

TRIBUTE TO GEORGE H.W. BUSH

In 1999, President George H.W. Bush came to York to speak in the Strand Theater. The York County Honors Choir, a brand new group in its second season, was asked to sing the National Anthem prior to his speech. We arrived at the theater and were led to our place on the risers behind the curtain. We asked if we would have an opportunity to meet President Bush, but the Secret Service agent said "No, absolutely not." We were told to stay on the risers and wait. Then we saw President Bush come in through the back door and walk with all of the Secret Service agents to the wings on stage right. He was so close, but we couldn't talk with him..... Then, suddenly, out of the darkness, there he was..... walking right into the middle of our group..... he just decided he wanted to meet us, and he told the Secret Service guys that he was going to do it whether they wanted him to or not. He greeted all of us, shook hands, and thanked us for being there to sing. He was so friendly and encouraging. (Unbelievably, there are no pictures of President Bush with our group because most people didn't have cell phones at the time, and even if we did, they were ancient flip phones with very poor cameras at best..... and it was such a surprise that nobody even thought to take a picture anyway). It happened so fast, and then he went back to the side of the stage. After we sang the National Anthem, President Bush praised and thanked our singers at the beginning of his speech. Since his passing at the age of 94 last week, the news has been filled with the stories of his love of family, heroic service in the Navy and decades of service to his country. Our little encounter with him proved that he was also kind, friendly, thoughtful, and connected to everyone and everything around him.

Randy Yoder, Senior Honors Choir Director