

OUR 19TH YEAR

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HOME+DESIGN

winter
2018


Fox News Journalist
and Former White
House Press Secretary

Dana Perino



75+
KITCHEN
INSPIRATIONS

Plus! Charleston Home +
Design Show Preview

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a blue button-down dress, stands on a brick walkway next to a light blue bicycle. The bicycle has a tan woven basket on the front. Behind her are stone steps leading up to a double door with dark wood frames and glass panes. The house has white horizontal siding and a brick chimney on the left. A lantern hangs above the door. The walkway is paved with irregular stone tiles.

Dana Perino stands outside of her Bluffton home that she shares with her husband Peter and beloved pup, Jasper.



Compelling Powerhouse

Story by Laura Jones | Photography by Patrick Brickman & Colin Grey Voigt

As a kid, I always knew that the news was important. My parents would pounce on both the morning and evening newspapers and would faithfully watch local and national news shows daily. I remember wanting to be a part of something so vital to so many people. I got my first taste of that power in the 7th grade writing for the *Puma Press* and truly fell in love with all aspects of news reporting—even if our reporting was about cafeteria food and Valentine’s Day carnation giveaways. My career path took a few different turns along the way, but I’m thankful I found my way back into the world of journalism in some capacity. Our cover star, Dana Perino, held fast and true to her childhood dreams even though the route wasn’t a straight line for her either.

Dana’s career has led her to many exciting opportunities. She became the first Republican woman to be White House Press Secretary during the George W. Bush administration, was appointed by President Barack Obama to the Broadcasting Board of Governors during his tenure, became a successful author, philanthropist, and is now a staple at the Fox News network with her television shows, *The Daily Briefing* and *The Five*. When Dana’s not in New York or visiting Capitol Hill, she and her husband, Peter, along with their much-adored pup, Jasper, retreat to Bluffton, South Carolina. Dana and Peter took the *Charleston Home + Design* team on a tour of their Lowcountry home and Dana shared more about how she has become the woman she is today.



Tell me a little bit about your family and your life as a kid.

I was born in Wyoming. I grew up in Colorado. My family on my father's side ranched and still ranches to this day. It is in the Black Hills of Wyoming, which is about 80 miles west of Mount Rushmore. My great great grandparents homesteaded that area in the late 1800s. It's a cattle ranch with quarter horses. I spent all of my summers, Christmases, and vacations doing all of that kind of thing.

What were you like as a child?

I was always a very early to bed, early to rise kind of person because that's the way our household was. I was interested in politics and my dad and I both loved the news. In third grade, my dad started a tradition with me where I had to read the *Rocky Mountain News* and the *Denver Post* every night before he got home from work and choose two articles to discuss with him before dinner. That really started my interest in journalism and in government. From there, I went on

to join the Speech Team, which I highly recommend to all kids. That is how I actually ended up going to college; I went on a Speech Team scholarship.

How did you go from a kid in Colorado to Capitol Hill?

I went to a small school—the University of Southern Colorado. I was a country music DJ working overnights and I waited tables as well. During that time I was studying Mass Communications. After that, I went on to graduate school to pursue Public



(left) An open floor plan was on the top of the “must have” list for Peter and Dana. They wanted to make sure this home was accommodating and welcoming for guests and groups of people. (right) Chic comfort abounds throughout this home. Since this house is meant to be a relaxing retreat, it was important for designer Kris Taylor to keep in mind durability and accessibility while designing each room—all while keeping everything looking lovely.

Affairs Reporting, but then I started doing the work and I didn't love it. I remember one day, I was supposed to be covering the State House, but they're only in session a certain number of days, so I got assigned to cover a trial. It was the first day of the trial and my assignment was to get an interview with this woman whose two-year-old son had been murdered. I got to the courthouse and I remember

thinking 'this is not my thing.' I circled her about three times and I couldn't do it. I went back to my bureau and had to just say, 'Sorry. I didn't get the interview.' Later, I ended up going to Capitol Hill working for a congressman and I was answering phones. Six weeks later I got a position as a press secretary on the House side for a congressman from Colorado.

It sounds like you've always been hardworking. Have you always been confident and brave to speak in front of others?

No. I don't think anybody is really. In fact, the number one fear of all Americans, and perhaps all people, but specifically Americans, is public speaking. I think I've always wanted to do journalistic work and I've always liked television. I loved



Even though she isn't one to hold on to a lot of items, Dana's office is one place that holds mementos and treasures that she has accumulated throughout the years.



(above) With Jasper (her dog) by her side, Dana has spent many hours relaxing and writing on this screened-in, second-story deck. From that bed swing, a great deal of her book writing has taken place. (inset) Custom wine labels featuring Dana and Jasper have been gifted to many family members and friends.

