



# **Presidential Disrespect**

A Skeptical and Adoring Citizenry Faces its Presidents,  
Befuddled or Wise

By Marcus Raskin  
Institute for Policy Studies

May, 2008

<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>JOHN QUINCY ADAMS.....</b>	<b>9</b>
DIPLOMATIC BEGINNINGS.....	9
SENATE LIFE AND THE PRESIDENTIAL CABINET .....	11
THE PRESIDENCY AND THE QUESTION OF A SLEAZY DEAL .....	13
POLITICS AFTER THE PRESIDENCY .....	15
<b>FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT.....</b>	<b>17</b>
FINDING THE AMERICAN VOICE AND DIGNITY .....	17
FROM LANDSLIDE TO LOSER TO WINNER.....	22
THE AXIS OVERPLAY THEIR HAND TO FDR'S ADVANTAGE.....	24
MRS. ROOSEVELT .....	27
THE PRESIDENCY.....	31
THE UNDOING.....	33
POLITICAL BEGINNINGS .....	36
BAD LUCK AND POLITICAL REBIRTH .....	38
<b>RONALD WILSON REAGAN .....</b>	<b>41</b>
FILM, POLITICS, AND ILLUSION .....	41
A SHIFT IN CONSCIOUSNESS.....	44
A PRESIDENT'S BEGINNINGS .....	49
A SECOND CHANCE .....	50

## Introduction

Citizens are prone to stand up when the President enters a room. They may even put on their suit jackets when the president phones, as distinguished historian Arthur Schlesinger did when President Kennedy called. However, since the beginning of the Republic, Americans have made clear to their Presidents that they should not expect respect. This despite the best presidential efforts; when President Nixon sought to foster an imperial aura about himself with an honor guard dressed in uniforms reminiscent of Kaiser Wilhelm's escort, there was such an outcry of laughter, derision and disbelief that he quickly withdrew his clumsy attempt.

Our presidents were reviled in the press and in the Congress. Their physical attributes were the butt of derision and bad jokes. Many were credited as being philanderers, fools and war mongering cretins. Some were accused of being secret monarchists or preparing the way for monarchy. Others were called totalitarians, Jacobins, drunkards, and communists.

Of course, many such claims were born of partisanship. Where some founding fathers claimed that a healthy body politic had to begin to form mutual bonds of affection, the way that these bonds often showed themselves was in the sort of fights one might find among brothers in a very rowdy family.

Except for the so-called era of good feeling, the idea of bipartisanship would have been thought absurd to members of the American political class; it is a modern day concoction that has nothing to do with the way American politics really operates. Our politics begins from interest and selfish ambition, is expressed in terms of conflict, and often ends in paranoia. That is why when we want to degrade someone in politics, or when a politician wants to attack another politician he claims that his adversary is being political. Yet our profound disrespect for politics only partially explains our disrespect.

Why should Americans treat their leaders with such contempt? There is the Oedipal interpretation, namely that once a man is elected president he becomes our father, and by so doing he becomes someone who in a deep unconscious way we want to kill. But this is not an interpretation I favor. Americans very seldom have seen a president as their surrogate father, although this point of view has a certain plausibility in the cases of Washington and Franklin D. Roosevelt, and perhaps Dwight Eisenhower, who was showered with affection by millions of men who served under him during war time, and was thought to be “above” politics and political party struggles.

Or one might conclude that as a nation, we never had good manners – a band of Indians, slaves, frontiersman and immigrants entirely lacks potential for couth. But the Federalists, who prided themselves on an economic and social class bias, with manners of an upper class and customs befitting a British palace court, had nothing but contempt for their opponents, the anti-federalists, the Democratic-Republicans, some of whom demonstrated Jacobin tendencies as they clung to slaves and the ways of the landed gentry, demonstrated in many disrespectful and indeed vicious ways.

More likely, the answer is bound up with our very understanding of freedom and the character of the United States as a nation and civil society, as it is presented in the more radical declaration of independence and the more conservative seeming federal Constitution. In both cases leadership and its meaning are ambiguous.

The United States and the American people were born of independence and revolution, both of which are prone to emphasize the sacrifice of the leader – it has been said that the difference between war and revolution is that in war the sovereign sacrifices the people and in revolution it is the people who sacrifice the ruler. We want to constantly remind the president that it is not his province to sacrifice us, the citizenry and that he has no special right to do so. (Paradoxically, it is usually taken for granted that in the modern presidency the power of the president has grown weaker as it relates to domestic matters. Modern presidents have found it easier to send thousands of troops abroad into harms way than to pass a health bill.)

What is clear is our deeply held need as free people not to be “taken in” by leaders, or fearful of them; when people are frightened of their leaders, liberty is not present in the law or in the hearts of the people. When we think about our own national beginnings, we see how the nation fought to maintain rights of free speech and press against those who sought to shut down these attributes of a free people. In Europe at the time of the American Revolution, those who criticized the king and his government could be charged with the crime of lese majeste. This was a broad charge that could range from conspiracy and treason to mere disrespectful words. When the second president, John Adams, sought to make the Alien and Sedition Acts a cornerstone of American law, creating a lese majeste-like condition in the United States, the people would have none of it, with the result that the Federalists were never able to regain the presidency and soon disappeared as a political party.

Americans have a difficult time with authority, sometimes confusing it with authoritarianism. The government, when it acts through its police powers, claims authority to coerce the citizenry to follow the law. And of course governments, including presidents of both political parties, have used the FBI and other federal policing institutions to spy on and harass citizens in order to disrupt and neutralize the political activities of a dissenting and antagonistic citizenry. Americans, whether consciously, or not, counter this with their belief that their liberty and freedom are utterly intertwined with the right and power to be disrespectful to authority and to invert what other nations define as authority into servants of the people.

Of course it is not only ordinary citizens who speak ill of a president. From its beginning the United States had political class that might sup with the president, all the while wondering why they weren't sitting at the head of the table. This wonderment and spite is to be expected in politics and should be understood as a condition which “goes with the territory.” These were real battles and they derived from the separation of powers in the American system of government as they related to palpable social and political problems that the nation faced. Even more so, the differences started from the

Madisonian principle that the only way to control one faction was to have a counter faction. And of course factions give rise to disrespect and conflict.

One should not be surprised to learn that John Marshall, the chief justice of the Supreme Court, saw, his cousin, Thomas Jefferson as “an absolute terrorist,” just as one hundred forty years or so later members of the Supreme Court saw President Franklin Roosevelt as a revolutionary out to destroy the sanctity of the court. It is probably no accident, then, that the Supreme Court has been no help to politicians in protecting them against the rhetorical postulations of the citizenry. Instead, in case after case, the Supreme Court has lent credence to the idea that the purpose of free speech, as political speech, is to allow indeed, encourage disrespect of presidents, and even the flag of the United States. Although some justices are prepared to give a president, during war-time conditions, extraordinary lee-way if the president waves the flag of national security.

President Clinton pointed out sardonically after returning from the turbulent Middle East, that it was good to be back in the secure White House. It was shot upon the day after his return. But such cases of lone madmen or conspiracies do not go to the problem of disrespect and bad manners. In fact the type of disrespect exhibited in these essays may be the substitute for violence. At least that is an arguable point, just as it is possible to make a strong case that certain presidents were philanderers with larceny in their hearts.

Of course antagonists may disagree as to policy and principle. It is most likely that antagonists and media will raise the level of debate by comparing presidents to baboons or venomous snakes and liars, language we would be very careful about using against our own employers. In everyday life people are more prone to speak and write badly of the president than they are of their boss. There are many cases of people speaking badly of the president without fear of retribution; there are fewer cases of a journalist publicly comparing his publisher to a baboon and keeping his job.

Meanwhile, thousands line up daily to see the White House, and while each person would be thrilled to shake the hand of a sitting president, this thrill is less related to the office of the President or the person who occupies it than to that very American phenomenon of

celebrity worship. Presidents may enjoy four or eight years of fame, considerably exceeding the artist Andy Warhol's prediction that everyone has fifteen minutes of fame. Indeed, for a president fame may evaporate very quickly. Although there were many good citizens who would have wanted to meet them, do we really care, for example, about Franklin Pierce, or James Buchanan or Warren Harding? Whether they were favored over celebrities of their period is not clear.

As we sort out our conflicting impulse towards our sitting presidents, we must not be taken in by the modern perks of presidential office, which have grown enormously since the beginning of the Cold War. The fact is that there is profound physical danger that now seems to come with the office, and while the citizenry wishes to protect the president physically, the President knows that it has nothing to do with him as a person. Rather there is fear of instability in the event he is assassinated. The President knows that he is one citizen among many. Sometimes he is the first citizen and other times he is not; he knows that politics is conflict and struggle, especially in a democracy.

So, our freedom and liberty are curious devices. We want to be united. But we know that the only way we can be united is by being different. We want to have respect for authority, but we know that too much respect for it breeds contempt of the people who become obedient out of fear. Americans want the president to know that he is not like some Roman emperor, a god, but merely a mortal citizen who must struggle, and, almost invariably, lose the battle in his time to be respected by the citizenry as a whole.

