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Special Event

George W. Bush Answers Questions about his DUI Arrest in 1976

Aired November 2, 2000 - 9:16 p.m. ET

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LARRY KING, HOST, "LARRY KING LIVE": We are now going to West Allis, Wisconsin, where George Bush is taking some questions. Let's listen.

(JOINED IN PROGRESS)

GOV. GEORGE W. BUSH (R-TX), PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE:

There's a report out tonight that 24-years ago I was apprehended in Kennebunkport, Maine, for a DUI. That's an accurate story. I'm not proud of that. I oftentimes said that years ago I made some mistakes. I occasionally drank too much and I did on that night.

I was pulled over. I admitted to the policeman that I had been drinking. I paid a fine. And I regret that it happened. But it did. I've learned my lesson.

As I mentioned, I -- as many of you know that I quit drinking alcohol in 1986. And it was the right decision for me to make then. I would be glad to answer a few questions.

QUESTION: Why wait until now?

BUSH: Well, it came out now because a TV station in Maine broke the story. But I made the decision that, as a dad, I didn't want my girls doing the kinds of things I did and I told them not to drink and drive. It was a decision I made. I have been very up front with the people of the state of Texas that, you know, that I had been drinking in the past, that I had made mistakes. And the story broke.

QUESTION: Why now?

BUSH: I think that's an interesting question, why now, four days before an election.

QUESTION: Did the girls know before today?

BUSH: No, the girls did not know until tonight. I talked to them.

QUESTION: Could you tell us some more about the night that you spent some time in jail? Did you...

BUSH: No, I didn't spend any night in jail there. I did not spend time in jail.

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QUESTION: Governor, do you believe this is relevant to your candidacy in any fashion?

BUSH: No, I think the people knew that I had been straightforward, that I had made mistakes in the past. This happened 24 years ago. I do find it interesting that it's come out four or five days before the election. But I have been straightforward with the people, saying that I used to drink too much in the past. I'm straightforward with people saying that I don't drink now.

QUESTION: But were you completely truthful, Governor...

BUSH: Yes.

QUESTION: ... all the times that you were asked..

BUSH: Yes, I was.

QUESTION: ... asked whether...

BUSH: Yes, I was. I was.

QUESTION: Is there anything else -- is there anything else...

QUESTION: How did you think you could get away with anything?

BUSH: I'm not trying to get away with anything.

QUESTION: Why didn't you come with this out sooner?

BUSH: I just explained why. I wanted to make -- I didn't wanted to talk about this in front in my daughters. I've told my daughters they shouldn't be drinking and driving. It's the decision I made.

(CROSSTALK)

BUSH: I have been very candid about my past. I've said I've made mistakes in the past. People know that. They've thought about that. They're making their minds up now. And they've seen me as the governor of the state of Texas. I've upheld the honor and integrity of my office.

And it's a regrettable incident that I find interesting that four or five days before the election is coming to the surface.

And the only thing I can tell you is that I told the people in my state I used to drink. I quit drinking. I'm not going to drink, and I haven't had a drink in 14 years.

QUESTION: Is there anything else that you might be embarrassed about, Governor?

BUSH: Pardon me.

QUESTION: Is there any action that you or your family took after that night?

BUSH: No, there's not. I mean, none.

QUESTION: (OFF-MIKE)

BUSH: No, none at all. None whatsoever. As a matter of fact, I, you know, I tried -- I mean, I -- listen, I told the guy I had been drinking and what do I need to do? And he said, "Here's the fine." I paid the fine and did my duty.

QUESTION: Do you recall what you were doing that night that led you to (UNINTELLIGIBLE)?

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BUSH: I was drinking beer, yes, with John Newcombe.

QUESTION: How much did you have?

BUSH: How many beers?

QUESTION: Yes.

BUSH: Enough to have been in violation of the law. I can't remember how many beers. It was 24 years ago.

And that's the interesting thing about this. Here we are with four days to go in the campaign and we're discussing something that happened 24 years ago.

QUESTION: Governor, was there any legal proceeding of any kind? Or did you just...

BUSH: No. I pled -- you know, I said I was wrong and I...

QUESTION: In court?

BUSH: No, there was no court. I went to the police station. I said, "I'm wrong."

QUESTION: So you just had a (UNINTELLIGIBLE).

BUSH: Yes.

QUESTION: For the same night.

BUSH: Yes, I did.

QUESTION: (OFF-MIKE)

BUSH: No. I admitted I was wrong. And...

QUESTION: (OFF-MIKE)

BUSH: My father, as I recall, he wasn't very happy about it. But...

QUESTION: Governor, are there any more mistakes of this kind or similar awaiting to be discovered? BUSH: No.

QUESTION: Governor, you're running for the highest office in the land, don't you think the people have got a right to know this about you?

BUSH: I told the people I'd made mistakes in the past.

QUESTION: But this specifically.

BUSH: I told people I'd made mistakes in the past. And this was a mistake I'd made in the past. I also -- please. I also told the people in that in the past I had drunk too much at times. And this was the case.

And as I mentioned to you, I'm a dad. I was trying to teach my children right from wrong. I chose the course that, to my daughters, I was going to tell them they shouldn't drive and drink. And that's the course of action I took.

And I'm the first to say that what I did was wrong and I've corrected that. And I think the people of America will understand that. I think the interesting thing is that why five days before an election, all of a sudden it pops...

QUESTION: Why do you think it (OFF-MIKE)

BUSH: That's your job. I got my suspicions.

Thank you all.

I've got my suspicions.

QUESTION: Governor, will you answer questions (UNINTELLIGIBLE)?

BUSH: Thank you very much.

KING: That was Governor Bush responding to the charges released today.

BUSH: Ross Perot did? That's fantastic.

KING: Hold it.

BUSH: I'm glad to have his support.

KING: Oh, he just told them about Ross Perot.

BUSH: And I think it's an indication of -- the fact that I'm picking up support from a lot of voters who aren't necessarily associated with the Republican Party. And I'm proud to have him on my team.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Thank you all.

BUSH: Thanks. KING: And that was, that last question was what he thought about the announcement tonight right here of Ross Perot's endorsement. We'll get Ross Perot's opinion on what he just said and lots of other things. We'll also include calls. We'll be right back. Don't go away.

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