

# KUNHARDT **FILM** FOUNDATION

SALLY QUINN INTERVIEW

*THE NEWSPAPERMAN: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF BEN BRADLEE*

KUNHARDT FILM FOUNDATION

**SALLY QUINN**

**Ben's Wife**

**December 14, 2016**

Interviewed by: John Maggio

**Total Running Time: 1 hour, 42 minutes and 8 seconds**

START TC: 00:00:00:00

ON SCREEN TEXT:

The Newspaperman

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ON SCREEN TEXT:

Sally Quinn

Journalist & Author

**Starting at *The Washington Post***

00:00:13:00

SALLY QUINN:

Well actually the first time I met Ben, I was – had come into *The Washington Post* to do an interview with Phil Geyelin who was the editor of the editorial page, and he was looking for a secretary. And so, I did this interview and we hit it off really well and he said, well I want to—I want you to meet the editor, and he took me in to meet Ben. And -- you know, he was Ben Bradlee, I was

dazzled. And – so anyway, we met briefly and – Phil hired me and then fired me at the end of the week because he said, before I even started because he said you’re overqualified and you’d end up hating me and I’d end up hating you so—I never went to work for him, but he later told me that Ben had said, you can’t possibly hire her because she will break up your marriage.

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SALLY QUINN:

So—several years later, I had – I was a theater major in college and so I had decided I wanted to go back into acting and I’d gone to try out for a play called, “We Bombed in New Haven” at this local west end theater group. One day I got a call from the director after I had tried out for the part and said, “Congratulations, you got the lead in this play,” and about five minutes later the phone rang and this voice said, “Sally, you don’t know me, you may not remember me, I’m Ben Bradlee, the Editor of *The Washington Post* and I’m interested in hiring you to cover parties for *The Washington Post*, would you be interested?” So I said yes. And I went down to *The Post* the next day and I had this interview with Ben, and-- we had this fabulous interview and at the end of it he said, “Can you show me something you’ve written?”

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SALLY QUINN:

And I said, “Well, I’ve never written anything,” and he said, “Well, nobody’s perfect! You’re hired.” So I – I went back and I called the director of the play and I said, you know I’m really sorry but, I’m—can’t do this part because I’ve accepted a job at *The Washington Post*. You talk about the road not taken, I

mean my—my whole life diverged at that moment into another path. And—so I went to work the next day and had my first byline the following day.

### **Falling for Ben Bradlee**

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SALLY QUINN:

I was totally dazzled by Ben, but he was married and had six children, and he was the editor of *The Washington Post*, he was this godlike creature. In fact, I called him Mr. Bradlee for the first four years that I worked there. And he used to say, call me Ben, but I just couldn't, he was Mr. Bradlee. And then, I – but I had decided I was in love with him. And we went to – Florida to cover the convention in Miami—Richard Nixon convention. So, *The Washington Post* travel people had assigned Ben and me to the seats next to each other on the flight. So there I was, seated next to Mr. Bradlee, and it was a very turbulent flight, so I found myself grabbing him a lot during the flight and when we got off the flight he said, "I'm having dinner with my friends David Brinkley and Susan Brinkley tonight, would you like to join us?" It turned out I had actually dated David Brinkley and Susan was one of my close friends, so I said yes, I'd love to.

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SALLY QUINN:

And so I went to my hotel and – the phone rang and he said, "look I'm really sorry but Howard Simons, who's the managing editor, has arranged for the

two of us to take a bunch of reporters out for dinner and—so I can't do the Brinkley dinner, but would you like to join us?" So, I said—well, yes. I was really disappointed but I said yes. And I –I went to the dinner, and in fact, Richard Cohen was at that dinner. And I was seated about halfway down the table from Ben, but just sort of looking at him now in a very different way because he had asked me to have dinner with him. And so suddenly I was thinking, oh, -- Anyway, that was the end of the dinner. And – about two nights later, I was coming out of the convention after covering it that evening and I was standing on the sidewalk hailing a cab and I heard this voice say 'taxi' and I turned around and it was Ben.

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SALLY QUINN:

And he said, oh hi –he said, look—"Why don't you come to the Fontainebleau Hotel with me and have a drink," so I said great, I'd love to. So we got in a cab and we got out, and there were all of these *Washington Post* people, including Phil Geyelin, and they said, "Hey, Benji, Sal, we're all going into the Flamingo Lounge, come and have a drink we us," and we both looked at each other and said, no thanks, and so that was—the end of it. And so, that whole year, and of course this is right in the middle of Watergate. That whole year I was just pining away for him and I was – I started writing him these little secret notes—secret admirer notes, and we'd have some encounter in the newsroom. And—I would then write him a little secret admirer note and put it in his—mailbox and I thought he would surely know who they were from

but, you know, he was really thick, I mean, men are so stupid sometimes. He didn't get it!

**Leaving *The Post* and Ben Bradlee**

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SALLY QUINN:

In the spring, I guess May, CBS News was looking for an anchorwoman for the morning news and – I would have been, or whoever was chosen would have been the first network anchorwoman in America and Gordon Manning, who was head of CBS News, great friend of Ben's and – Gordon called me and asked if I would come up for an interview. Hughes Rudd was the anchor, and he was a great good ol' boy, Texan, fabulous writer who had gone to TV and was – was real iconoclast. And so—they had interviewed all of the women at CBS who were the ones who had started protesting in the first place that there was no real anchor, and Hughes had rejected all of them. And so, I went up to New York and I had lunch with Hughes and Gordon Manning and at the end of the lunch, Hughes said, "I want her"—and so Gordon looks at Hughes and he says, "Why Sally? Of all the people that you interviewed, why Sally?" And he says, "cause she's meaner than a junkyard dog!"

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SALLY QUINN:

So—I then came back to Washington and I told Ben that I was leaving. And I went into his office and I burst into tears. I was just sobbing because I had decided to take the job because I was too much in love with him and it just

was too painful to be around him everyday and know that I couldn't be with him. I had a boyfriend in New York, and I thought well, I'll move up to New York and I'll get away from Ben and—we can both get on with our lives. But I didn't want to leave *The Post*, I loved my job and I didn't want to go to New York, I didn't want to do the TV job. But it was also kind of an offer I couldn't refuse. So, I went up to New York and signed all the papers and quit *The Post* and I came back and there was a farewell party for me and I asked Ben if he would take me for a farewell lunch and so he said yes, and so we went to the Madison Hotel. We both ordered chicken salad, I remember these mounds of chicken salad and I couldn't swallow, much less eat a bite, and I said—I had—rehearsed this in my mind a thousand times, I said, “Ok, I have to tell you why really I'm taking this job”—because he had tried to talk me out of it—he'd offered me all kinds of money, please stay, you can't go. I said, “I'm taking the job because I'm in love with you and I have to get away from you.”

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SALLY QUINN:

Because it's just too painful and too hard to be around you. And he said, “I can't believe you're telling me this because I'm in love with you too. And I have been for a whole year.” And that was—that was it.

### **Ben Bradlee's charisma**

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SALLY QUINN:

He never tried to be seductive, you know, he just was sexy. He never tried to be sexy, it just was who he was. And so he— he had that sort of sensuality that—pulled people in and certainly pulled me in. He was – he was funny. He had a great sense of humor, he was very witty. But he wasn't—he wasn't a comedian in any sense. But he loved to laugh. He had joie de vivre—like I've never seen. He was just, I mean I think the highest compliment he ever paid me was to say that I was a joyous creature. But he was so full of joy and so full of optimism, and so full of enthusiasm that it was just irresistible, you just wanted to be around somebody. And he also had this way of talking to people, I mean he could fire somebody and they could think that he was their best friend.

### **Ben Bradlee's temperament**

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SALLY QUINN:

I have to tell you, that we were together for 43 years and I never saw him depressed once. Not in 43 years. Now during Watergate, we would go out to West Virginia, he had this log cabin in West Virginia, it was on the—this wild river and it was in the woods about 200 acres of woods, and he would get his chainsaw and his ax and all of his toys and he would go out in the woods at 9 o'clock in the morning and he wouldn't come back 'til five in the afternoon. He'd take some water with him and maybe a snack. And he would just go out and clear brush and chop down trees, you know, cut wood. And he always said to me that that was the most valuable time he spent. He called it mind

emptying. I think today you might call it meditation. In terms of him ever worrying about being Ben, having to be Ben, he just never did.