As we come full swing into the 2008 presidential election season Presidential Disrespect will post regular reports which will contain profiles on various presidents. Presidential Disrespect can be read as a short hand cultural account about presidents in a democratic republic and the abuse they must take irrespective of the period in which they serve as president. It can also be used as a tool to examine critiques of presidents, both while holding office and running for the position, which have been made in the past and hold relevance to today's current presidential race and political environment. Anyway that it is read Presidential Disrespect will show that whether it comes from other elected officials,

the press, or citizens, no person has been able to escape the barrage of disrespect that is bestowed to them as president.

---

· Quotes compiled by Sushila Nayak. Thanks to Andy Plenge, Alex Sushkov, Erik Giles, and Devin West for their transcription help.

## **John Quincy Adams**

(b. July 11, 1767 d. February 23, 1848, served 1825-1829)

### ***Diplomatic Beginnings***

Legends of a positive kind gather around the presidents like flies to horse manure. But in the case of John Quincy Adams, a man who not only kept up with the times but was ahead of them in vision and purpose, his stance as a far seeing leader and legislator should have bestowed upon him the mantle of true greatness. So why has he not received the accolades from historians which he deserves?

Perhaps the central reason was that he came across as forbidding, with frightening self-control and discipline for work. Yet upon his death even his enemies in Congress recognized his greatness and integrity. Perhaps it was because he came to the presidency under a cloud. Andrew Jackson and the Jacksonians claimed that Adams and his supporters stole the presidency from Jackson in a contested House of Representatives arrangement as a result of a sleazy deal which gave the Speaker of the House, Henry Clay, the post of Secretary of State in John Quincy Adams' cabinet. Puritanical training albeit colored by the need to succeed, a characteristic of presidents, may have turned Adams to accept or champion such an arrangement.

On the other hand, from childhood onwards, John Quincy Adams was the soul of probity. And precocious probity at that. The following is a letter written, at nine years old, to his father, the future president, who at the time was a minister of the Continental Congress in Europe.

Dear Sir,

I love to receive letters very well; much better than I have to write them. I make but a poor figure at composition. My head is much too fickle. My thoughts are running after bird's eggs, play and trifles, till I get vexed with myself. Mamma has a troublesome time to keep me a studying. I own I am ashamed of myself. I have but just entered the third volume of Rollin's History, but designed to have

got half through it by this time. I am determined this week to be more diligent...I have set myself a stint this week, to read the third volume half out. If I can but keep my resolution I may again at the end of the week give a better account of myself...I wish, sir, you would give me in writing, some instructions with regard to the use of my time, and advise me how to proportion my studies and play, and I will keep them by me, and endeavor to follow them.

With the present determination of growing better, I am, dear sir, your son.

John Quincy Adams

p.s. Sir – If you will be so good as to favor me with a black book, I will transcribe the most remarkable passages I meet with in my reading, which will serve to fix them upon my mind.

(As quoted in Life of John Quincy Adams by William H. Seward, (1849) Kennikat Press New York p. 29-30).

A man who bows to every vicissitude swims upon the tide of every revolution, and is the acknowledge creature of circumstances. He went abroad, it is presumed, before his principles had been formed – in the immaturity of youth when the mind is ductile and susceptible of impression. It was there that he learned the superiority of a monarchical over a democratic or federative government, that orders of nobility should be instructed, and Senators entrusted with their official functions for life. (Natchez Gazette. November 1, 1827. As quoted in American Press Opinion.)

It is little wonder that John Quincy Adams was named private secretary of the delegation to Russia at the age of 14. Adams returned to school at Harvard University and then undertook the practice of law in Boston. He was bored by law, concerned about his own career and fearful that life would pass him by. However, he began to write important journalistic articles under assumed names stating that the United States must stay out of taking sides in the French Revolution. Indeed, he feared the radical democratic characteristics of the French Revolution and the possibilities

that they could ignite passions towards democracy within the nascent American republic. Adams successfully outlined a neutralist stance in newspapers which was meant to balance off the French diplomat, Citizen Genet, who sought to engage the United States on the side of the French Revolutionaries. As a reward for his work President Washington chose Adams as American diplomatic minister to the Hague. This

commission was received when Adams was 27. It did not hurt his career that his father was vice president at the time. However, when John Adams became president he had thought to recall his son. He asked advice of Washington, who answered that Quincy Adams was the most valuable diplomat the United States had at the time. Married at 30 to Louisa Johnson, he served as Minister in Berlin.

### ***Senate Life and the Presidential Cabinet***

Adams was not in the United States during his father's turbulent period as president, which resulted in the Hamilton-inspired Alien and Sedition laws. Adams returned to Boston with his father's defeat and was soon elected to the State Senate of Massachusetts. In 1803 he was chosen by the Massachusetts legislature to be U.S. Senator at the age of 36. As senator he opposed Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase on constitutional grounds that Jefferson had overstepped his authority. It was during his term as Senator that he raised questions about slavery in ways which moved him towards his abolitionist position at the close of his political career. He called for a tax on the imposition of the slave trade. In his term as senator he supported Jefferson against his own Federalist party on the question of a trade embargo against Great Britain because of the British high-handed methods against American ships and seamen. The traders of Massachusetts suffered and as a result he was not re-elected to the Senate by the legislature. He had alienated his own political base. He returned to life as a professor at Harvard, but not for long. In 1809 he returned to St. Petersburg as the American minister in the Madison administration. While in Russia, Adams was nominated to the Supreme Court. The Senate affirmed him but he spurned the appointment. No justice has gone from the Supreme Court to the presidency (it worked the other way with William Howard Taft), and it may be that Adams realized that he would have been totally out of the political fray had he accepted the appointment.

The friends of Mr. Adams boast his transcendent talents...In him we shall discover little but what industry and art might supply; little evidence of vigor or versatility of genius. His style is studied and sophomoric. His "Lectures on Oratory, & c" are dull and insipid. No one admires that work...It remains on the hands of the bookseller, to banquet the worms, or goes under the hammer at half cost. Would it not rather become our state of Massachusetts to boast no more of the talents and erudition of her literary mammoth? (A Voice from the Interior. By a Republican of the Jefferson School. Boston: True and Green, 1828.)

In Russia he befriended the Tsar and the Romanov family. He was especially admiring of the Russian aristocracy's stance against Napoleon, who bid to upset the balance of power in Europe. As minister Adams was able to negotiate the release of American ships in Denmark and entrance of American ships into Russian ports.

President Madison appointed Adams to be the head of the American delegation to the end of the War of 1812. After six months of hard negotiations, in which the British

praised the American delegation as extraordinary in their preparation, arguments and knowledge of international law, the Treaty of Ghent was signed. Adams was then appointed the American minister in London, where he completed the negotiation of a commercial treaty with the British.

It seemed only natural that the new President, James Monroe, who was the last of the Founding Fathers, should call upon John Quincy Adams to be his Secretary of State. A few years later, notwithstanding the heated presidential campaign in which they were to be opponents, Andrew Jackson praised Monroe's choice, saying that there was no one better to fill the role of Secretary of State.

In that capacity Adams, who became secretary in September 1817, followed a course of moderation bounded by international law and wisdom with an eye to the real interests of the United States. He was the architect of the Monroe Doctrine, which warned European states and specifically the Holy Alliance nations that the Western Hemisphere was to be reserved for republican states and was not to be a place of interference or colonial expansion by European nations. But he also made clear that the United States would not intervene in the struggle for Greek independence against the Ottoman Empire even though there was considerable support for such intervention in the nation, as best

represented by Daniel Webster. Adams said that neutrality and peace with all nations was the course the United States would follow and the United States would not intervene. The United States could not become “voluntary auxiliaries” to war. His views apparently contradicted those of his father, John Adams, who supported Greek independence. Adams successfully negotiated with the Spanish for East and West Florida, an arrangement which was utterly in the American interest.

Adams sought to end the slave trade in pursuance of a February 1823 Congressional resolution. And to this end he began negotiations with various maritime powers. It should be noted that under the Constitution the importation of slaves was to end in 1808. This had been a lucrative business for Southern as well as New England shippers. Adams sought to end the practice in all of the Americas. With the American minister, Benjamin Rush, he negotiated an agreement with the British and others. However, the Senate rejected the agreement because it allowed the signatories to stop slave ships on the American coast.

### ***The Presidency and the Question of a Sleazy Deal***

March 4, 1825 marked the close of the Monroe administration. The question had raged for a number of months regarding the name of the next president. The vice president was a forgone conclusion. It was to be John Calhoun who supported a constricted view of national power, a believer in interposition, slavery and states rights. The question of the presidency was to be resolved in the House of Representatives, for no candidate of the four major candidates had a clear majority in the Electoral College, although Jackson had the most electoral votes as a result of the three-fifths rule in which slave owners were accorded extra votes. And here is where the issue of how Adams’ sharp elbows played a part in determining the outcome. For much was at stake. Jackson, the populist, remained pro-slavery and war-like in judgments. Crawford, the candidate of the South, was a gentleman but sickly. Clay had no general support but he was the Speaker of the House.

It was Adams who opposed and then came to detest slavery. Adams emerged victorious in the House election but it turned out to be a Pyrrhic victory after Clay supported him.

