

CHAPTER I

Do I Know You?

I know you from somewhere—but where?

I feel like I've met you before, but I just can't place you. Do you know me? I know I know you.

I was sitting in my father's living room, listening to his slow and labored breathing while he rested in his hospital bed close by. These questions and thoughts nagged me as I interviewed a young man to help me take care of my dying father. I couldn't give these questions much of my time because Dad was fading fast.

After eight years of serving in President George W. Bush's administration, I was worn out and honestly looking forward to downtime with my family and a "normal" life outside of government. I was a political appointee and had to resign my position effective on the day the new President took the oath of office—January 20, 2009. That normal life wasn't meant to be, because my father was going into the final stages of congestive heart failure and needed all the family's caretaking time, including mine.

To take care of my father, I had to leave on a Monday for Pennsylvania, about a three-hour drive from my home, and return on a Friday afternoon, trying my best to beat the Washington, DC Beltway traffic. While glad that I had the time to spend with Dad, caretaking was taking its toll.

Dad had lived in the same row house outside of Philadelphia for fifty-five years, so you would think these caretaking trips would be like going home for a visit: same kitchen, same bathroom, same bedroom where my sister Kate and I shared a bed until she got married (she married before I did). But they weren't. I had not lived in the house since my marriage to a