60 Minutes as a kid; in fact, my dad used to set a timer because I'd be so nervous that I would miss the show, because this was before we had DVRs and things like that. But in order to overcome what is a natural instinct to be reticent about public speaking, I joined the speech team. The other thing that helped me going forward was my first time filling in for Tony Snow, who was the White House Press Secretary at the time. I was filling in for him and I was so nervous because not only are you on camera so people are watching you, but you're speaking on behalf of the President of the United States. Of course you don't want to mess up or be made fun of, but like with anything, once you start doing it a little bit, you become more confident. The way I was able to continue to do it with confidence is that I would study all of the time and I still do that to this day. I'm reading the papers just like that tradition I started with my dad.

Your choices during and after high school seem to have paved your path to today. What advice do you

have for young people about to graduate high school?

I know that there's a movement afoot to say that college isn't necessary, but I still say that it is important. The other thing is, after I wrote *The Good News Is*, I realized one thing that I wish I had written but didn't is that I hope they will not worry their young lives away. I did. I worried all of the time. When I wrote the book, and I looked back at all of the points along the way that were career changes and improvements, they were not ones that I had planned. They were all random. I was prepared in that I had studied and had met a lot of people. That brings me to another piece of advice for young women, which is that you have to start building your network early. I don't really like that phrase as much as I actually mean 'make friends,' but what I mean by that is that men are very good at building a network naturally. Women, and I don't know why, don't seem to do it as much.



I read that you've done quite a bit of work with trying to help women with that challenge, especially with the Minute Mentoring program. Can you explain that a bit?

When I left the White House, I felt an obligation to try to help other young women who were asking questions kind of like what you're asking now. Minute Mentoring really began partly because I was overwhelmed by requests for people to get together for coffees or lunches or people asking me to call their granddaughter, niece, or someone. Honestly, I didn't have time for all of that and I was explaining the situation to my friend when we went to this event on Capitol Hill. It was a bipartisan women's networking group's meeting, and I was their speaker for that month; I felt like I had given them my best advice during that event, but during the photo line, I'd say 80 of them asked me if we could get coffee or something. As we were leaving, I was telling my friend Jamie that I just wished I could get all of them together at once, because they all want to meet individually, but they all wanted to ask relatively the same things. Jamie then asked me why wouldn't I just go and do that. I think Dee Martin, who was one of the original founders, came up with Minute Mentoring. The basic format really is like speed dating for mentoring young women.

Switching gears completely, what was your first reaction when you found out that you were going to be the first woman Republican White House Press Secretary?

That my life was changed forever. I was actually about to leave that job because I had exhausted all that I could do as deputy and I was tired because I had been there seven years. The Chief of Staff had said to everyone that if you don't think you can make it until the end, it'd be better for you to leave so we

can get fresh people because the President is going to have a lot of work to do until the last day. I had talked with my husband and we had decided I was going to leave and I intended to resign. Well, on that particular resignation day, the Communications Director came up to me and asked if we could speak after a meeting. That's when he told me, "The President wants to make you the Press Secretary." I didn't tell him that I was about to quit. About two hours after I found out, I had a reason to go into the Oval Office for a policy meeting and there's a great picture of that interaction where

he [the President] is looking at me and I'm looking and him and he is grinning like, "you got the job!" He's been like a second father to me in a lot of ways and I admire him in so many ways, too.

How did your time under that administration help you with your time under the Obama administration?

Oh, well being the White House Press Secretary means that you touch on all of the policy issues across the board and you get all of this experience. When I transitioned into television I was able to put things in context and to really understand things and say, 'well, actually I think he was meaning this,' or 'this is how it works.' President Obama appointed me to the Broadcasting Board of Governors, which is a bipartisan board that oversees all of our radio efforts outside of the country. I got to work with bipartisan colleagues who I'm still very good friends with,

Michael Meehan and Susan McCue in particular; we all went to Africa to work on putting more programming together.

Present day, you are on Fox News's *The Five*. What is it like being on television everyday like that? Do you ever read any of the criticism and how do, if you do that is, start each day fresh and new?

I'm still learning how to be in media and television. It is fas-



This stylish bathroom was built with functionality in mind. The shaker-style cabinets and tile flooring are easy to clean and the trendy cage lighting yields ample lighting.

Rich textures bring extra life to this guest bedroom. Animal skin pillows, a burlap bed skirt, and a studded leather nightstand work well together to provide elements of interest within a similar color palette.





(above) This coastal-chic guest room features ample space for many visitors. Four beds with ample storage space allow numerous people to visit comfortably. (below) Shades of coral and blue in a variety of complementary patterns bring a lot of energy to this relaxed hangout space.