...When called on to vindicate your needless and unauthorized concessions, you equivocate, conceal facts, contradict yourself, impeach the integrity of your colleagues, attempt to prove our right to navigate the Mississippi a mere conditional British grant. You have attempted to barter our blood – not, as you acknowledge, to purchase any new right – but to secure one which already exists. You look to the West for justice – the West looks for it to the East and she calls upon her elder sister to protect her against those statesmen who would dismember her territory, destroy her trade and compromise her security. (Pamphlet: “Letters addressed by Amos Kendall to JQA.” Also included in “The Speech of Samuel Daveiss, Esq., Kentucky Senate, 1828.”)

Adams had hoped to press the cause of a modified Federalist program which meant that the national state had the power to undertake a program of internal improvements. He rejected the limited interpretation of the Constitution and federal power which the Virginian Monroe held to.

In his single term of office Adams pressed for a national canal and road system, piers, lighthouses, harbors, and a transportation system which would connect the various regions and sectors of

the nation to each other. As part of his program to stimulate internal development he supported high tariffs as a means of protecting domestic industry. His view was that American workers should not have to compete with pauper wages which were paid abroad. In terms of foreign relations Adams sought to make good on his idea of amity with all nations. The United States signed more treaties on commercial, trade, friendship and other matters than had occurred in the prior 36 years, according to Seward. Adams pressed for greater attention to be paid to national support for scientific endeavor as well as a national university. He also sought, within limits, to find ways of living in peace with the various Indian tribes, including the Creek Indians. Adams stopped the enforcement of a bogus treaty with the Creeks and renegotiated a more equitable one. He had hoped for a single nation of Indians west of the Mississippi but nothing came of this idea except the agreement among the American leaders to continue a program of Indian removal.

Adams found that he had little support in Congress, and that the claims of his right to hold the office of president were illegitimate. In the election of 1828 Andrew Jackson became president, ending four years of calumny against Adams and his Secretary of State, Henry Clay.

### ***Politics After the Presidency***

For many who have held the office of the president, retirement to a quiet and honorable life would end the political story. But not for John Quincy Adams, for he was the

[We oppose the re-election of John Quincy Adams] because, in that eventful period, when his patriot competitor devoted his whole energies to his country, and, instead of accusing his government of feebleness and penury and holding out the disgraceful language of fear and submission, raising the banner of his country, and inviting to its defence, by the most elevated examples of constancy, devotion and courage. (The striking similitude between the reign of terror of Elder Adams and the Reign of Corruption of the Younger Adams. Albany Republican County Convention. Printed for the Albany Argus, 1828.)

quintessential statesman who sought to live his life for his nation. For a time he went home to Massachusetts, wrote poetry and continued his biblical studies. In 1830 he won election as a Whig to the Congress by a near unanimous vote from his district. As the first and only former President to sit in Congress he was accorded great respect by former antagonists, especially on such issues as commerce and manufacture. His first act as a member of Congress was to present petitions for Pennsylvania residents who wanted to abolish slavery and slave trading in the District of Columbia. It should be noted that Adams, who opposed slavery, did not take an

abolitionist position in presenting the petitions, for he believed that an all-out onslaught on slavery would fail. Southern members introduced and passed a resolution, which stated that no petitions – a right guaranteed under the Constitution – could be presented to Congress which were concerned either with slavery generally or slavery in the District of Columbia. He continued to challenge the ruling and presented dozens of such petitions. As far as his southern colleagues were concerned, the last straw came February 7, 1837, when he presented a petition not from whites and Quakers, but slaves themselves who

lived in Virginia. Many of his colleagues called for his expulsion but nothing came of this attempt. On the other hand, a gag rule was applied to anyone who attempted to present petitions, a tactic which Adams pursued at every session. He added to his grievances the gag rule itself. Adams continued with his agitation to end slavery, and in 1839 he proposed an amendment to the Constitution which would have ended slavery for any child born after July 4, 1842. Further, no new states could come into the Union as a slave state and the slave trade would end in the District of Columbia by July 4, 1845. Though nothing came of the amendments, he did succeed in getting the gag rule rescinded in 1844.

As a lawyer Adams argued the cause of a group of slaves who were kidnapped from Africa but who took over the boat, the *Amistad*, after killing the captain and crew. The slaves wished to return to Africa but the Spanish government insisted that the slaves be turned over to it and tried for murder. Adams argued a rule of self-defense for the slaves in the Supreme Court and won.

John Quincy Adams suffered a series of strokes. His second stroke occurred on the House floor and he died on the 23rd of February 1848. As one member of Congress put it at his death, “There was no incident in the birth, the life, and the death of Mr. Adams, not immediately woven with the history of the land.” He was known as the “Patriot Sage” and the “Old Man Eloquent.”

One other personal matter should be noted. John Quincy Adams had three sons. One died or committed suicide at 25 and another died at 30. The third lived to 79 and almost won the Republican nomination for president against Horace Greeley. It takes no speculation to imagine how heavily the death of two of his sons weighed on Quincy and Louisa Adams. It was no wonder that Louisa Adams, who had had several miscarriages, became a depressive.

## **Franklin Delano Roosevelt**

(b. Jan. 30, 1882 d. April 12, 1945, served 1933-1945)

### ***Finding the American Voice and Dignity***

Franklin Roosevelt was elected to the presidency four times beating four Republican candidates, Herbert Hoover, Alf Landon, Wendell Willkie and Thomas E. Dewey. There was so much anger among Republicans about this feat that they successfully championed the twenty second amendment to the Constitution which limited to two the number of terms a president could serve.

At the beginning of Roosevelt's first term, the leading Supreme Court Justice, Oliver Wendell Holmes, commented that Roosevelt had a first class temperament and a second class intelligence. However one cares to classify him he was one of the two or three extraordinary presidents in the history of the United States and surely the leading American president since the civil war.

To understand this statement it is important to remember the historical context in which he lived. When Roosevelt became president in March 1933, the United States was experiencing a terrifying economic depression in which the people seemed to have lost all hope. It was taken for granted that capitalism was a dead letter and that there was no way to protect its existence from its excesses if a democratic framework was to be retained. Fascism was riding high in Italy, the Nazis had come to power in Germany, and in the Soviet Union Stalin's version of communism was thought by many to be the wave of the future.

Through a whirlwind of activity, some successful, others less so, Roosevelt's New Deal became the definition of how to save and run a modern democratic capitalist state. It would set the framework for last resort employment, agricultural subsidies, regulations

"Brutus, Arnold and Franklin D.  
Sat in the shade of a sour apple tree. Their  
conversation took a turn  
As to which one was the most traitorous worm.  
"It is I, cried Brutus, I betrayed my friend. I  
double-crossed Caesar unto his end.  
I won his trust and the history books say His final  
words were Et tu Brute.  
"Not bad, said Arnold, but listen awhile. Your  
puny record just makes me smile. You fooled only  
one man, but look at me  
I sold out a whole bloomin' army.  
"Up jumped Franklin, haughty and sure, You boys  
are only like Amateurs. When I took charge in '33  
A great nation placed her trust in Me.  
"I told them just to feel at ease. I had them  
chanting their ABC's I promised that I'd soak the  
rich Ain't I the lyn'est son of a bitch?  
I promised a land of milk and honey Where  
everyone would be rolling in money. I promised  
this and what did they get? They got results which  
were all wet.  
They called me the great humanitarian. (I should  
have been in a sanitarium)  
Blue buzzards were on every window pane; New  
born babies bore My name.  
Beware of Wall Street, I dinned in their ears. Trust  
in me and have no fears; I will keep you safe from  
all harm, To heck with the work, plow under your  
farm.  
"They believed in me both husbands and wives  
But the little pigs ran for their lives. They alone  
knew they were no longer free. As I killed them  
off with the greatest of glee.  
"I fooled these Yokels, both old and young;  
I was the greatest scoundrel to remain unhung.  
I've ruined their Country, My Friends and then,  
I've placed the blame on Nine Old Men.  
"Brutus stood there filled with awe,  
Arnold sat with fallen jaw.  
Then Brutus said, We've had our fling  
Get up now, Arnold, and salute your King."  
(Anonymous poem, 1940 Presidential Campaign;  
As quoted in "Smear" Politics.)

over the stock market, and  
guarantees to bank deposits. It  
would build highways and public  
buildings, as well as aid everyone  
from artists to farmers. People  
were to be given a measure of  
dignity for their work.

A few years later, in 1941, the  
United States was engaged in a  
world war. The Second World  
War was thought by many to be  
one which Roosevelt maneuvered  
the nation into by favoring the  
British. After the Japanese  
attacked Pearl Harbor and the  
Germans declared war on the  
United States, the battle lines  
were clearly drawn and the  
shadow war and shadow boxing  
which did exist between the  
United States, Japan, and  
Germany came to an end. By dint  
of the economic, military and  
political power the United States  
exercised, but also because of  
Roosevelt's visionary views and  
charisma, Roosevelt was  
recognized as the leader of the  
alliance which crushed the axis  
powers, even though Russians

carried the brunt of the war.

