George W. Bush and The Badge He Kept Close:

By Mike Krumboltz

After the attacks on September 11, "Never Forget" became a kind of slogan, a way to honor the victims and heroes of that horrific day. President George W. Bush took that sentiment to heart.

Following the aftermath of the attacks, Bush met with families of the victims. One woman, Arlene Howard, approached the president during a Ground Zero visit and gave him a police badge, which Bush carried in his pocket during his presidency. The badge belonged to her son, George Howard, who was an officer for the Port Authority Police Department in New York City.

"President Bush carried it in his pocket in the days and months that followed 9/11," said Eric Draper, the official White House photographer during Bush's presidency. "He would show it to people and tell the story about George Howard and the day it was given to him by Howard's mother."

The badge meant a great deal to Bush. Draper told CNN, "He would always carry it and pull it out to remind people and to remind himself about what happened that day." During an address to Congress 10 days after the attack, Bush held up Badge 1012 as a symbol of all those who had lost their life.

Bush remarked: "And I will carry this. It is the police shield of a man named George Howard, who died at the World Trade Center trying to save others. It was given to me by his mom, Arlene, as a proud memorial to her son. This is my reminder of lives that ended and a task that does not."

The official site of the Port Authority Police Benevolent Association hosts a memorial to Officer Howard. He wasn't officially working on September 11, 2001. He had the day off, but heard about the attacks and immediately went down to the World Trade Center to help in any way that he could.

That wasn't the first time Howard had responded to an emergency at the World Trade Center. When the site was bombed in 1993, Officer Howard responded and was credited with saving several lives. He was off duty on that day, as well.

Officer Howard was 44 at the time of his death. His badge will "become part of the Bush Presidential Library under construction in Dallas, Texas," says Draper. "It was extremely important to me to have a visual record of the badge in his hand." The photo was taken in the Oval Office on October 15, 2001.