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SALLY QUINN:

I mean, he was never afraid. He was worried about, during Watergate, he was worried about what would happen to *The Washington Post*, if anything went down. And he was—I mean he was worried about Kay, and *The Post*, and he was worried about journalism. And what would—what it would do to journalism if it turned out *The Post* was wrong or that things didn't go well. And he was also worried about the country. I mean he really cared about journalism and really cared about the country. And, you know, the first amendment was really his religion in a way. And it was something that he talked about but you know, Ben—Ben didn't get into serious conversations about issues. That was not his thing. I mean he would toss off a line or an idea and it would be just the right thing to say but he was not ponderous. And he couldn't stand sort of – people who were pedantic and he couldn't stand people who took themselves too seriously, he couldn't stand sanctimony. He never wanted to write a column. Just had no interest in doing that at all.

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SALLY QUINN:

And — he basically wanted to get the facts out and tell the truth. And that was his goal. And sometimes it wasn't convenient. And sometimes it was dangerous. But I never saw him flinch. And sometimes I was scared to death for him and for the paper. He was never – he was never afraid for himself



during Watergate—I mean he never once said, “I’m going to be in trouble.” It was always about what was going to happen with the paper or with journalism or how it would affect the country. And particularly how it would affect the country if they didn’t really nail the story. So it was not – it was not personal for him. And I think that whatever stress he felt during that time was not personal stress as much as it was the responsibility that he felt that he was taking on.

**Ben Bradlee’s battle with polio**

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SALLY QUINN:

The Polio suddenly hit St. Mark's School and a number of the kids – got Polio and Ben was one of them. He had to be rushed home and rushed to the hospital. One of his friends died. And a couple of them were left paralyzed. And he was paralyzed from the waist down for about six months. And—what — he got—the thing that he got most out of that period was his relationship with his father because his father really nursed him. His mother couldn’t carry him around, you know. He was too heavy and so his father would carry him to the bathroom, and get him out of bed and do all these things with him and he was very, very close to his father. He adored his father. His mother, I have a feeling, was sort of a cold—slightly a cold fish. Very proper, very New York upper class proper.

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SALLY QUINN:

But he - also read a lot and he had not done much reading before and so he spent a lot of time reading and - that was important to him. He read a lot of history and philosophy and he ended up majoring in Ancient Greek at Harvard. And he probably never would have done that had he not had polio. But he just sort of went off on a much more intellectual tangent during that time when he wasn't able to do sports. He recovered, but was never able to really run. He couldn't play singles in tennis, for instance. And he couldn't run, and even—He didn't like walking, I mean, when we went to the beach every summer, we would go up to Long Island and I loved nothing more than a walk on the beach and Ben just couldn't do it. He just - it was too hard for him to take long walks. And so his - main activity was working out in the woods. And that's—there's a lot of aerobics involved in that because you're really pulling things down and chopping things and—but—the polio, I think was—I think of the three most sort of seminal moments in his—well, four—I'd have to say, polio and then the war. And Watergate and Quinn's illness, and heart surgery and near-death were the four things that affected him the most in his life. And were real turning points for him in many different ways.

### **Ben Bradlee's outlook**

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SALLY QUINN:

Ben was always positive. Always positive about everything, that's why I said when, you know, I would get upset about something and he said, well you know, and you know, it did drive you, it did drive me crazy sometimes. I mean

it's not—I'm not a pessimist but sometimes things go badly and he just wouldn't accept that things were going to go badly, and he was always positive about everything. He never believed he was going to be paralyzed and he wasn't. And, you know, one of the problems we had when Quinn was sick is that he just simply wouldn't believe that Quinn was not going to be ok. And I was always scared Quinn was going to die or that, you know, he would be sick for the rest of his life or whatever. And honestly, I think, well you've met Quinn so you know what a – what a wonderful spirit he is, he's a magical person. And I really think that he is that way because of Ben.

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SALLY QUINN:

I told Quinn something the other day about something I was worried about and he just said, “Mom, why are you gonna worry about that now? It hasn't happened. If something happens, then we'll worry about it later.” And I thought, boy is that his father speaking? And Ben—and Quinn has exactly the same attitude about life that Ben does, which is always looking at the positive side, always seeing things, the glass is always half full. Always. And actually for Ben, and for Quinn, the glass is always full, not just half full. And that was just hugely important to me to have somebody like that in my life who was always strong. I mean I – because I would—I would be fearful sometimes and I would get scared and I would be sad and I'd be upset and Ben was—he was like a – when somebody says that person is my rock, Ben was The Rock.

### **What Ben Bradlee would think of his biopic**

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SALLY QUINN:

I think he would love this and I think he would love it because it was Quinn's idea. And that he – I think he would love the fact that Quinn would be involved in it. And—Quinn is so on fire about it. And Quinn adored his father, I mean I've never seen a father and son have a relationship the way the two of them did. I mean, Ben really – thought of Quinn as his best friend. And – Quinn grew up with a lot of problems and he had learning disabilities when he was younger and he didn't have a lot of friends, and so they spent a lot of time together. Particularly out in the woods. And Ben would always say to Quinn, "I admire you more than anybody I know in my life." That's pretty heady stuff. For somebody to have Ben Bradlee say that about you and so Quinn has-- a lot of confidence in himself. In fact, as he pointed out the other day, he said, "Maybe I have too much confidence in myself." But -- he – Ben just sort of gave him that confidence because he loved him so much and he was so close to him and -- and I don't think Quinn would be nearly the person he is today if he hadn't had that infusion of love and affection, and admiration from Ben. And, you know, I was a pretty good mother, but I couldn't have given Quinn what Ben did.

**Ben Bradlee's time in the navy**

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SALLY QUINN:

Ben was very adventurous, you know, he wanted to get out of there. And you know, he accelerated at Harvard. He went through Harvard in three years so that he could go to war, and he asked to be on a destroyer which was probably the most dangerous assignment you could have because people on destroyers were getting killed left and right, but he was just desperate to get to war. He couldn't wait to go to war. And to get out of Harvard. I mean, you know, it's a very provincial atmosphere, Boston, particularly in those days. And everybody knew everybody else, and they were all related to each other, and they all went to the same clubs, and they all went to the same beach and they all went to – you know, it was very incestuous. And Ben just wanted to see the world and he loved being in the navy, and he loved being at war. He, you know, people always talk about, well so and so is at war and they never talk about it because it was so awful and —

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SALLY QUINN:

Ben didn't talk about the grimness of the war, but he did talk about the exhilaration of – being you know– in combat and in a situation where – you were in danger. He – and you know, he was – I mean he was not a daredevil by any means. But he just— he felt that – that gave his life meaning more than almost anything he ever did. That was the most meaningful time in his life. That he was doing something really important. And he was.

### **Ben Bradlee's time in Paris**

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SALLY QUINN:

I don't think he's ever had a moment of guilt in his life, honestly. I mean, he had a few affairs when he was married to Jean and he wasn't guilty about that. And he had a few affairs when he was married to Tony and he wasn't guilty about that. He did—but Paris was a huge – deal for him. I mean he was there for seven years. He was in his element. He spoke fluent French. He loved the French, he loved France, he loved everything about it. You know – it brought out all of his sensuality that he had not – had not been brought out in Boston. I don't ever think of Boston as the most sensual place in the world, you know, Paris is. And he started eating well, he loved food, he loved wine, you know, he went to great restaurants, he traveled all over Europe, he went skiing, he had affairs, he just—he had a fabulous time.

**Ben Bradlee wanted to transform *The Post***

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SALLY QUINN:

The idea of working at *The Washington Post* is that he was interested in politics. Particularly after the war. So the idea of being in Washington where politics is covered, even though *The Washington Post* was certainly... was like the number 3 newspaper at the time, that intrigued him. And – I think he saw an opportunity there. You know, I – I would guess that one of the reasons that Ben didn't go to *The New York Times* was because *The New York Times* was already *The New York Times*. And I think Ben always liked the idea of doing – Ben always liked the idea of making a difference and changing things and

creating things. And I think that – I mean it’s like going to work for the biggest law firm or going to work for the biggest investment bank. It’s already there—it’s already done. And you can work your way up to the top, but somebody else already created that. And I think the idea of coming to work for a paper that was not the number one was a huge challenge—just like going to war was a challenge that – it gave him something to work for.

### **Ben Bradlee’s romanticism**

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SALLY QUINN:

He was very romantic. Ben cried a lot actually, cried more than I did. He would cry in movies and cry at commercials. I mean as soon as a violin would start Ben would start—but here’s the thing about Ben—Ben never cried in real life. He only cried in fictional things. He would cry in movies, he would cry in commercials, he would cry you know—but I never saw him cry over Quinn, and that was the saddest—and I mean the most difficult time he’s ever been through. I never cry in commercials and I never cry in movies, but I cry in real life. And I think that was the difference. And in some way I think that yeah it – he was romantic in the sense that it was sort of-- he was intellectually romantic. You know, he had this vision of things that were romantic, things that moved him and it was kind of almost automatic that he would get teared up about ideas and stories.