Like other presidents, for example Andrew Jackson and Jack Kennedy, Roosevelt had serious physical ailments. In his case, he had contracted infantile paralysis as a 39-year-old adult which left him crippled from the waist down. The press did him the favor of almost never photographing him in a wheelchair. Except in one case, when he returned from a grueling trip from Yalta where he met with Stalin and Churchill, he always addressed Congress standing up. But in March of 1945 his spirit and amazing will power began to surrender to his body and he asked permission of Congress to sit as he presented his report on the character of the postwar settlements that had been reached with the allies and which he believed would keep the peace among the United States, the Soviets, and the British.

More than any other, Roosevelt had pressed for a United Nations Organization which he hoped would take the place of a world that had faced two devastating wars in less than a generation. The UN was to be an organization in which the most powerful nations in the world would work in concert for peaceful solutions for the good of humanity. The first three words of the UN Charter, "We the Peoples," were of course patterned after the first three words of the American constitution.

So who was this aristocratic man that some called a squire and others called a communist and traitor to his class? He came from that part of the landed gentry which already had claimed a President in its family, Theodore Roosevelt, and formed a protective world for its children through tutors and private schools. In the case of FDR, an only child, the schools to attend were Groton and then Harvard, where a Christian uprightness and upper class noblesse oblige were engrained in the students.

Roosevelt finished his law degree at Columbia University and practiced law for a short time in New York City but soon surrendered to the calling of politics. He was elected as a Democrat to the state senate of New York. During the First World War, he was chosen by Woodrow Wilson to be assistant secretary of the Navy. His views at the time were unexceptionable, favoring a large navy. He had an engaging disposition and flirted with

social causes through his wife, Eleanor Roosevelt, a distant cousin who had committed her life to the needs of the downtrodden as he own life broadened to include Blacks, Jews and radicals.

In 1920, Roosevelt ran as the Democratic vice presidential candidate with James Cox of Ohio. Roosevelt campaigned to generate popular commitment for the League of Nations. But the Cox campaign failed to light any fires. The national electorate was into normalcy and withdrawal from European affairs after the First World War and it was not about to support such ventures, even though the League had been an American initiative.

“He is not Dutch, as you have been led to believe. His father was rich. His mother was also rich in her own right. He was pampered and petted. He was sort of a Little Lord Fauntleroy. When he first entered Groton—another private school—he was a pampered pet, tied to his mother’s apron strings—a mother’s darling. He was principally interested in boats and ships. He wanted to join the Navy. He was urged by his father to go to Harvard instead. Most of Mr. Roosevelt’s advisors, since he has become President, are instructors or graduates of Harvard who believe in Socialism to an extreme degree, and Communism also. They propose most of the socialist schemes which Mr. Roosevelt puts into effect.” (“Free Men, Liberty or Slaves”; Anonymous campaign literature, 1940; as quoted in Bone.)

Roosevelt was known as a moderate reformer within the Democratic Party, and while he had first fought the bosses of New York politics in the New York legislature and then as governor, he also was respectful of their power and their organizational ability. In 1928, he supported Governor Al Smith as the Democratic Party's candidate for the presidency. This was the first time that a Catholic candidate was nominated for the presidency from a major party. With Smith's defeat, Franklin Roosevelt ran

for governor of New York and won a substantial victory. It was in this role that he tried various ideas regarding labor and social welfare which became the basis of the New Deal.

Roosevelt had gathered around him an exceptional group of advisors who then served him when he was in the White House. These men were of a new breed. They were professors, lawyers, journalists and political experts who were concerned with the creation of a modern and strong national state. Yet they did not all sing from the same

political hymnbook. Some favored a large central government, while others clung to the idea of a government which would resuscitate local communities. Some favored antitrust, others thought trust busting a waste of time. Some favored public planning, others thought it would never work in the United States. All were committed to experiments as a means of testing what was useful and what would "work."

With the advent of the Depression and the deep despair of the American people, these men, with Roosevelt their willing captain, were given the chance to bring together ideas and policies which had been set forth in various states among populists, progressives and socialists for over a generation. His administrative style from the outside seemed sloppy, but in fact it was one which allowed ideas and members of his government to be continuously tested.

As his first act, Roosevelt attempted to stop the run on the banks by declaring a bank holiday. He then called for an emergency session of Congress and undertook a furious pace for his administration. In the first years of his administration, he remade the banking, agricultural relief and public works laws of the United States. Private citizens could no longer hoard gold and were to turn in their gold for paper currency. Labor unions were encouraged through section 7a of the National Recovery Act. Farmers got to refinance their farms through new mortgages and foreclosures to a great degree were halted.

It was a period in which a pliant Congress feared for the nation and was prepared to follow executive leadership- where ever it might lead. And that leadership demanded the WPA, which opponents called a boondoggle, and the Civilian Conservation Corps, the precursor to VISTA and the Peace Corps in conception, as well as a framework for rebuilding the army. The New Deal drafted and got Congress to pass legislation which called for a Securities and Exchange Commission to regulate Wall Street.

Roosevelt often held back in the support of certain ideas with which he fundamentally agreed. For example, on social security, it was not until 1935 that he accepted the principle that there was a need for it--and then only as a result of considerable political

pressure from the Townsend movement, which sought 200 dollars a month for all those qualified to be on social security.

### ***From Landslide to Loser to Winner***

Roosevelt believed that in domestic affairs, timing was everything and while he might have favored different policies than those of the status quo, he assessed very carefully whether he wanted to be pushed or whether he was prepared to lead on any particular policy change.

"I'm tired, oh, so tired of the whole New Deal  
Of the juggler's smile and the barker's spiel  
Of the mushy speech and the loud bassoon  
And the tiredest of all of our leader's croon."  
(1936 Republican Party campaign jingle read into  
the Congressional Record, as quoted in *Verbis  
Non Factis*, Fay M. Blake and H. Morton  
Newman.)

In his run for his second re-election, Roosevelt won 61% of the electorate, and all but two states in the Electoral College. The claims of Alf Landon, the Governor of Kansas and the Republican presidential nominee,

that Roosevelt was taking the nation into socialism either didn't bother the voters or the Republican claims were not believed.

After the 1936 election, Roosevelt decided to take on the Supreme Court because it had declared as unconstitutional major pieces of New Deal social legislation. He attempted to do this in a clumsy manner by claiming that the Court's numbers should expand if its members reached retirement age but didn't retire. Roosevelt touched a raw nerve and he lost the war for the changing of the Court. However, he won the battle, for the Court began moving in a direction which reinforced Roosevelt's economic and social policies. Further, he was able to name a number of liberal justices -- such as Hugo Black, William O. Douglas, and Frank Murphy -- judges which changed the character of the judiciary.

His run for a third term as president shocked many in the Democratic party, for this was the first time that any president intended to be president for more than two terms.

Roosevelt's argument was that there was much unfinished business, and that the peaceful revolution the New Deal had wrought would be taken away by the Republican nominee Wendell Willkie, "the barefoot boy from Wall Street."

“He had collected money from the wages of all working men for social security and then spent the money for other purposes. He placed the National Youth Administration under the control and direction of Aubrey Williams, who has been called the most dangerous man in the government because of his well-known assistance to and sympathy for the Communists in the United States. For bad judgment, consider Russia. One of the first acts of the New Deal was to extend diplomatic recognition to Russia. Meanwhile, Roosevelt threatened and taunted Hitler only to have Russia and Germany form an alliance.” (“You Will Decide if it is Time to Change Horses”; 1940 Campaign Literature; printed under the guise of various organizations including the Anti-Third Term Committee (Los Angeles) and Citizens Information Committee (Iowa and New York); as quoted in Bone.)

For a time the programs, which Roosevelt initiated, worked and there was a significant upturn in the situation of Americans both in real terms and in their psychological condition. This sense of "uplift" was not easy to accomplish, for the average unemployment rate over the depression was over 14%, and for four years it was over 20%. As Roosevelt put it in his second inaugural, "I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished." For Blacks it was over 50%. Roosevelt did develop a group of New Deal advisors who were Black and on whom he relied.

Sound arguments can be made for the view that the economic depression was finally ended by the Second World War, and only then. There was as well another aspect which, ironically, has come in for attention with regard to Roosevelt's economic policies. He ran on the idea of a balanced budget but soon enough surrendered that view in light of depressed conditions. His policies were given intellectual respectability by the great English economist John Maynard Keynes who argued that democratic governments must intervene in the economy and be prepared to unbalance budgets in order to avoid the valleys of depression.

## ***The Axis Overplay Their Hand to FDR's Advantage***

It was Hitler's war and the war in Asia which broke the back of the American depression and gave impetus to the idea of government intervention in the economy as a social goal.

“Do you know that the next move will be a law like this one [Burke-Wadsworth] drafting women and young girls? Do you know that under this new law women and girls are to be used to make the most dangerous munitions? That some of them are to be ‘on duty with armed forces?’ Do you think that the morals of your daughters can be safeguarded under such conditions? You have only this one election to save the lives of your sons and daughters.”  
(Mothers of Pennsylvania; 1940 Campaign Literature; as quoted in Hugh A. Bone, “Smear” Politics: An Analysis of 1940 Campaign Literature.)

Full employment emerged on the home front with women playing an important role in the industrial part of the war effort. Over fifteen million men served under arms. And what was thought impossible, for example the

production of 60,000 planes a year, became just another task which was successfully fulfilled. By the end of 1944 it was clear that the war would be won.

