's health as well.

VAN SUSTEREN: Food shopping? Is the president -- what's the president up to? Has he taken any...

BUSH: He hasn't done any food shopping so far, but...

VAN SUSTEREN: He's done none?

(LAUGHTER)

VAN SUSTEREN: How about cooking?

BUSH: No cooking either. But neither have I, really. We've been -- we have somebody who has helped us cook, fortunately, and George has been really happy about that. I'll admit it -- so have I.

VAN SUSTEREN: What is the president doing? I know he's writing his -- is he working every day on his book?

BUSH: He's working every day on his book. He's so disciplined. He's always been so disciplined. He gets up early in the morning, then works for a few hours on his book.

And I'm also working on a book, but I'm not as disciplined as he is. So he's putting me to shame on that. He works on his book.

We've been seeing a lot of people. We've been working a lot on his new library, the Bush library that will be at SMU here in Dallas.

We've been doing fundraising for that and talking about that, and having a lot of session to plan it, then talk about it. And so that's been very fun and exciting for us.

VAN SUSTEREN: Have you had any contact with some of the old guards, so to speak?

BUSH: Sure.

VAN SUSTEREN: How about Vice President Cheney speaking out? What do you think about that?

BUSH: Well, I think that's his right as an American citizen. And I think he feels obligated.

He also was briefed every single day, just like President Bush was. And I think he feels an obligation to speak out. And I think that's certainly something he should do if he wants to do that.

VAN SUSTEREN: President Bush hasn't spoken out.

BUSH: He just thinks as a former president that he owes President Obama his silence on these issues. And he doesn't think a former president should second-guess what the president is doing at the time. He didn't like it when that happened to him, and so he doesn't want to do that to President Obama either.

VAN SUSTEREN: Do you hear from Condoleezza Rice, former Secretary of State?

BUSH: Sure. Condi's stayed with us already. She was one of our very first guests, which was great, because it made me get the guestroom furnished as fast as I could and the drapes in, and all of those things.

And so she's been here already and stayed with us once. And I hope we'll see her soon.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

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