### **Ben Bradlee was self-aware of his persona**

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SALLY QUINN:

He just never—he didn't have any idea. He had no idea of how he looked and how he came across. He didn't think about it. As I said, he was more comfortable in his own skin than anybody I've ever met. You know, he'd write a — and he was always joking about his trench coat with the bullet holes in it and that kind of thing. And he loved—he loved the romance of journalism, that was, for him, the most romantic thing. And the romance of war.

**Ben Bradlee was not introspective**

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SALLY QUINN:

Ben was not terribly introspective. I mean, he didn't wallow in things, you know, he didn't oh my god, oh my god, what have I done, am I doing the right thing? Who am I? What am I here for? That was not Ben. He just was not introspective. And — I mean I was a lot more introspective than he was and — but that — I mean I think part of that was what was appealing, in a way, is that he never agonized over anything—he was—you know, he was always—he didn't second guess himself and—I think part of that was his — part of his appeal was that he wasn't introspective. That he was just out there in the world and—and he was just living his life. And he wasn't—thinking about it every day. He wasn't pondering it every day. He used to call it navel-gazing. He hated navel-gazing.



**The bond between Ben Bradlee and JFK**

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SALLY QUINN:

I think they saw the best in each other. They were very much alike in a lot of ways. They were both sort of dashing, and sexy, and charming, and good looking and – and smart and funny. And I mean Jack had a very good sense of humor and so did Ben. And also, they both loved to gossip. And Jack wanted to know what was going on all the time and Ben, of course as a journalist, knew everything going on, so they would have dinner like three times a week at the White House, and Ben would walk in and Jack would say what do you know, what do you know? What's going on? Tell me all the gossip, because of course he was living in this bubble. And nobody ever told him anything and – and of course nobody around the White House really knew what was going on, so he was just fascinated and they would sit there and Ben—and they would talk about the issues and all of that. But both of them understood that – it was more important—well it was equally important to know about the people and the personalities behind who was making the policy and who was making the decisions and who was behaving in a certain way. And that's what Jack and Ben really talked about a lot because Ben was really interested in – personalities.

**Politics and the press**

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SALLY QUINN:

I think he remembered going to the White House and a group of them being ushered into the Oval Office and just sort of sitting around and hanging out with the president. There was nothing formal about it, it was just kind of people wandering in and out of the press office and – you know there weren't that many reporters, there was no real press corps. And – so now, you have a formality that—it's impenetrable almost. And gets worse every administration. So yeah, it was a very different time. And, you know, the other thing is that – today if – if Jack Kennedy's antics, romantic antics, had been known about, they'd be all over the internet in 20 minutes, that would never have been able to exist. But then also you know the press didn't report when Roosevelt had polio, when he was in a wheelchair, no one ever took pictures of him in a wheelchair or even showed him on crutches. It was just kind of understood that you didn't do that – and that just would never – I mean there's no way, it just – it's the dark ages if you think about it.

### **JFK's personal life**

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SALLY QUINN:

I say that if he had known, I would have gotten that out of him. He would have told me eventually, you know. He just didn't know. He really didn't know and I – you know he said it makes me look stupid, but the fact is that – nobody—I guess people knew that I was his closest friend and that nobody was going to come up to me and say, guess what? And – he just didn't know. I mean I – he had no reason not to say so. There was no reason for him to pretend that he

didn't know. And – and also, I was with him when he—when the stories started coming out and he was – in shock, you know, he was— and so disappointed. Disappointed and – and then ultimately revolted. And I saw his reaction as he was learning these things.

### **Ben Bradlee's friendship with JFK**

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SALLY QUINN:

He did not want to be in the inner circle and he didn't—he felt that having him be in the inner circle would have him be compromised. And one of the things about the Kennedys, and whether they wanted it or not, was that they had a lot of hanger's on and a lot of sycophants, and a lot of lords and ladies in waiting. And—Ben did not want to play that role. And he would not play that role. And so, he was happy to be Jack's friend, but he saw himself as Jack's equal. And if ever he felt that he was being compromised on any level, whether it was personal or political, he would back away because he didn't want to be part of that. He did not want to be part of the entourage and he never was. I mean—you know, it's hard to know when to draw the line, but he always knew when to draw the line. When you could—where was the moment when you said, mm-mm I don't think so, I don't want to play here.

### **Ben Bradlee's relationship with Kay Graham**

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SALLY QUINN:

Well I think that—Kay was very glamorized by Ben— I mean, she was very glamorized by Ben and Tony and the—and Jack and Jackie. You know, I felt like an ugly duckling when I was around all those beautiful young women. So I think she was glamorized by Ben and so they had this famous lunch and she asked him if he'd like to come to *The Post* and that's when he said, "I'd give my left one." And... I mean, I think Kay always had a little crush on Ben. But – you know, there was never anything sexual between them at all. And I think Ben absolutely adored Kay. I don't think it, I know it. He just loved her. And you know—she was—she was insecure in a lot of ways. And as I said about myself, Ben made me feel safe. He made me feel protected and secure.

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SALLY QUINN:

And I think he made Kay feel that way. He gave her enormous amount of confidence. Because he had so much confidence in himself and that so he gave Kay confidence. And – so they had this great relationship. And also Kay loved gossip, too. And she loved journalism and she loved the newsroom. And you know, but she was off in this ivory tower, and everybody always sort of—oh Mrs. Graham, Mrs. Graham and you know, she had that accent. You know, which is just sort of really off putting and so people were—they were a little afraid of her. And Ben was not. You know. She'd – you know, she would complain about something in the paper and Ben would say, get your finger out of my eye. And she—so he treated her like she was a normal person, which she was. And – she loved that. You know, they would tease each other, I mean they weren't-- he wasn't vicious with Kay the way he was with his men

friends, but – but they would—had a very teasing relationship and -- and she would come down everyday and go sit in his office and close the door and schmooze.

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SALLY QUINN:

You know, she just wanted to know what's—it was like Jack Kennedy. What's going on? What's happening in the newsroom? What's the story? And she always wanted to know what was going on and they had this thing they called the no surprises rule, you know, which was that she didn't ever want to be... sort of have to pick up the paper and learn something, or have somebody come up to her at a dinner party.

### **Ben Bradlee's own unique style**

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SALLY QUINN:

First of all, Ben started Style. He invented Style. And he invented it about two or three months before he hired me. Well the thing that was interesting about Style is that it – it completely revolutionized journalism and – most people think of Ben in terms of Watergate in terms of his accomplishment. But I think that—in terms of what he did for journalism and how he changed journalism, that maybe inventing Style was as important, if not more important than Watergate. I don't mean to diminish Watergate, but that one story--and it was a great story—but I think that-- and it's interesting because Ben was a feminist in a way that—what I meant was that for Ben, everybody

was equal. He didn't - he wasn't—he just didn't discriminate against anybody.

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SALLY QUINN:

But he also wanted people - he also—he recognized people for their talent and not who or what they were - what color, what gender, whatever. He liked talent. So I guess he was discriminating in the sense that he liked talented people. And hired talent—and he recognized talent. And—and I think that he thought that the—was the style section—was called for and about women. And it was really about—you know, going to teas and parties and, you know, ladies events and everybody wore pearls and white gloves and - it was boring. It was really boring. So there was this whole section—and it was sexist in a way. I mean you would have never had a section called for and about men. And Ben wanted the section to be—he wanted something that was alive and that would be covering the sociology of the day—of the moment.

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SALLY QUINN:

And what was going on in the country and what was going on in the sects—and this was 60's - so—there was a lot going on that we weren't covering because there was sort of no place to put it. It didn't really belong—we didn't have a feature section. So a lot of that stuff just didn't go into for and about women, because it wasn't about teas and luncheons and -and he wanted a different kind of party coverage. He didn't quite know what

kind of a party coverage he wanted, but he just wanted it to be different. So he – he hired—he put in the best writers in the section. So he took people from national and metro and different—and sports and brought them into style because they were all women—they were all ladies. They all had tea cups on their desks, I’m not kidding.

00:38:32:00

SALLY QUINN:

And they all wore white gloves. Well, when I went into interview with Ben, I wore white gloves. I had my little purse and my little white gloves and my pearls. And—so I think he wanted to reflect society and he just felt that for and about women was not reflective, this was in 69, so it was really after the 68 riots and you know, the anti-Vietnam War and all that—he just felt like we weren’t covering the story. And that was the reason he started Style. What’s –what’s going on, what are you breaking? I’m going to a party, Henry Kissinger’s going to be there, is there anything you need to know? And so, then I would go out and I would go to the party and I would see Henry Kissinger and of course, you know, I had my little notebook, but I also had a drink in my hand, and everybody else had a drink in their hands, and I would say, you know, what’s going on with China? And you know—and people would just talk more openly, and you could get to talk to them in a way you couldn’t if you tried to make a date for an interview in their office, they would never talk to you.