Roosevelt and his advisors believed that it was necessary to ensure the domestic peace. They did so by calling for an Economic Bill of Rights, including rights to housing, employment and

education. Roosevelt also pressed for a GI Bill, which granted veterans funds for housing, medical care and education. The GI Bill changed the character of American life, increasing skills, education and training for millions of veterans. It also allowed for their orderly return to the employment market over a five year period, thereby avoiding the likely reinstitution of depression conditions. This was a stunning accomplishment, for, by the end of the war, Roosevelt had lost touch with an increasingly conservative and recalcitrant Congress.

Besides directing the course of the war and preparing the outlines of postwar domestic policy, Roosevelt also attempted to shape the peace through the development of the concept of mediation and collective security through the UN. This attempt at peace making broke down after Roosevelt's death and the advent of the cold war. Roosevelt also sought a Good Neighbor policy with Latin America. This was more than a change in

“Roosevelt has made inflammatory statements, he has meddled in foreign affairs. His acts in foreign affairs have been acts of war. Do you realize what war would mean to your sons? The Roosevelt family has nothing to worry about. Son Elliot Roosevelt, with no experience, has been made Captain. (He will do the buying of airplane parts). Son James Roosevelt is also a Captain. Roosevelt’s sons will remain in this country in the event of war. Where will your sons be sent?” (East Utica Club for Willkie; 1940 Campaign Literature; as quoted in Bone.)

rhetoric towards Latin America; Roosevelt worked to separate American policy from economic interests of particular corporations. The most striking example of this policy was in Mexico when the Cardenas government expropriated American corporate oil interests. Roosevelt did not run to their rescue.

Roosevelt's political skills were thought to be legendary. In 1944, campaigning for his fourth term against Thomas Dewey, the Governor of New York, he gave a political speech which is

a classic in campaign oratory. Speaking in his well-practiced and carefully modulated voice, Roosevelt said that it was all right for the Republicans to slur him, his children and his wife. But they had taken to slandering his dog Fala which, his dog being a Scottie, he would just not put up with.

Well before the formal entrance of the United States into the Second World War, Roosevelt initiated the Manhattan project, which began the nuclear age. The making of the atomic bomb was an entirely secret affair which was enormously costly in resources. There is considerable question as to how the project was paid for, whether Roosevelt acted illegally, and whether it had any but the most lightly assented agreement from a few congressional members. Whether Roosevelt would have ordered the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki after the German surrender remains a question for debate among historians, but his decisions to construct the bomb left an indelible mark on humanity for its future-or non future.

At the beginning of WWII, Roosevelt accepted the advice of those such as Walter Lippmann who said that Japanese-Americans should be interned in camps. Some 110,000 people were transported from their homes in the Northwest and California into camps in a shameful episode in American history. While his wife was sympathetic to the

"We're Tweedledum and Tweedledee,  
 The Congress of the land  
 We legislate on everything  
 We do not understand;  
 But that's all right because you see  
 The whole New Deal is planned.  
 "We love to spend your hard earned cash  
 Which you so kindly save,  
 And when we add another tax  
 You really shouldn't rave;  
 We know just what is good for you  
 And you had best behave.  
 "If we spent five billions dollars  
 Upon our veterans dear,  
 'Do you suppose,' said Tweedledum  
 'We'd get their votes next year?'  
 'I doubt it, Sir,' said Tweedledee  
 And shed a bitter tear.  
 "Then they must have ten billions  
 The peanut vendors six,  
 The bootblacks too, a billion,  
 To help them in their fix.  
 The tax payers will cough it up,  
 They're just a bunch of hicks.  
 "The silver-bloc-heads tore their hair  
 Because they thought the King  
 Had handed them a silver bill  
 That didn't mean a thing.  
 'It isn't fair of him,' they said  
 'He promised us our fling.'  
 "The King was spending o'er the land,  
 Spending with all his might  
 A million each he gave to make  
 The farmers gay and bright;  
 But this was not enough because  
 The drought was at its height.  
 "So then he tried the AAA  
 (Aflop, Alas, Alack)  
 And killed off all their hogs and pigs  
 To get high prices back;  
 But when the price of pork went down  
 The ducks said, "Quack, Quack, Quack."  
 "Baloney dollars by the ton  
 The printing press did pour.  
 And thick and fast they came at last  
 And more and more and more,  
 Their green backs shining in the waves  
 That swept the Treasury shore.  
 "'Taxpayers,' said the Brain Trust boys  
 'We've had a lot of fun,  
 We've socialized the U.S.A.  
 And put it on the bum,  
 You can not call your soul your own,  
 We haven't left you one.'" ("Frankie in  
 Wonderland," Latham Reed; published 1940.)

plight of Jews in the Nazi concentration  
 camps, virtually nothing was done  
 directly by the Roosevelt administration  
 to save them from this piece of the Nazi  
 madness.

The situation of Black Americans  
 improved during the New Deal period,  
 although Roosevelt found that it was  
 necessary to keep the support of Southern  
 Democratic party racists for his own  
 coalition. He tried to fight them in  
 congressional elections but did not fare  
 well. Roosevelt signed an executive  
 order to establish a Fair Employment  
 Practices commission to ensure that  
 Black workers might be hired through  
 federal contracts. Roosevelt did not  
 confront the segregation system in the  
 armed forces or in the federal  
 government, although his wife urged him  
 to adopt policies which would lead to  
 fundamental

changes in race relations. He did support  
 by executive order a form of affirmative  
 action so that African Americans would  
 have a chance at working on government  
 contracts.

The position of women improved during

Roosevelt's term of office, with women finding themselves in positions of influence in his administration. Frances Perkins, the first woman to hold a cabinet position, was Roosevelt's distinguished Secretary of Labor.

Roosevelt died of a cerebral hemorrhage on April 12, 1945 in Warm Springs, Georgia, where he had established a center for rehabilitation that was used by children with polio.

Roosevelt's marriage was one filled with mutual respect, companionship, and five children. However, Eleanor and Franklin may have looked elsewhere for that quality of love which overcomes personal loneliness.

### ***Mrs. Roosevelt***

Roosevelt married Eleanor when he was 22 and she was 20. Eleanor was not what Roosevelt's mother had in mind for Franklin. The 20-year-old presented herself as a shy ugly duckling. But she had already lived through a great deal. For all practical purposes she was orphaned by the time she was 10 years old. Her father was an alcoholic younger brother of Theodore Roosevelt and her mother died when she was eight. She grew up with an instinctive identification with the wretched and the underprivileged.

Under Eleanor Roosevelt's shyness there was a woman of enormous determination and toughness. These attributes were tested constantly in her life through the loss of a child and raising four boys and one girl, through a complex, respectful but estranged relationship with Franklin from the time she discovered in 1918 that he was having an affair with Lucy Mercer -- who was with him at the time of his death, through her successful battle against Roosevelt's mother who wanted the bed-ridden Roosevelt to be an invalid roped off from the political world, to nursing him back to functional health, and, most importantly, to become the ambassador to and from the vast world of people not part of the ordinary political process who took the flak which was aimed at FDR. She changed the meaning of First Lady to a combination calling and vocation.

There was a fearless quality to this woman. According to one account, in Roosevelt's first term there was a second Bonus March which could have ended as badly as the march of the Veterans during Hoover's term. The army was not used against the veterans. Instead, Mrs. Roosevelt went by herself to speak and sing with the Bonus marchers. They left peacefully. Throughout the depression and war she traveled within the United States and elsewhere to find out conditions and report back, often to hector Roosevelt who must

“ . . . Meantime the President’s ubiquitous wife, Eleanor, has been busy effecting alliances for her children with the most ‘royal’ of American economic royalist families. Besides, the whole Roosevelt family capitalized their position, their official connections with their notoriety to rake in the shekels for our own ‘royal family.’” (Christian American, a Beaumont, Texas newspaper, 140, as quoted in Bone.)

have seen Eleanor as another advisor or interest group that wanted something from him even as he sought respite.

She herself must have felt exposed and lonely. A popular conservative columnist of the day, Westbrook Pegler, called her La Boca Grande. And while liberals, radicals and minorities held her in great esteem,

conservatives could not abide this upper class woman who spoke in a shrill and high-pitched voice. There is evidence that Eleanor turned to a leading woman journalist during the White House years for sexual love and companionship.

"War by January  
If you vote Democratic on November 5th.  
The Democrats lied to you in 1916 as they are  
Lying to you today\_\_they are making promises of peace when  
Their every act is a step closer to war!  
November 5th you will vote on war.  
A vote for Roosevelt is a vote for war.  
A vote for Willkie is a vote against war."  
(Anonymous 1940 campaign literature; as quoted in Bone.)

After Franklin Roosevelt's death, Eleanor continued her public activity as a columnist. Her most important work was as a U.S. delegate to the United Nations where she became the champion of human rights and the Declaration of Human Rights. She remained a leading liberal voice in the Democratic Party and was a strong supporter of Adlai Stevenson in his bid for the presidency. She was one of the

founders of the liberal organization, Americans for Democratic Action. Eleanor Roosevelt died November 7, 1962, a few days after the Cuban Missile crisis ended. She was buried in Hyde Park, New York, next to her husband.

