

THE GRIFFIN LEGACY



Senator Robert Griffin & Mrs. Marjorie Griffin with Presidents George H.W. Bush and Gerald Ford

We talked with Robert Griffin's grandson Jason in the Griffin Legacy Piece this year. Jason shares fond memories of his Grandfather. He talked about how he was as a person and politician and how he inspired him.

The Griffin: Tell us about your grandpa.

Jason: While I never knew my grandfather as the US Congressman or US Senator, I did get to grow up hearing stories directly from him and others about his

service. Grandpa Griff (as I know him) was closely aligned with Governor Bill Milliken, Governor George Romney, and President Gerald Ford, all of whom he considered amongst his closest friends. By knowing the type of friends he had, you can also tell the type of Republican he was; someone that could reach across the aisle and put partisan differences aside to come up with the best solution for the people of Michigan and the United States. One of the best examples of this bipartisanship is in the Landrum-Griffin Act, which is widely regarded as The Bill of Rights for Union Workers and protected employees' union membership rights from unfair practices by unions. Even Grandpa's closest friends were quick to point out that my grandfather was not driven by the party he represented or what was best for the party, but that his primary focus was always on the people that he represented and what was best for them.

The Griffin: What's your favorite political memory of him?

Jason: While I don't have many political memories as he was out of the Senate

before I was born, I will never forget when my grandfather retired from the Michigan Supreme Court. As the eldest Grandson, I was asked, along with my cousin Sarah the eldest Granddaughter, to unveil his portrait which still hangs at the court today. As an 11-year-old in fifth grade, I can't say that I truly appreciated all that my Grandfather had done up to that point but this was probably the moment in my life that I realized how great of a man he truly was and the incredibly great things he had done.

» Fun Fact: I grew up playing golf every Sunday with Grandpa Griff and my father. My Grandpa always thought it was the coolest thing that 3 generations of Griffins were together every Sunday morning. I was also fortunate enough to grow up directly across the lake from my Grandparents, so going over for Grandpa's famous Turtle Pancakes was a regular occurrence. Don't worry they only looked like turtles, no turtles were harmed in the making of the pancakes...truth be told, the secret ingredient that made the pancakes so "famous" was Beer!



Jason Griffin with Gov. Whitmer

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The Griffin: What inspires your career in policy and government relations?

I started in the Michigan legislature as an intern at 21 years old. On my first day, Senator Tony Stamas introduced me to a few of his colleagues in the Senate and I was blown away at how many knew my Grandfather, how many respected my Grandfather, and regardless of D or R how many had a good story to tell about the positive impact that he had on their lives. Grandpa Griff used to always say, “You know J, the biggest difference between then and now, is back then we were civil. We could have our disagreement publicly but then we could sit down 1-on-1 and sort out our differences. It didn’t mean that we would always agree, but it did mean we’d have a deeper understanding of where they were coming from, what life experiences lead to their beliefs and, more often than not, gain mutual respect through understanding.” I’ve always been one to get along with multiple friend groups, being able to talk to anyone regardless of their walk in life, and in general, have been a reasonable consensus builder. After all of my discussions with my Grandfather, it seemed like my skillset was a natural fit in Government Affairs/Relations.

The Griffin: Would you say that the sense of civic duty “runs in the family”?

Jason: Yes, a sense of duty runs deep in the Griffin family. My Grandfather never ran for office to “see his name in lights”, he did it out of a sense of service to his community and to the State that had given him so much. My grandfather had to work for everything he had in life, which in turn gave him the utmost respect for every other Michigander working to pull themselves up by the bootstraps. Volunteering what time and resources you have to better those around you was a core tenet of what my Grandfather taught us growing up.

We all do our best to give back to the community. I currently serve as President of the Andrew J Griffin Foundation which was founded in my brother’s name to support the Andrew J Griffin Scholar program at the Great Lakes Culinary Institute in Traverse City, as well as have volunteered with numerous organizations such as Habitat for Humanity and the Michigan Children’s Trust Fund, to name a couple.

The Griffin: To date what has been a career highlight for you?

Jason: This is a tough question as it depends on what phase of my career I was in. My work as campaign manager and on the legislative staff for both Tony and Jim Stamas will always hold a special place in my heart as it was how I got



Senator Griffin with President Carter



Senator Griffin with Senator R. Kennedy



Senator Griffin with President Nixon



Senator Griffin with President Reagan



Jason Griffin with State Representative Graham Filler at Hemlock Semiconductor



Senator Griffin with President Eisenhower



Senator Griffin with Governor George Romney

started in this field. Being able to bring then-Senator Tony Stamas to Grandpa's house and watch the two of them trade stories on the back deck is something I'll never forget.

My career in corporate Government Relations has been focused on Energy Intensive manufacturing operations, which has led to me focusing my efforts on decarbonizing heavy industry. My work on Governor Cuomo's Energy Intensive Trade Exposed Advisory Workgroup to the New York Council on Climate Solutions or being an industry expert and presenter to Governor Whitmer's Energy Intensive Industries Advisory Workgroup to Michigan's Council on Climate Solutions, has been especially rewarding. Knowing that projects I've worked on will have immense positive impacts on the World around us far after I'm gone is something that I take great pride in. An example would be working with the State of Michigan to increase the alternative fuels program at the Alpena Cement Plant to help reduce their reliance on coal as well as divert current waste streams from being landfilled indefinitely.

Or working with the MEDC, the Governor, and the Legislature to secure funding for the expansion of a municipal wastewater

system in Saginaw County to provide long-term reliability for the residents as well as allow for business expansion and attraction to the region for decades.

Truly the biggest highlight for me is being able to talk with High School and College students about my career and encouraging students to "blaze their own trail." If you are passionate about making a difference, are driven to find solutions, are willing and interested in working with people from ALL walks of life, and are willing to admit that, regardless of age or experience, you still have a lot to learn, government affairs is a great pathway.

If there are three things I can leave you with, it's this:

- How many people you bless is how you measure success.
- Never burn a bridge, you never know when you'll need it to get back across that divide.
- Don't ever assume you know where someone else is coming from without understanding it directly from them first. We can never understand what is shaping someone's decisions until we ask, and every time we ask we tend to learn something new.



Senator Griffin with President Ford