00:39:42:00

SALLY QUINN:

But they would schmooze casually over cocktails. And so I found that we were breaking stories, not just me but the other party reporters, once we got the nod that we could write what we wanted to write. Then we started covering party stories the way you would cover any other stories.

**Ben was a formidable editor**

00:40:05:00

SALLY QUINN:

Yes, he was very tough. I mean when—when I first came to work there and—a lot of people were scared of him. And they thought that he was—because he was tough. And he was a real—he was a taskmaster—sorry—he was a taskmaster. And he worked really hard. I mean he worked 12 hours, 14 hours, 18 hours a day sometimes and he'd work on weekends and – and he expected the same thing of other people. I mean this was not a 9-5 business from his point of view. And he really expected people to be on top of the story and on their beats. He didn't like laziness and he didn't like sloppiness. And he wanted to get the story—Ben was very competitive. Very, very competitive about everything. And—and so—you know, people who didn't do the work—were not in his favor.

00:41:10:00

SALLY QUINN:

And you know, people wanted to be one of Ben's favorites and so there were people who were thought of as Ben's favorites and not, Ben was sort of – I mean I remember people telling me that Ben would run over his



grandmother to get a story. And that's probably only half true. I – I have to say that I think that I – I softened him up a little bit—when he and I got together.

**Ben Bradlee trusted his gut**

00:41:43:00

SALLY QUINN:

I mean, obviously he used his brain. But—in the end his gut would just tell him, I don't think so—this is not right. And—and he would hold off. And he said that his predecessor—Russ Wiggins—had always said that when you want to write a tough letter, write a letter and then put it in your drawer and then come back the next day and read it to see if you really want to send it. And he really did do that—I mean cause sometimes he'd get so pissed off at somebody that he'd dash off a letter—I mean—I think that one letter he wrote to this guy who was a – he wrote a letter to this guy who was a newspaper critic who—who ran this right wing operation criticizing the liberal press and um Ben wrote a letter – which he actually did send, which he called him a retromingent asshole and – nobody knew what retromingent was—Ben was really thrilled with himself over this. Retromingent means somebody who pees on himself.

**Ben Bradlee chose his words carefully**

00:43:02:00

SALLY QUINN:

Well you know, it's interesting because I – you know, Ben always talked about how— well he learned how to talk that way in the navy, which he did, and then of course, in journalism, people are pretty profane too. I think now—everybody is in the world, but in those days, it went from the military, it went from World War II, people were profane and he brought that into the world of journalism and – when I first started going out with journalists and then went to work for *The Post*, I remember having never heard people use language like that before. But I – somehow, the way Ben always chose exactly the right word to use at the exact moment and it never seemed to be a dirty word, you know. It always seemed to be – just the precisely the right word at the right moment that you wanted to use. And – I, you know—and it – it made people laugh. He always made people laugh with his—and sometimes—he liked it when I was being outrageous. Sometimes I can be outrageous.

00:44:16:00

SALLY QUINN:

And – I would be at a dinner party and I would be telling some outrageous story and then Ben would say, Jesus Christ, Sally! And then he would just—he would start on—this thing about me and everybody would burst out laughing, it was our—and he – he would pretend to be outraged and, you know, horrified and everything else but—but he really enjoyed that. But I – with Quinn, with both of us—but particularly with Ben—we were using this language around Quinn, and Ben was too, and when he was about four—Quinn had learned all these bad words and this couple came to visit from out of town, very straight laced, I don't know why they were there, can't

remember who they were, but from the Midwest. And so Quinn came downstairs in his little pajamas, his onesies, to say goodnight.

00:45:13:00

SALLY QUINN:

And he was I guess four or five. And so—and he had some dollar bills in his hand and so—this couple said, “Quinn, how are you?” and he says, fine, they say, aren’t you a big boy, look at you, and look at all that money! Where did you get all that money? And Quinn said, “Well, I get paid every time my parents say a dirty word” and – he said—“I have a lot of money.” And they said, well how much do you get paid? And Quinn said, “well—motherfucker is two dollars!” So—anyway, that was Ben’s legacy.

### **The Pentagon Papers**

00:46:07:00

SALLY QUINN:

And the whole idea that – that the Pentagon Papers was a matter of national security, which was the argument, as Ben always said, when they said it’s a matter of national security, what they really mean is it’s a matter of national embarrassment. And that was what the issue was. So—but I mean that was the—precursor to Watergate. But that—this really got his juices flowing, you know. Because there was really a threat to the first amendment. And it was a serious threat to the first amendment. And Ben felt that if – if they didn’t make a stand then, that they would start – their freedoms would start being eroded.

**Ben Bradlee's fight for free speech**

00:46:53:00

SALLY QUINN:

It was ex—absolutely who he was. And I think that—you know when he was in the war, he -- you know he said to me later cause he had started out when he was in high school doing journalism, but when he was in the war he kept saying, what were we fighting for? We were fighting for our freedoms. What's one of the most important freedoms we have? It's freedom of speech. And if we don't have that then we're not free.

**The partnership between Ben Bradlee and Kay Graham**

00:47:24:00

SALLY QUINN:

I think that it was really important that Ben had given Kay an enormous amount of confidence in herself because he believed in her. He knew how smart she was. And he knew that he was—had enormous amount of integrity and values and ethics and morals and all the things that were important to him. And so he-- he made her believe in herself so that he made her strong – as I said, he's made me feel strong and safe and protected and he made Kay feel strong and safe and protected. And if Ben said it was ok, it was going to work, then she believed it, and it gave her the strength to make decisions.

**The Pentagon Papers and the *Post***

00:48:14:00

SALLY QUINN:

It happened very quickly. You know, it was not this long drawn out thing. It was that *The New York Times* came out with this story and then suddenly *The Post* had to get on it and get on top of it, and so it wasn't like Watergate that went on for years. And so I – I don't have a strong—and of course I wasn't with Ben then, and I wasn't involved in any way. You know, with Watergate, it was such a slow-- and of course with Watergate, Bob and Carl were friends of mine and—also I was writing stories about some of the personalities who were involved in Watergate, so it was—I was much more involved. So I don't remember much about The Pentagon Papers. I just remember that everyone in the paper was really – very excited about the fact that we had stood up to the government and that we had won. And just—and that there was a sense—that we – what we were doing was really important.

### **The Pentagon Papers and Watergate**

00:49:19:00

SALLY QUINN:

Absolutely. It did lay the groundwork. I mean – you know, I mean. I think that once you saw that the first amendment—once you saw that the first amendment could be threatened that way, and could be put in jeopardy, that there was no question that you would do everything you could to fight that the second time around.

**Ben Bradlee's success as editor**

00:49:47:00

SALLY QUINN:

People in journalism all over the country wanted to come and work for Ben. And I mean I still have people coming up to me today, journalists – really high powered journalists who will say my greatest regret is that I never got to work for Ben Bradlee. I mean he just—he owned the newsroom, but in a good way, you know he didn't – he wasn't power mad or anything, it's just that—he walked through a room and it was electric. I mean, because he would go and he would come by people's desk and he'd say, "Great story!" He called everybody chief, I mean the guys anyway, he'd slap them on the back— "Hey great story, chief!" You know? And everybody – oh my god, Ben Bradlee thought my story was great! And—and he wouldn't say it unless he meant it too, and everybody knew that. And—but he would—he prowled the newsroom. What's going on? What's the story here? What do you think—what do you think? You know? What do you got? What do you got? And—and he engaged with people all the time and he was so excited about all the stories and-- I never sat in on one of his story conferences, but I – you know they were legendary, you know, that Ben would sit in the story conferences with feet on the desk and he'd let other people talk and then he would sort of pipe up with—you know—that's bullshit. You know?

00:51:06:00

SALLY QUINN:

Whatever he would say, you know. Or go get 'em or whatever but it—it was—you know, people wanted to please him and they wanted to do a good job for him. And it was just fun. I can't keep saying that word enough. It was just fun. It was so much fun to be a journalist it was so exciting. And everyday you'd come in and you didn't know what the story was and he didn't know what the story was—what it was going to be and everyday it was let's go out and get those stories and let's do it. And—just everyday was a new day and everyday there was something to look forward to and – you wanted—you know, just—I guess—the word I'd have to use is inspiring. You know, and when he would tell me, I knew, when I would write a story I knew that Ben would like it you know? I would just be so—cause I was writing for Ben. And I think that's the thing, is that everybody in the paper was writing for Ben. They were writing for his approval.