The connection of the Roosevelts to New York and New York politics extended virtually throughout their lives. Roosevelt began his political career as a state senator, from 1911-13. Like Teddy Roosevelt he left the state to become Assistant Secretary of the Navy. After the failed vice presidential bid Roosevelt returned to New York and he became governor, having replaced Alfred Smith when Smith ran for president.

Roosevelt's first vice president was John Nance Garner who served two terms. He had been Speaker of the House and was chosen to allay the fears of southerners and those who thought that the government might fall into turmoil if Roosevelt would become incapacitated as president. Garner complained that being vice president wasn't worth a barrel of spit. He was replaced by Henry Wallace who had been the Roosevelt's Secretary of Agriculture. Wallace represented the left of the Democratic Party. He was a man of great intelligence and fervor who frightened the moderate and southern Democrats. Roosevelt allowed him to be replaced at the 1944 Democratic convention and through politicking by his own staff by Harry S Truman, a border state Democrat, although Justice William O. Douglas may have been his first choice to replace Wallace who did not sufficiently campaign to stay on the ticket.

Roosevelt campaigned hard against Thomas E. Dewey, who made his pitch that there was no one who was an indispensable man. That was a difficult argument to make during a war. On the other hand, the Happy Warrior's time was running out. He won by only 53% of the vote although he received 432 electoral votes to Dewey's 99. And he died April 12, 1945. Except in the crazed world of Hitler, who took Roosevelt's death as a sign that now the Nazis could win because the allied alliance would break apart, there was a moment of extraordinary grief in much of the world. Many have thought that the Cold War would not have occurred, or the atomic bomb would not have been used or that the return to peacetime would have been smoother. But as Franklin Roosevelt used to say those are all "iffy" propositions.

Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt's children had wide ranging careers. Anna Roosevelt was a journalist who probably understood Roosevelt's extreme loneliness for she made arrangements for Mercer to see her father over the objections of Eleanor Roosevelt. James Roosevelt served in Congress from California, 1955-66, where he became one of the leaders of the Democratic Study Group and Liberal Project. Elliott Roosevelt wrote several interesting books about the Cold War and his father's views on politics. He became the mayor of Miami Beach. Franklin Roosevelt Jr. served as undersecretary of Commerce under John F. Kennedy. He made an unsuccessful bid to be governor of New York. The Carmine De Sapio Democratic machine defeated his chances and Eleanor Roosevelt became De Sapio's nemesis and joined the reform movement against him. John Roosevelt stayed out of politics and entered business. He was a Republican. All the Roosevelt sons were officers in WWII. The five children of the Roosevelts are now deceased.

## RICHARD MILHOUS NIXON

(b. Jan. 9, 1913, d. April 22, 1994, served 1969-74)

### *The Presidency*

It is said that a nation's leaders are a reflection of its people. And surely that is the purpose of election -- to bring to power leaders who best mirror the hopes, aspirations and interests of the citizenry. To make such a statement, however, may damn a people to

“Like his idol, Lincoln, he studied the law late at night, became a lawyer, a Congressman, a debater, a President, had a general for a friend and fought an unpopular war—however, unlike Lincoln, he never got a tunnel named after him, although there is a movement going now to do just that by those who are convinced he is taking the country down the tube.” (*Will the Real Richard M. Nixon Please Stand Up?* Lane Associates, 1972.)

a purgatory which they do not deserve. In 1974, two years after Richard Nixon won re-election by an overwhelming number, millions of Americans believed that they did not deserve Richard Milhous Nixon. Indeed, they saw him as their problem, not their mirror.

Nixon first won the presidency in 1968 against Vice president Hubert Humphrey and a deeply divided Democratic Party and George Wallace of Alabama, a breakaway Democrat who found support among segregationist, war hawks and the white working class.

Nixon won the popular vote by approximately 500,000. The electoral vote was Nixon-301, Humphrey- 191 and Wallace-46.

Richard Nixon was an extraordinary man of stunning ambition with enormous drive and intelligence, though his political stance demanded that he appear ordinary. In reality he was both less than and more than the average man. He was more than the ordinary man in that he had taken on certain Dostoevskian insights about power. To kill one person is a crime, but to order the killing of thousands makes the person a hero and leader. And so he extended the war in Vietnam several years beyond the time it could have been settled

on the eventual diplomatic terms. The result was the death of countless thousands including the death of over 22,000 more American soldiers. He and his advisor, Henry Kissinger, carried out this policy in the vain hope that by increasing bombing, the North Vietnamese and National Liberation Front would cry "uncle." But Nixon's bombing antics were for another reason.

Nixon sought to bring what he called the structure of peace into international relations. He pursued a policy of diplomatic recognition with China and signed a limited arms control accord on strategic missiles with the Soviets (SALT ONE).

“One would have to go back to Harding, at least, to find an administration so devoid of intellectuals as that of Nixon . . . . As for intellectual content . . . [the administration] is headed by a man whose taste in music runs to country-western and Lawrence Welk; who put comic opera uniforms on the White House Police; and who could think of nothing more discerning to say to a student war protester from the University of Syracuse than to ask them about the Orangemen.” (Tom Braden, a political columnist, *The National Observer*, November 4, 1972, p. 13.)

There were ironies to this strategy for Nixon, arguably, had been the leading cold warrior and anti-communist in the United States. It was he, more than any other politician, who played a crucial role in keeping the Cold War going -- until he became president. As vice president in 1954 Nixon had urged Eisenhower to intervene at Dien Bien Phu with air strikes and the possible use of nuclear weapons to save the French position in Indo China.

At 39, Nixon had risen to become President Eisenhower's vice president as a concession to the Rightists in the Republican Party who had favored Senator Joseph McCarthy and his tactics for patriotic

purification. Yet, as vice president, Nixon served as Eisenhower's emissary to the Republicans in the Senate, saying that Eisenhower wanted McCarthy censured.

It is too easy to say that Nixon was a paranoid who carried with him uncontrolled feelings of anger against those who slighted or crossed him, for to say this would be to intimate that he was a dysfunctional man without purpose satisfied with mere ravings. But this was not the case.

He did have a consistent view of what he was trying to do as president, and he had an insightful, albeit slightly weird, view about the realities of American politics. It was in his attempt to organize this consistency that Nixon proved himself to be less than the ordinary man. He sought to turn his sociopathic personality into a piece of the state apparatus.

Thus, in his second term he formed within the White House a unit called the Plumbers who were charged with the responsibility of stopping leaks to the press about Nixon's policies and organizing attacks on political and personal enemies. An enemies list, which represented all segments of American life, was prepared, including this author; extensive wire tapping and break-ins were ordered. Tax audits were initiated by the White House against opponents. "Dirty tricks," as they were called, were played on political adversaries such as Senator Ed Muskie, and government agencies such as the FBI and the CIA were employed as if they were President Nixon personal police force. (Dirty tricks were not new to American presidential politics. However, Nixon took these shady activities to a level which ultimately destroyed his administration.)

### ***The Undoing***

“Nixon is probably the most political president who ever sat in the White House, but he is congenitally devious. When you talk to Nixon, you have no idea if his words actually reflect what’s in his mind. It’s something like kissing a girl through a handkerchief.” (Emmanuel Cellar, former U.S. Representative, D-NY, *Plainview (Texas) Daily Herald*, March 13, 1973, p. 4.)

Nixon's undoing began with a break-in of the Democratic Party headquarters, ordered in 1972 by "higher-ups" in the White House to gain "intelligence" about the Democrats. When the culprits were arrested, a massive cover-up began and hush money was given to those involved. The cover-up and payment were undertaken with the express permission of Nixon. This led to the unraveling of the Nixon

presidency, which many liberals and others in the federal government were pleased to facilitate.

After his overwhelming re-election victory against George McGovern in 1972, Nixon ordered a political purge of government officials in the hopes of replacing them with appointees totally loyal to him. Those who were to be replaced later leaked documents

“Events of the last several days prove the dangerous emotional instability of the President of the United States . . . The President has so destroyed the people’s confidence in the government that . . . he should resign or be impeached . . .” (George Meany, president, American Federation of Labor, in the *Los Angeles Times*, October 25, 1973, p. 20.)

about Nixon, his tax returns, and other damning information to the press and to a committee of the U.S. Senate, the so-called Ervin committee, named after a North Carolina Senator. The entire White House staff found itself caught in a tissue of lies and a web of investigation conducted by a special prosecutor, a Federal Judge, and the Senate.

Nixon's White House counsel, John Dean testified before the Senate committee and claimed that Nixon had ordered the cover up; this was later verified in tapes which Nixon made of all conversations in the Oval office.

Nixon had initially refused to turn over the tapes to the special prosecutor, Archibald Cox. He then demanded that his attorney general, Elliott Richardson, fire Cox. Richardson refused and resigned. His deputy, William Ruckelshaus, also refused and resigned. This left Robert Bork, the solicitor general, to carry out the order to fire Cox. (Bork's action enraged liberals. And they took vengeance later when Bork was nominated by President Reagan to the Supreme Court. Senator Kennedy, a friend of Cox, led the attack on Judge Bork. The turnabout continued later, this time on President Bill Clinton and Hillary Clinton during the Whitewater investigations. Ms. Clinton had been a junior counsel to the House Judiciary Committee during Nixon's impeachment hearings.)