(right) Every room in this home has a completely different aesthetic, yet the colors and elements of comfort keep the Bluffton home cohesive.



inating. Basically, I get a performance review every night. Sean Hannity actually told me that early on, 'Don't look at ratings or the criticism and over time, you'll see success.' I'm lucky that I work on a show where we laugh a lot. We take the issues seriously but we don't take ourselves that seriously. We use wit and funny videos in order to tell a story. I will say, though, regarding the criticism during the 2016 election, it was horrific. There were days where I felt like I needed to curl up in a ball under my desk. Peter would try to help me but there is nothing you can really do. Then I found out later that about half of the criticism was actually bots from Russia—they weren't even real people. The ways that they

tried to influence the election were many and one of them was to take commentators off the battlefield. If you're being criticized for something that you say, the chances are you will say less.

Do you ever have strangers try to talk about politics with you?

Not really actually. I think people try to give us a break. If I ever have a chance to see fans, and there are a lot of them, they usually just say that they love the show and ask if Greg is really that funny or if Kimberly can really walk in those shoes. One of the things that we love about South Carolina and coming here for a getaway is that, I don't know what people's politi-

cal preferences are and I don't typically ask, but I get the feeling that there is a lot of support down here and, in particular, support for my former boss. I don't talk about politics outside of the show because I do so much on the show. Politics is part of what I do, and not who I am.

Speaking of separation and getting away from things, how did you first come down here to South Carolina?

We first came here to attend a wedding for Scott Stanzel and Priscilla Jones. I had never been to the Lowcountry. We drove down here from DC with my girlfriend Jeanie Mamo and were coming down that five-mile long road that leads into this particular area and I remember thinking to myself, 'what sort of magical place is this?' We had the best time that weekend. Peter and I came down to Bluffton by ourselves for

a week about a year after that. Later, we decided to build a house down here. Kris Taylor, who is the designer here today, helped me and I kind of gave her free reign. We did a few email exchanges and met once. We thought at first we'd rent it out, but after coming down here and seeing the house, we knew that we would never rent it. That could change in the future, but right now this is just such an oasis for us. Actually, because of Jasper, we met our best friends, Jeff and Tracy Schyberg, who have a house here, too. We've been able to make a lot of friends in Palmetto Bluff, and I've lived away from home for over 22 years and this is the most like home than any other place that I've been.

We like to gather our friends and family here. We don't have children together, but Peter has children from a previous marriage, and they've come to visit from

Scotland. Actually, sitting right here in this living room, we've started a sort of old-fashioned tradition of playing charades at night. It's so much fun and the kids get so into it. Also, during the holidays we do a family scavenger hunt.

How does your design aesthetic here differ from you other places?

This home is very much in tune with the Lowcountry from the colors to the mix of wood and iron that we do throughout. I wanted a place that was comfortable where people could feel like nothing is going to get broken. We have the big round table and the island is large enough for people to gather around and even from a fabric standpoint, it is just fun and easy. Nobody has to take their shoes off. It's a cozy place to be. Also, we rarely watch TV here. We might turn it on if there is a game or something, but we don't really





Dana Perino and her husband, Peter McMahon, pose in their South Carolina kitchen. The two have enjoyed making many friends while residing down south.

use it. If there are little kids visiting, they'll go out to the porch and watch a movie.

Do you keep any of your world travel souvenirs here?

We brought all of our pictures and mementos from life to South Carolina. I'm not a very sentimental person. I don't have a lot of possessions that I really care about except for a few things. One

would be a painting that George W. Bush did of Jasper when he was a puppy. That is one thing I'd be very upset about if I lost that. Having worked at the White House and having been all around the world, especially to Africa, obviously we like nice things, but we are pretty cognizant that we have so much, and a lot of people around the world have nothing. I don't know if that is part of the reason why I'm not very sentimental about items, but I'm really not.

What do you do for fun while in South Carolina?

We started taking tennis lessons down here and we love it. We needed an activity that Peter and I could do together that didn't involve checking your phone. We both wanted to play tennis because it is something you can do anywhere in the world and you can do it with friends. Peter has gotten very good. I'm not that good, but I enjoy it a lot. We like to walk three to 5 miles with the dog every morning. We'll go for a bike ride or hit the pool. In the fall or winter we will kayak. My favorite thing that I've learned about since coming here is a verb called "porching." Of course, the food in South Carolina is amazing and I try to catch up on my sleep because it is so quiet compared to New York.

What do you see for yourself and Peter going forward?

This is the longest I've been at a job and I just signed another contract to stay on longer. The thing about being on the news is that it is always changing everyday. Also, this is what I've always wanted to do since I was a little kid—it just took me a long way to get there and I have a really great platform. I have a chance to talk about more than just politics. If I go to Africa for Mercy Ships or if I do something for Companions for Heroes, Fox lets me talk about it. I realize I have a voice. After hearing somebody talk about something that I've said on the show, and it definitely isn't so much about having power, but it's a realization that I really have a voice. I don't think I'm going to do anything different in the future. Peter and I do think that there will be an extended time in the future where we are in Africa where we would volunteer. It is something that we really want to try to do. 