### **Unraveling the Watergate web**

00:52:21:00

SALLY QUINN:

I think within the first few weeks, people began to think there was something there. You know, just—just rumbling around the newsroom. You know, this looks like more than what it seems like. I mean first it was just a lowly break in story, which is of course why Bob and Carl were assigned to it. They were Metro reporters and they were young and, you know, you wouldn't call in the A team on a lowly break in story. But it then started to look like something. Yeah, you could feel it building after about the first few weeks, you could feel

that there was something going on there that might be bigger than what it appeared to be. I mean I can't really pinpoint when it was that it became clear—but I think, you know, I remember feeling—I remember hearing around the newsroom that some of the national reporters and the national editor wanted to take it away from Bob and Carl and Metro because they just thought it was getting to be a big story.

00:53:23:00

SALLY QUINN:

And that then there was an argument about—and Ben said, look these kids got the story you know, let them stay, they're doing a good job. He thought it was a great story. He could—he thought right and-- from the beginning when—and also when the National started saying, this is time for the big boys to take over. I thought that—that's when Ben got really excited. But he just felt there was something there. I mean when they found out—when they got the little address book with all the numbers in the White House, that's when Ben got really excited and said, hum, this is big.

### **Ben Bradlee and “Deep Throat”**

00:54:04:00

SALLY QUINN:

At some point he and Bob went out to Lafayette Square and sat on a bench and Ben said, “You got to tell me who it is.” And that's when Bob told him. But I never knew and I never asked. No one can believe I never asked. But I – you know I knew he wouldn't tell me, and I didn't think he should. And I didn't



want to know anyways because then I was afraid I might tell somebody. You know? Well at some point, you know, there's a whole newspaper on the line, I think that there's a line in *All the President's Men* where he said, we're just not—we're talking about the first amendment the—you know—the future of the country—you know—the Constitution, the whatever—only our lives, that's all we're talking about here. Um—so yeah, I mean it was important to know who it was.

00:54:53:00

SALLY QUINN:

Well, but the thing was Deep Throat was right. You know, you got a good source—he was right—he was sending Bob off in the right direction every time. And every story just kept—you know just kept adding more and more veracity to what they already knew.

**Phone being tapped at the *Post***

00:55:20:00

SALLY QUINN:

Well we all suspected they might be, I mean we all acted as though they were and certainly acted as though our home phones were tapped. And – you know, there was one story where somebody tried to sell Carl marijuana on the street and we just assumed that that was a setup, that somebody was trying to nail him. And so, Ben was constantly trying to—you know making sure everybody was just – not paranoid, but just – because we – it became to

be clear that these guys were not messing around. And so—we had to be extra careful with everything.

00:56:00:00

SALLY QUINN:

Which is why I never, during that year from the convention until the following summer, early spring, that's why I quit *The Post* because I—I knew that if I told him I loved him—I could tell that he really cared about me—that I knew we'd probably end up having an affair, and I was afraid that if we did, um, he would get caught--either be blackmailed—he wouldn't have allowed himself to be blackmailed, but then it would have been a big scandal and it would have totally destroyed the whole relationship—I mean the whole story for *The Post*, it would have been such a distraction and –and it would have given the Nixon people fodder for, you know, it would have given them ammunition against him and so I just felt I couldn't do it. That's why I quit and went to work with CBS.

### **Ben Bradlee and Nixon**

00:57:01:00

SALLY QUINN:

He didn't think that he was an honorable person. I think that's—he didn't believe him, he didn't trust him. Yeah, he was a liar... obviously. I mean when he stood up there and said I am not a crook, Ben said, "oh yeah," he didn't – yes, he was not an honorable person, he was not an honest person. But I have to say that after Nixon resigned, when David Frost did his Nixon interviews,

Ben and I were sitting here in the library watching the David Frost interviews and about half way through the interviews, and Nixon was going like this, and—Ben sort of said, “oh god oh god oh god no,” and I said “what’s the matter Ben?” And he said, “oh I miss him so much! I miss him so much!” So—you know, there was this thing he had about Nixon that—he was a great story.

00:58:02:00

SALLY QUINN:

He really elevated the press. Well Nixon was a totally Shakespearean character. I mean he was just such a flawed person—because he was bright. And if it hadn't been for Watergate, he would not have been a bad president. I mean he was perfectly good on foreign policy. But he just—with lacking morals and ethics and values. And it's his—really sad.

### **The Nixon White House tapes**

00:58:34:00

SALLY QUINN:

Oh yeah, Ben was ecstatic. And I remember him talking to-- we were having dinner-- we were having dinner, right after we had heard about the tapes--with Edward Bennett Williams and – Ben was saying, oh my god this is so fabulous, we got these tapes and – and Ed said, I want to be Nixon's defense lawyer—cause Ed was a defense lawyer, you know, criminals were his thing. And he said, oh my god, I would kill to be his defense lawyer, and Ben said, what's the first thing you'd do and he'd say—he said, I would take

all of those fucking tapes and I'd put them on the White House lawn and I'd set them on fire and have a bonfire and burn them. Ben said, well I'm glad you're not going to be his defense lawyer! No, Ben was—well there it was, there was the whole story. And it was vindicated *The Post* and you know.

### **Getting the story right**

00:59:32:00

SALLY QUINN:

He talked about that in the movie—you know, when he was talking-- when he was talking to Bob and Carl, he'd say, if only the Constitution and the First Amendment's at stake, I mean—yes. And they did make some mistakes. They were wrong sometimes, and it just killed him. He couldn't stand to be wrong. But—you know—they were right most of the time and they got the story right. I mean nothing's worse if you're a journalist and print something that's wrong. Nothing is worse. I mean it would not seem so in the atmosphere we live in today. But if you're a real journalist and what you care about is the truth—then to get something wrong is just—the worst nightmare you could possibly have.

### **Ben Bradlee's celebrity status**

01:00:27:00

SALLY QUINN:

He was a little embarrassed by it. You know, he much preferred to sort of walk down the street and not have people know who he was – you know, I

had a – my little fifteen minutes of fame when I was on – on CBS Morning News and my picture was on the cover of magazines. And I was on TV and there – it was a big story and – and then Ben and I got together and then that was a bigger story, and then Ben had been in the middle of Watergate and so we were – you know, we were a story and it was uncomfortable, neither one of us really liked being famous. And I remember when I wrote my book about CBS, and I was talking about Ben too and said, you know—I’ve discovered that the perfect kind of fame is to have everybody know your name and nobody know your face. And—so and only if they admire you for who you are. So—yeah we—you know—after his book came out and after Watergate, people knew who he was and sometimes they’d know who I was. If we were together, they would generally know who we were.

01:01:32:00

SALLY QUINN:

And we would, you know, walk into a — I mean, we’d sometimes be—you know, in some foreign country and somebody would come up to us. And I always felt a little violated. And we’d walk down the street or you’d walk in a restaurant and you’re not thinking—because we were never that famous—you’re not thinking that you’re famous. And so, if somebody comes up and says, “oh I was always with Ben, oh you know—it’s such an honor to meet you, I admire what you—thank you for what you’ve done for our country or whatever.” And Ben would always be--it would always make him uncomfortable. And he didn’t really like it very much. He just—he didn’t need the adulation—he just didn’t need it.

**Becoming the story**

01:02:22:00

SALLY QUINN:

It makes you a little uncomfortable because you're on the other side of the pen and pencil or whatever you'd call it today. But you're on – you're on the other side, and so suddenly when you're thrust—I mean I – always said, and so did Ben after both of us had gotten a certain amount of notoriety, that every journalist should have the experience of being written about before they're allowed to practice journalism, because you've got to know what it feels like to be on the other side, because it'll make you more careful about what you do. And—and I feel that's really true. Because it was an eye opener to me. I mean I— you know—I love journalists and I trust journalists and I believe devoutly in –the first amendment, freedom of speech in journalism, but there are some journalists who are not very good. And some journalists who are not honest, and some journalists who do get things wrong, just like there are bad doctors and bad lawyers and bad -- car repair men. You know?

01:03:31:00

SALLY QUINN:

I mean – there are good ones and there are bad ones – and so if you—if you get burned by somebody it's – it's a real shock. And it's a real eye opener because you don't expect that from your colleagues. And so I think that for Ben was – you know—was – revealing and for me, too. But I mean—you know, there are some people who love fame and being famous—and you

know, I'm always amused at people who are really, really famous and they—you know, they walk down the street and they go out in public and they show off, and then they complain about the publicity. And you know, you want to say, wait a minute, you just – I mean because we were--we became public figures, so we didn't really have a right to complain about anything. I mean there were some things that were so over the top written about us that were—I mean really horrifying.