Nixon's White House advisors pleaded guilty to perjury and obstruction of justice. Twenty five members of the Nixon administration or campaign re-election committee served prison time. One Nixon operative who maintained his code of silence about Watergate was Gordon Liddy, a lawyer turned radio columnist, who at the time worked for the Committee to Re-elect the President (CREEP). He was convicted of a break in and

burglary. Nixon forced his two closest aides, Bob Haldeman and John Ehrlichman, to resign as a way of saving himself.

Nixon was faced with another problem in 1973. His vice president, Spiro Agnew, continued to receive bribes for favors he had performed as County Executive in

“All of us, Mr. President, whether we’re in politics or not, have weaknesses. For some, it’s drinking. For others, it’s gambling. For still others, it’s women . . . Your weakness is credibility . . .” (Senator Robert Packwood (R-OR), *The New York Times*, November 17, 1973, p. 19.)

Baltimore and as Governor of Maryland. He resigned in disgrace and was replaced by Gerald Ford.

At the end of July 1974, the House Judiciary committee voted to impeach President Nixon. Nixon had lost the support of senior Republicans in Congress, such as Barry Goldwater. Nixon's

chief of staff, General Alexander Haig, negotiated his resignation. Nixon's Secretary of Defense, James Schlesinger, had ordered that no use of the military could be undertaken without express orders from him. Nixon had lost control of the government.

“The administration, masquerading as conservative, has taken the most radical steps toward dismembering the spirit of our Revolution and the protections of the Constitution . . . They administer the nation’s business through men hidden in the White House . . . They have transformed the public institutions into instruments of intimidation and control—turning to their own benefits not only agencies of intelligence and law enforcement, but an immense mechanism of economic sanction and rewards . . .” (Senator Edward Kennedy, *Los Angeles Times*, July 5, 1973, p. 25.)

Less than two years before, after his re-election in 1972, Nixon had told his advisors that the East Coast establishment had lost its will to govern. But on August 9, 1974, rather than face an impeachment by the House, Nixon resigned. Nixon found that the Establishment that he had simultaneously courted and hated helped to destroy him through media accounts and legal proceedings. On his last day as president Nixon left sharing what he had learned from his political experience. "Always remember others may hate you, but those who hate you don't win

unless you hate them, and then you destroy yourself." He had lost the will to govern, fight, or reach out.

## ***Political Beginnings***

Richard Nixon was born in Yorba Linda, California, in January 9, 1913. His parents were poor, at times working as lemon growers and at other times as storekeepers. The family moved to Whittier, California, which Nixon identified with throughout his life. His parents were Quakers, which, perhaps spoke to a side of him that sincerely wanted to find the key to peace without endangering America's preeminent position.

Tragedy was never far from the Nixon household as Nixon grew up. Two of his brothers died in childhood.

As a boy and young man, Richard Nixon identified with his version of the American dream -- to work hard and find the means to be rewarded. He was a very good student in high school and was admitted to Harvard College, but his parents could not afford to send him. Instead he attended Whittier College and then Duke University Law School, where he ranked as a fine scholar.

Nixon came back to practice law in California in 1937. In 1940 he married Thelma "Pat" Ryan, whose father was a copper miner. Pat Nixon's parents were no better off than Richard Nixon's parents. Pat worked her way through college and became a typing teacher. From time to time she appeared in films as a walk-on or extra.

Before Nixon entered the Navy, he joined the Office of Price Administration. It is said that from this negative experience he learned to hate bureaucracy and interference with the market. It is likely that the reverse is true; Nixon's interest was in having control over bureaucracy and not in getting rid of it. When he was president, for a two year period he reinstated price and wage controls.

Nixon served in the Navy for close to four years, until March, 1946. Upon his return to civilian life he was chosen by local businessmen to run against a liberal New Deal congressman, Jerry Voorhis. Nixon's campaign was run by Murray Chotiner, who helped Nixon throughout his career. He taught Nixon bare-knuckle aspects of politics and the

idea that the primary purpose of elections was to win -- at virtually any cost. Nixon won his seat in Congress because he was a veteran and because he painted Voorhis as a Red.

In Congress, Nixon joined the House Un-American Activities Committee and soon was locked in battle with Alger Hiss, who was accused of being a communist by a former communist and senior Time magazine editor, Whittaker Chambers. For Nixon, Hiss represented the East-Coast establishment, which he had come to admire and despise. Hiss had been the acting Secretary-General of the United Nations, and had become the head of the Carnegie Endowment for World Peace. Hiss denied knowing Chambers, or acting as a communist agent, which led to perjury charges once Chambers produced innocuous State Department documents from a hollowed out pumpkin which Chambers claimed had been stolen by Hiss when he was in the State Department. After two trials, Hiss was convicted and Nixon was vindicated.

“To all appearances, Nixon cannot be himself, because he has no authentic or identifiable self. Psychologically, he seems to fall within the definition of the “as if” person . . . This is the real tragedy of Richard Nixon and the people he was elected to serve. He cannot communicate who he is; for like all “as if” persons, he simply does not know.” (Bernard C. Myer (Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, Mt. Sinai School of Medicine, New York). *W*, May 17, 1974, p. 70).

As a member of the House Committee on Education and Labor, Nixon was involved in drafting the Taft-Hartley law, which excluded not only communists but anyone else from being officers of unions unless they signed a loyalty pledge.

In 1950, Richard Nixon ran for the Senate against another leading liberal of the time, Congresswoman Helen Gahagan Douglas. He claimed that she voted on most issues the same

way as Vito Marcantonio of New York, a left wing congressman who accepted communist support. This campaign marked Nixon in the minds of liberals as a dangerous demagogue. He soon came to be known as "Tricky Dick."

In the Senate, he identified with the most conservative members. He favored a wider war with the Chinese and North Koreans, including "unleashing" Chiang Kai Shek against Mao's China.

“Watergate riveted attention on personal immorality, rather than institutional social immorality. People think Nixon is a crook and Henry Kissinger is honest. To me, both of them shared an evil vision whereby the world would be ruled by American power and a few other powerful nations, plus some Multinational Corporations . . .” (William Sloane Coffin, Chaplain, Yale University, *People*, May 5, 1975,

As a 39-year-old, Nixon was accepted by Eisenhower as his running mate. Nixon almost lost his place on the ticket when a newspaper released the fact that he had a slush fund which California businessmen paid into for his "walk around" expenses. Nixon saved himself politically with a powerful and maudlin speech which featured his wife Pat's good Republican cloth coat and his children's dog, Checkers. Thousands of telegrams flooded the Republican National Committee at

Nixon's suggestion and the dubious Eisenhower found himself having to embrace Nixon anew.

Eisenhower was not overly fond of Nixon. At one press conference, he was asked by a reporter what Nixon had done as vice president; Eisenhower responded that he would think about it for a week and give an answer at the next press conference. Nixon did perform as acting president twice -- when Eisenhower was ill with a heart attack and also when he was struck down with ileitis. Nixon also traveled to South America and the Soviet Union. In Venezuela he was literally stoned and spat upon. In the Soviet Union, he engaged Khrushchev in a "kitchen debate" at the American exhibition of consumer goods which helped to identify Nixon as an international political figure. As vice president, Nixon also interested himself in Cuba and was the White House action officer on Cuba after Castro took over.

### ***Bad Luck and Political Rebirth***

As the Republican presidential candidate in 1960, Nixon was a victim of bad luck. There was a recession that year which was blamed on the Eisenhower administration. Furthermore, Kennedy appeared to be more anti-communist and anti-Castro than Nixon, who, in fact, was helping to plan the CIA-backed expedition into Cuba. And Nixon, who

was ill for the first televised debate, did not televise well. After his loss to Kennedy, Nixon went back to California and ran for Governor against Pat Brown. He lost, and it seemed that Nixon was retired for good from public life.

“Nixon has turned the government into a monarchy. In a sense, Kennedy and Johnson were monarchists, but Nixon has violated the Bill of Rights . . . he shows a total disregard for the Constitution.” (Barbara Tuchman. *W*, September 21, 1973, p. 16.)

Nixon re-established himself as a lawyer and plotted his return to national politics. He traveled throughout the world and began campaigning for Republican candidates in virtually every state. By 1968 he was ready, and he received the Republican nomination over feckless bids by Nelson Rockefeller and Ronald Reagan.

Although Nixon did not have the charisma or joy for life of Theodore Roosevelt, it would not be absurd to compare the two in domestic programs. Like Roosevelt, Nixon might have been described as a "progressive conservative." As president, Nixon accepted the idea of environmental protection, including the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency, as well as the Product Safety commission. Nixon's program sought to capture the whirlwind of regulatory protection which Ralph Nader had demanded on consumer issues.

The voting age was lowered to 18 as a constitutional amendment in 1971. Nixon's appointee to the Supreme Court, Harry Blackmun, wrote the majority opinion in *Roe v. Wade*, which has been a target of the right and the Catholic Church since 1973. Nixon gave the appearance of favoring, through his adviser Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a welfare guarantee program which would have been considered radical by the standards of both the Democratic and Republican parties of 2008.