01:04:32:00

SALLY QUINN:

But in general, you put yourself out there. I found an ashtray once that I bought for Ben—for us – and it said, don't play the game if you can't take the pain. And I think that's true about fame—and you know, it's a double edge sword. But I think Ben and I were—both of us much more comfortable being not recognized than recognized.

### **Janet Cooke and the story that never happened**

01:05:05:00

SALLY QUINN:

I sort of not—didn't really know her, I was vaguely aware of – she actually was a roommate of Elsa Walsh who was Woodward's girlfriend—that was before Bob and Elsa got together, I think. And then she wrote this extraordinary story about Jimmy, this little boy who was on drugs. And it just took the newsroom by storm—I mean, it took the city by storm.

And—Woodward was the editor of Metro at the time but there was a—she

had an immediate editor, and there was another editor the story went through and—and then—and then Woodward. And then managing editor and then Ben. And it was a fabulous story and it was beautifully written. And when the story broke, Marion Barry gave a press conference and said, we know who Jimmy is, we've identified him and we're taking care of him, we're dealing with the family—it's all, you know—and then she was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize.

01:06:13:00

SALLY QUINN:

And I remember being up in Boston—when they announced that she'd won the Pulitzer Prize—and it would have been about a month before that--that I started hearing rumblings in the newsroom that maybe the story wasn't true. And—I didn't say anything to Ben about it, for some reason, I didn't mention it. But there was this—and I thought maybe it was jealousy or grousing or something like that but—it just got—heated up and heated up and you know, people were really questioning the story. And I was in Boston and I was with some reporters—and the story broke that she had won the Pulitzer and I had said, oh no, oh my god. I mean, I just remember I had this awful feeling in my stomach. And they said, what's the matter? And I said, I think she made the story up. And this one person turned to me and said, that's just sour grapes.

01:07:06:00

SALLY QUINN:

I said, I just have this awful feeling. And then of course, I think that—they started looking at her bio, and she said she graduated from Vassar and she



never did, and then she spoke French and Ben went up to her and called her – started speaking French to her and of course she didn't speak a word and – they just got her—locked her in a room and just grilled her and she fell apart and said she'd made the story up and so Ben had to—we had to give the Pulitzer back. And we had this wonderful ombudsman named Bill Green and Ben put Bill on the story said—he said I want you to write this story from beginning to end, do not spare anybody, even me—but I want the story the way it happened and how this whole thing happened, and Bill did this brilliant story—just going, talking to her editors, talking to her, talking to people that she talked to.

01:08:04:00

SALLY QUINN:

And as it happened, that week or so there was the—the newspaper editors conference, the ASNE, and Ben's friend, the editor of *The Globe* Tom Winship, had asked Ben to be the program chairman and Ben hated the ASNE and he hated the whole idea of being program chairman—he never did anything like that. He—Ben was not a joiner. Ever about anything. But he agreed because Tom strong armed him and so— Anyway, suddenly the program that was, got scrapped and the program became Janet Cook. And — So I went with Ben that morning, they had a panel on Janet Cook, they had it in this auditorium—they had to move the whole thing to an auditorium because of course everybody showed up because they wanted to see Ben get sacrificed. And Don Graham came in and sat next to Ben—as Ben said, Don had his arm around me the entire morning and didn't take his arm away.

01:09:11:00

SALLY QUINN:

And I sat there and one editor after the other got up and excoriated Ben and just said, how could this—this is appalling, this is – and as it turned out, within the next month, the two editors who had been the most critical of Ben – both printed stories by their reporters that were not true. And had to have them retracted. And of course what everyone had forgotten was that—Marion Barry had gotten up the day after the story broke and said, we know who Jimmy is. So—there was no reason to question the story. But Janet Cooke was a –she was a sick person. I mean she made it up—she was sick. And so she had to be fired, and then that was the end of that.

**Ben Bradlee's leaving the *Post***

01:09:56:00

SALLY QUINN:

It was much harder for me because I was so worried that he – wouldn't have anything to do, you know—or he wouldn't have enough to do and – you know, he didn't sort of plan his retirement and you know, I knew that Don had asked him to stay on until he was 75. I can't believe that he quit when he was 70, he was so young. I mean he had a child who was nine. But he just said, look I'm at the top of my game right now, you know. I can't do—I'm not going to do any better and I'm getting bored—I'm getting bored. He was spending more and more time sitting at his desk doing crossword puzzles. And – you know, the big—after Watergate, everything is sort of a let down and the big stories

just weren't coming and – he just couldn't – he just couldn't get excited about sort of the daily story.

01:10:56:00

SALLY QUINN:

He said, I've seen every story come around and around and around, you know. I've wrestled with presidents and Secretaries of State and Secretaries of Defense and Heads of CIA. You know, I've done it all and so it just—and he said, I don't think it's fair to the paper, it's – I don't want to be here and not be doing my best and be at the top of my game, and so I'd rather leave when I'm on top then wait until people sort of say, "oh my god, when is that guy going to get out of here," you know? And people really didn't want him to leave. But he just felt that it was the right thing to do, and I think it was a very brave thing for him to do. But for me it was hard because I was so worried about him. But of course I should have known better than to be worried about Ben because Ben was Ben and he was never going to be diminished in any way. I remember the summer well he—he had his farewell at *The Post* end of July and then we went to—Long Island in August and then his actual retirement date was September the first I think but—essentially—and they had a big send off for him at the paper and everybody showed wearing striped shirts with white collars, and it was a very emotional day and – people stood up and talked and I actually talked and...

01:12:23:00

SALLY QUINN:

Well I remember when I left *The Post* to go to CBS News—there was a – what we call a caking, they have farewell cakes for everybody—there was a caking for me in Style and Ben came back. And this is after we'd had this really sort of emotional...experience in his office where I cried--this is before I told him I loved him. And—and—he came back and made this—speech which was really mean, which I knew that meant that he was being affectionate. And—the end he said—he sort of raised his glass—he said, let's raise a glass to Sally who's forgotten but not gone. And so – I said that about Ben—when I got up and I said I'm going to get him back now because – I just want to say, he may be forgotten but he's not gone because he was going upstairs to the ninth floor. And we walked out of the newsroom and everybody applauded and it was – it was very nice.

**Quinn Bradlee**

01:13:39:00

SALLY QUINN:

Ben did not want to have another baby because he had been married twice, he had three other kids, he was almost 60 years old and— but I was almost forty and I never had children and I wanted to have a baby and so—we had – shall we say discussions about it—and Ben just said, I'm too old to get up at 3 o'clock in the morning and feedings and – you know I just can't do it again. And I said, but I've never done it. So anyway, talk about being tough—I said to Ben, okay well I'm going to have a baby so—either it's going to be yours or it's going to be somebody else's! You get to choose. So that sort of focused his

mind. And so he finally agreed that we would have a baby. And so--I got pregnant almost immediately.

01:14:41:00

SALLY QUINN:

And – I just had the most wonderful pregnancy, I wasn't sick at all and – I just felt radiant and happy the whole time. And Ben—Ben was really excited and happy, but also his back went out and so he had to wear a back brace, I think—I think he was terrified at being a father again at his—at almost 61. I think he was really scared the way one might be scared when you're 21 and you're about to be a father, you know, it was the same kind of thing—because his children were grown by then. And—Quinn was born and he was the most beautiful baby you're ever seen, but when the doctor came to examine him the next day—his pediatrician—she detected a heart murmur. And she – was a little concerned, but she said that it didn't sound bad but she wanted us to go to Children's Hospital to have a – an exam, and so we took him to Children's Hospital and it turned out that he had a hole in his heart, but they thought it was very small.

01:15:45:00

SALLY QUINN:

And that that was not uncommon and that the hole would always close up—or most often close up after a couple of years. But here are the symptoms of heart failure, and just be looking out for them—and so I wasn't terribly concerned, but when Quinn was about 3 months old—or 2 months old I guess, it was my birthday and – I remember having people over for

dinner and he had been very fussy all weekend – I mean during the week and that day, and wouldn't nurse and I'd take him to the pediatrician, she said he was ok, but anyway—they wanted to see him and I brought him downstairs and I looked at him and I thought, there is something wrong with this child. There's something wrong. I don't know what it is, but I'd—I had just literally come from the doctor. And so we took him up to the country the next morning—we drove up to the country and he was fussy and he wouldn't feed and that night he was fussy all night long and the next morning he couldn't – he was having trouble breathing and he was crying a lot and wouldn't nurse and I just said to Ben, there's something terribly wrong here—we've got to get him back.

01:16:56:00

SALLY QUINN:

So we got in the car, and we had to keep stopping the car because he was crying so much. I got home and called the cardiology department at Children's Hospital and explained the symptoms and they said, he's in heart failure. Bring him in right away. So Ben and I took him over to the hospital and he was, in fact, in heart failure and so we put him in the – you know – they admitted him into the hospital and put him on all kinds of IV's and – they did more tests and found out that the hole in his heart was much bigger than they thought it was. And they were actually stunned. And so, they decided he needed to have heart surgery, but he was too weak by that point—and too small to really operate on, so they wanted to wait as long as they could.

01:17:47:00

SALLY QUINN:

And so I lived in the hospital with him for over a month. And – this was probably one of the most traumatic times of our lives—well –I think for Ben probably the most traumatic time because the same day that—so we were—I was in the hospital and I would—I lived there—in the room—I had been in the hospital for a year when I was a child in Tokyo when my father was in Korea and—they never found out what was wrong with me—but they wouldn't allow my parents to come visit me. My father was gone but they wouldn't allow my mother to visit me – they had no visiting hours in the hospital. And so I was – determined never to leave Quinn alone for one minute and – so either I was there or my mother was in the room or – he had a babysitter come for two hours every night, and Ben would come pick me up and see Quinn and take me out to dinner and then bring me back.

01:18:44:00

SALLY QUINN:

And I would stay in the hospital. And he just got—he lost more and more weight, got sicker and sicker and sicker, and it was clear that he was going to die. I mean, I could tell that—I just knew that. And – the other terrible thing that was happening is that – that day, the next day, Ben had to go to trial because he was being sued by the head of Mobil Oil, this guy named Tavel Reyes—*The Washington Post* had written a story that he had helped his son out in his company and it had reflected badly on him and – so he sued *The Washington Post*—for millions of dollars and – so the trial started the day after Quinn went into the hospital. So—I was in the hospital all day and Ben

was in court all day. And then he would come and see me and then he would go home and this went on for a month—and Quinn was getting sicker and I was getting more frantic.

01:19:44:00

SALLY QUINN:

And finally they said they couldn't postpone the surgery any longer because he wasn't going to make it. And so they scheduled the surgery for a – a Tuesday. The doctors didn't operate on Fridays and Mondays-- the heart surgeons. And I realized that Quinn was not going to make it. I just knew he was going to die—and I said, can't we do it earlier—oh well they have all these others—elective patients. And I said—I went to the doc—the surgeon and I said—he's going to die. He will not make it until Tuesday. I'm just telling you this. This is my mother's gut. And Ben was, of course, frantic because he was in – you know—he was in the hospital, he saw Quinn getting smaller and smaller and weaker and weaker and bluer and bluer—and I – I was so hysterical that the doctors finally said, okay we'll operate on Friday. I – and I think because they were pediatricians, I think they'd had enough experience with mother's gut that they listened to me.

01:20:49:00

SALLY QUINN:

And – so we went into surgery and we took Quinn down to the operating room and—because you can't eat before surgery—so Quinn couldn't nurse and so I couldn't hold him because he kept going for my breast, and so I wasn't able to hold him because he would start screaming when he couldn't



nurse, it was just horrible. Anyway, Ben and I took him down and the doctors came and took him out of my arms to take him into the surgery, and I just collapsed on the floor—just sobbing. I couldn't even speak I was crying so hard—and Ben leaned down, he picked me up and put me in his arms and said, "Just think of it this way, he'll never have to go to war." Because of course he would be 4-F. And being an army brat, I knew exactly what he was talking about. And—that—the idea of sending my son off to war, that was so horrible—it was the only thing he could have said that made me feel better.

01:21:53:00

SALLY QUINN:

And so anyway we sat—we went to the cafeteria and—at one point, Art Buchwald and Ed Williams and Kay Graham showed up and sat with us—and then my parents came and they came and said that the surgery was successful. And so – the next—that day Ben had to leave and he had to go to the courthouse the night of the surgery—the afternoon of the surgery. And the verdict was guilty for *The Washington Post*. And Ben was devastated as you can imagine, because the story was accurate. And-- so we went to the—the intensive care unit and Quinn was there and he was completely knocked out and – you know, on all these tubes, just this tiny little thing just lying there. And – the doctor said, you have got to go home and get some rest—because I hadn't slept in weeks and neither had Ben and so we went home and Ben said, you know I—everybody—we both agreed everybody was so devastated from the trial that we decided to get them to come over to the house that night for dinner.

01:23:07:00

SALLY QUINN:

And so we ordered carryout Chinese and all the lawyers, and Woodward, and Pat Tyler came to our house. And we had a party. We had Chinese food. I was in a state, you know. And I went upstairs to take a shower and I fell on the floor in the shower. I was crying so hard I couldn't stop crying and then Ben came in and got me out of the shower and put a towel around me and you know, said, it's gonna be ok. I mean, he was just so strong throughout it all cause I couldn't have made it without him, I couldn't have. And—and so we went down and we had a couple of glasses of wine and – you know—and then we went to bed and slept and then it was the best thing we could have done. And we got to the hospital the next morning and Quinn was beginning to – you know—get better. I was pumping milk and able to feed him. And his recovery was just miraculous. I mean we took him home in about 5 or 6 days, and then we took him up to Long Island.

01:24:08:00

SALLY QUINN:

But – it was clear that there were going to be a lot of problems. And – as it turned out, he—had medical problems, just endless medical problems. He was sick, in and out of the hospital constantly. He was getting pneumonia, he was getting bronchitis, he had to have ear surgery, he had to have his tonsils out. He had – he had hearing problems—he had terrible speech problems—we had to have him speech... We had – surgery on his—throat. Four times. Where they had to slit his throat open and create this flap

because he couldn't speak properly and—it just—it went on and on and on and just—Ben was there—I lived in the hospital most of the time—I had to take time off from *The Post*. But Ben was there -- all the time and just he was so loving and so supportive to Quinn.

01:25:09:00

SALLY QUINN:

I mean, but he bonded with Quinn in a way I just couldn't imagine and I – you know—one of the things—that Ben has never been good at is weakness. He doesn't – he sort of deplors weakness in other people. As I said, he doesn't like to hear whining or complaining. Can't stand people who are feeling sorry for themselves who—who are acting like victims. And weakness has always been something that he's just been... almost repulsed by. And so it was stunning to me that he would be drawn toward Quinn with all of his problems and—it was almost like this was his calling. If whatever he did in Watergate, whatever he did in World War II, whatever he did all of his life, that somehow this is what he was meant to do. Is that he was meant to take care of this special needs child. And—and give him the strength and the confidence that he needed to grow up.

01:26:12:00

SALLY QUINN:

And – be a functioning person. Because, as I said, I don't think that would have ever happened. And—so I – you know, that's when he started really bonding with Quinn. And that brought Ben and me close together—closer together. Although there were times when Ben just didn't want to face the

problems that Quinn had. It was just—it was awfully hard for him. Quinn started a special school when—he was four. He went to The Lab School and—I was devastated by that because, of course, that was not my plan for Quinn. My plan for Quinn was that he was going to go to St. Albans, and Harvard, and he was going to be Ben, you know. It became clear that that wasn't the plan at all. And so it took me a long time to try to accept that—and accept the issues that Quinn had.

01:27:14:00

SALLY QUINN:

And it's hard to explain but – Ben—I mean the arguments we had were that Ben kept saying, he's gonna be fine—and but I knew that the-- that the medical reports showed that he wasn't going to be fine, you know, and so – I would get really upset with Ben—for I felt – sort of being unrealistic about what we were dealing with. And on some level, he may well have been, but it was actually the right thing. Because it was his confidence and his belief in Quinn that kept me going and that—and that created the person that Quinn became. And so, when Quinn was 8, he was seeing this psychiatrist this—psych—when Quinn was 8, he was seeing this therapist and—she did some tests on him and one day we went in to see her and she said, “Well, I have some news for you. He is completely retarded and he will never – finish high school, and he'll never have a job, and he'll never have a relationship.”

01:28:26:00

SALLY QUINN:

“And in fact, he belongs in an institution and I have called this institution out in Maryland and I have made an appointment—reservation for him reserved a place for him starting in January.” This is in October, November. And I was in shock. I mean literally Ben had to carry me out to the car. And I just—I couldn’t even get into the car. I was crying so hard. It sounds like I’m crying all the time but-- I was crying a lot, um, over Quinn I have to say. And Ben just—I just said I can’t believe this – and Ben just said, fuck her. This is – she’s wrong. And I knew in my gut she was wrong too, but, you know, I just couldn’t – grasp it. Anyway—we had him tested again, we went back to The Lab School, they were outraged. It turns out she was wrong, totally wrong about everything.

01:29:24:00

SALLY QUINN:

And I mean that has happened to us so many times with Quinn where he has confounded everybody by just doing things that no one ever believed he could do and achieving things that no one could ever believe. And I knew—I think that—you know, I think with Ben working out in the woods with Quinn, he got him a little baby chainsaw, I was terrified but he showed him how to use it safely and—they would get in their Jeep every day and they would drive off and they had a special project and they would and they had a big burn pile and – and Quinn would talk to Ben about his dad and how he would work out in the woods with his dad, and it was just so life giving. And—and Quinn continued to have problems—continued to have these – but he had this confidence, Quinn did, always. We went to a drug store one day and

Quinn asked the druggist something—he wanted something on the counter and the druggist said, “I’m sorry? What is that?” And Quinn repeated himself and the guy said, “I’m really sorry, but I just don’t understand you and—so Quinn said it a third time and the guy said, “I’m really sorry, but I just didn’t understand him, and Quinn just turns to me and he says, “Mom, what’s his problem?”

01:30:40:00

SALLY QUINN:

And I thought, this is perfect, you know, this is perfect, this is what Ben would have said, you know? What was the guy’s problem? It wasn’t Quinn’s problem. And we had – you know—he was having surgery until he was 16. And – you know, I had days where I couldn’t even get out of bed. I was so depressed. And Ben never lost his faith or his confidence in Quinn. And when Quinn went off to boarding school, he went to a special school for boys with learning disabilities, the teacher told us that Quinn—the math teacher said, look, you know, I’m sorry but there are some kids that get it and some that don’t, Quinn just doesn’t get it. He’s never going to be able to do math. And Ben just said, that’s bullshit. And he worked with Quinn on his math during his vacations—This is a boarding school—at the end of the year, Quinn got the math prize. And Quinn was scheduled to have some—test at Children’s Hospital. Some cognitive testing.

01:31:47:00

SALLY QUINN:

And I couldn't—I had scheduled to be in a spa in California and I couldn't – I had decided I couldn't go because that's when they had scheduled the test—Ben said, no, no, no I'll take him it'll just be fine –you know—they're not going to do anything except test him, so – anyway I went off to this spa and I -- and I walked the labyrinth, which is this incredible sort of like a maze-- and it's some meditation tool—and I remember sitting in the labyrinth the first day I walked it, and it was in this grove– of trees –live oak trees. And I looked up and in front of me, while I was meditating, there was this huge fir tree. This Evergreen, this gorgeous Evergreen tree. And I looked at it and I thought, you know what, that tree is Quinn. It's different from all the other trees, but it's the most beautiful tree here.

01:32:47:00

SALLY QUINN:

And that's what Ben had always said about Quinn, is that he's different but he's beautiful. He's more beautiful than all the other trees. So the following year—so I had done that the first year, the following year I went out and I walked the labyrinth and I chose the time that Quinn was gonna be taking the test and Ben said, don't worry, I'm going to be with him the whole time - and so I walked the labyrinth and I meditated on that tree while he was taking that test. And so – a few weeks later they called us in and we went in and they said, well there's good news and there's bad news. The bad news is that he's tested very badly. I mean really low on all of these different-- in every area. But there's one test that he scored higher than anybody we have ever tested ever. And that is the maze.

01:33:40:00

SALLY QUINN:

And of course that's what I had been walking, is the maze. But Ben had been there with him the whole time—and as it turned out, Quinn has been this—Quinn's a magical person and Ben is a magical person. And I have never – I have not known very many people who, what I call have the magic. And Ben—Quinn got his magic from Ben. I mean, if you really want to know about Ben, I mean people used to say what's the one word you would use to describe Ben, I would say swashbuckling, but I think really now, the word I would use is magical, because – you know, there's something about Ben that you just can't describe when—when he just walked into a room, he created magic wherever he went, and Quinn has that quality too.

### **Ben Bradlee as a father**

01:34:37:00

SALLY QUINN:

I mean for Ben who was so patient with Quinn and so understanding and so loving and so affectionate. And he—it was the first time in his life he's ever had a relationship like that. I mean it was certainly different from my relationship with him, but I think that—he learned a lot from Ben, and I think that Ben—really liked himself so much better after Quinn was born. He became the person that he really was and the person that he was meant to be. And not the tough guy that was gonna run over his grandmother to get a story, you know.



**Ben Bradlee as a husband**

01:35:18:00

SALLY QUINN:

We had a wonderful marriage. I was madly in love with Quinn – no sorry—well I was in love with Quinn—I was madly in love with Ben from the first moment we got together and I was madly in love with him until the moment he died. And he was madly in love with me always, and we never—never considered ever splitting up. We never had any problems like that. We did—We obviously had areas of discussion—things we disagreed on but—you know, we both loved all the same things, we both had the same values. We both were just passionate about journalism and newspapering and – we liked the same people and we both—loved to have fun, which was really important.

01:36:18:00

SALLY QUINN:

You just – you have to have a balance in your life and you have to have fun. But I mean we were lucky. We were just really lucky that we found each other because we were perfect for each other. We were perfect together and I – I just feel so grateful that I had this incredible life with this extraordinary man. And I never doubted for a moment that he loved me. He never doubted for a moment that I loved him.

**Ben Bradlee’s lasting legacy**

01:36:51:00

SALLY QUINN:

He never talked about it for a second. He didn't care. He was doing the best he could and living the best life he could and, you know, and somebody—you know the Ben Bradlee prize this and the Ben Bradlee prize that – and they've just started a new Ben Bradlee prize at *The Washington Post*—and—I've not started any kind of a Ben Bradlee thing, or a prize, or an event, or an award, or a – because I – don't want to be the keeper of the flame. I'm—that's not what he would have wanted. Ben doesn't need a keeper of the flame. I mean Ben was his own flame. And he certainly didn't – he certainly didn't need me for that. And you know—his flame will never die, that's for sure.

### **How Ben Bradlee would have viewed the Trump presidency**

01:37:53:00

SALLY QUINN:

During the campaign people were often asking me how Ben would have felt and what he would have done and everything. And I said Ben would have been conflicted about it. I think he would have thought – on the one hand, this is a great story, and on the other hand, I think he would have been really concerned for the country. And—maybe the latter would have outweighed the former. I think now—the day after the election I woke up and I felt so alone—I don't think I've ever felt that alone in my life and I –you know looked over to the other side of the bed and it was empty and I just thought—I don't think I can do this. And –I just all I could think about Ben and what he would

have done—and I know what he would have done-- he would have jumped out of bed and said—he would have said, let’s go get those stories. You know? And for him, if he thought that there was any threat to the first amendment, any threat to freedom of speech, any threat to our country, he would have been on it until the day he died.

**Ben Bradlee’s memorial service**

01:39:11:00

SALLY QUINN:

I put that together, I don’t even know how I did it when I think about it, because there were 3,000 people there and it was this two hour long ceremony, and I look back on it and think, who did that? Because I was in such a state of grief that I was kind of going through the motions—I mean—he was in hospice for—some weeks before he died, so I actually had started making some plans. I had gone to the cathedral and talked to them. But I think that —I wanted people to feel—and I think that this was the overwhelming feeling in the—in the cathedral—I mean people—everybody was crying. I mean that wasn’t my intention one way or the other. But I wanted people to have a feeling of transcendence.

01:40:12:00

SALLY QUINN:

I wanted people to feel as though at that moment they were transcending their own life and that somehow, Ben was able in his own life to transcend all of the sorrow, whatever pain he had, whatever evil there was, whatever

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darkness there was in the world—that Ben had this incredible spirit that just transcended all of that. I mean he was a very spiritual person—he wasn't actively religious. But—somehow I just wanted everyone to feel uplifted. And I think that they did—I think in the end. You know—people were crying—they weren't—I mean it was—it was sad, but it was uplifting in a way. I think everybody just felt—it was—almost sort of a sense of levitation in that cathedral that day.

01:41:08:00

SALLY QUINN:

The music was beautiful and – and the emotions were—real they were such—it seemed to me so much authenticity there. And so much beauty there. And—and—there was a sense of the divine. I just felt that—overwhelmed with—love and—certainly grief, but love—I felt, for that moment – I looked at Ben's casket and I knew that he would love this funeral more than anything and so I felt a certain sense of joy. That—that I could do this for him and honor him in this way. But I guess in the end it was transcendence that—I think people felt.

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