On national security matters, through his Secretary of Defense, Melvin Laird, the Vietnamization program, first authored by the Democrats, was continued. Its logic led to American military withdrawal. Nixon also changed the American war plans and therefore defense requirements so that the military would only have to fight and be prepared for one and a half wars simultaneously rather than the two and a half war

number which had been the case since the Korean war. Nixon supported two treaties which lowered the temperature on weapons of mass destruction. Besides SALT ONE, his administration negotiated treaties to ban nuclear weapons from the sea bed and he agreed to the destruction by treaty of chemical weapons with the Soviet Union.

When Nixon left the White House, the assumption of East European and Soviet leaders was that Nixon was pushed out of power because he favored detente with the Soviets. They and other national leaders abroad could not see Nixon's fatal flaws and the corrosive effects they had on the nation. Yet all the living presidents appeared at Richard Nixon's funeral in 1994, and President Clinton spoke at it as well.

“His [Nixon’s] political career has often seemed to show charity toward none and malice for all . . .”  
(JFK in his acceptance speech at the Los Angeles Democratic Convention.)

Nixon lived 20 years after leaving the White House. His time was spent in California and New York refurbishing his image as a world statesman. He did this through a number of books and television appearances.

The Nixons had two daughters, Patricia Nixon, married to a lawyer, and Julie Eisenhower, a writer and editor married to David Eisenhower, author and grandson of President Eisenhower and son of General John Eisenhower, thereby sealing the Nixon family to the Eisenhowers.

## **RONALD WILSON REAGAN**

(b. February 6, 1911, d. June 5, 2004, served 1981-1989)

"The pruneface from the West."

--Coleman Young, Mayor of Detroit, The Washington Post, December 19, 1980.

### ***Film, Politics, and Illusion***

The effect that films have had on American culture is incalculable. Twentieth century political figures use film as vehicles of propaganda that seek to create reality. From his craft the filmmaker knows that politics is more than a system for the distribution of power, hierarchy and resources. It is also a vehicle punctuated by sentiment for the manufacturing of illusion and vision about the future. Therefore the politician and the maker of films find a linkage, almost a symbiosis. Through the visual narrative, film attempts to create an inexorable logic about the future and the past.

So, it is not surprising that an actor such as Ronald Reagan should seize that part of politics which concerned itself with illusion in order to find a way of fusing it with political power and its acquisition. Politics and film are linked in another way.

For the actor and the audience, Hollywood film is the medium to escape personal psychological pain, economic hardship or even loss of sexual power. Ronald Reagan the politician successfully fused illusion, kitsch sentiment and reality to the point where the nation at times seemed to surrender itself to the stage of politics. It seemed transfixed by a man who made up facts the way a script writer might make up lines for an actor to read in a film.

There was a base purpose to what came to be known as Reagan's "factoids"; for they built on people's fears and insecurities around crime, inflation, the loss of the Vietnam war and Carter's ambivalent handling of the American embassy hostage situation. Through his

rhetoric, Reagan played on how terrible conditions were in the United States and how, with his leadership, it was going to be a perennial morning in America.

Reagan's first policies as president were intended, as he and the media pointed out often and gleefully, to administer pain much like the good doctor or parent who knows what's best for the patient or child. Reagan's "medicine" added to people's fears, which at first decreased his popularity. Once having survived an assassination attempt by John Hinckley, and having conducted himself with great style through that trauma, Reagan, as a man, seemed invincible.

There were so many anomalies and contradictions in Reagan's presidency that it would be easy to dismiss him as an actor who merely played the role of president, reading off of

“The concept of an aging ex-movie actor who once co-starred with a chimpanzee leading the Free World against the dark forces of Marxist-Leninism is inherently . . . hilarious.” (Arthur Hoppe, columnist, *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 12, 1980, p. 43.)

cue cards prepared for him by advisors. Many have argued that he was little different than the hero of Peter Sellers' *Being There*; a man without knowledge or interest but with pat phrases that felt right for any situation. Whether actor or political leader, Reagan recreated a new social time where the extremes of wealth were to be flaunted, and begging on the streets was to be taken for granted.

In Hollywood, Ronald Reagan was not known as leading man material. When the film mogul Jack Warner heard that Reagan was about to run for governor of California he said, "No, No. Gary Cooper for Governor, Reagan for best man." If Reagan was not a leading man in Hollywood, he believed that he could be cast as such in politics if he had the proper lines and outlook. He believed, proved correct, that like Cipollo, in Thomas Mann's *Mario and the Magician*, he could gauge an audience, make part of them suffer and seduce the others to enjoy the show.

Reagan's opponents underestimated him, dismissing him as a lightweight. This turned out to be their supreme error. California governor Pat Brown said after losing to Reagan, he had made a great mistake not comprehending Reagan's skills, for he was both

tenacious and clever. Reagan learned from the movie moguls that the moviegoers wanted to enjoy the rich and the famous through celluloid so that they might escape their everyday lives. Wasn't that the key to the success of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers in the depression? They deftly danced away the audience's social and economic troubles.

“The problem we haven’t faced up to yet is that these clowns may end up running the United States government.” (Patrick Brogan of the *London Times*, *The Washington Post*, July 18, 1980, p. 8.)

By the time Reagan became President he knew that people were prepared to pay for celebrities and the rich in foolish economic programs and tax cuts that penalized the young, children, most women and most people of color. He used a formula, both as governor and president. First he was to appear the tough guy, embracing the ideology and assumptions of the right and then slowly shift back to the ideological center by his second term, having shifted the entire political framework to the right.

Until he supported Eisenhower for president in 1952, Ronald Reagan was a liberal. His first wife, Jane Wyman complained that one of the causes of divorce was that he spent too much time in union politics rather than with her. Indeed, he learned many tricks from the enemies and friends who comprised the political and cultural style of the Popular Front with the Communist party. Praise of the common man was an ode and a mantra. He understood the need to use the music, script and symbols of Americanism as the means of including "the common man" in the morality play of American life. Reagan never left that theme, although he came to use it for a different political ideology.

Like the hedgehog against the fox, Reagan knew but one thing; how to communicate sincerity and use stories which had little relationship to reality but which excited and tickled the passions for an ideology of narcissism and egoism.

## ***A Shift in Consciousness***

Even greater than his public policy of meting out pain to the poor, Reagan's greatest domestic policy accomplishment was to shift the national consciousness for a time so that greed, selfishness and egoism were no longer suppressed sentiments. Rather these features were praised and identified with the creed of individualism and self-confidence. Conspicuous waste and consumption were no longer embarrassments. According to liberals, they became part of the conservative economic investment strategy in which throwing subsidies and tax breaks at the rich would result in "lifting all economic boats."

The idea of the environment as the endless provider if she could continue to be conquered and ravaged was back on top. Altruism was portrayed as foolish and harmful to the nation. Self-indulgence was resurrected into a positive virtue, while a little war against Grenada as distracting entertainment was successfully prosecuted.

To some, Reagan's view of democracy was cramped and limited, assuming a system which intended to re-enforce the idea that there were two classes of Americans, citizens

“All I know is that the winning lottery number on November 4 was 666, Ronald Wilson Reagan has six letters in each of his names, the number 666 connotes the anti-Christ or the devil and the planets were in an unusual configuration on the day he won . . . and . . . he was born on the sixth day of February and his age, 69, is a six and an inverted six.” (Unnamed Washington, D.C. woman on a story circulating throughout various parts of the city that Reagan was the Devil. *The Washington Post*, November 15, 1980, p. B1.)

and associates, with the latter having no power and few rights. The poor, the non-white, and most women were the successful candidates for the associate class -- if they were lucky. The unlucky ones could meet an early death, as some social scientists claimed would occur. The socializing of risk and the assurance of profit for the few were seen in statistics that reflected a startling increase in the number of poor, and a trebling of the national debt. To

others, Reagan's views were an antidote to statism and a celebration of individual freedom and liberty. It was the poor, women, Blacks, gays, and unions who were interest groups, not the owners of capital who, like studio owners, were thought to be disinterested men who had the common good in mind.

Reagan's strategy of foreign and national security policy proved to be potent and correct, to the surprise of liberals and professional diplomats. He stoked the arms race for a few years as a means of perpetuating military Keynesianism, and frightened the Soviets. His Strategic Defense Initiative (STARWARS), ironically, followed the plot of a film Reagan had made in 1940 entitled *Murder in the Air*.

Reagan's hope was that the Soviets could be spent into bankruptcy. This project was one which informed American national security elites at different stages in the cold war; namely, that a piling on of arms could cause the Soviet Union to fold. And it did. (What has not changed are the assumptions of the national security state and the continued emphasis on arming because, as a Clinton CIA director put it, there are "snakes out there" in the international jungle.)

The Reagan revolution, as it was called, was cleverly presented as necessary and inevitable after the Carter presidency, in which Carter had spent much time proving how smart he was. Carter, and John Anderson who ran as an independent, polled a total of 48 percent of the vote, although Reagan received 489 electoral votes to 49 for Carter and none for Anderson. Those numbers also reflected voters like for the fact that Reagan was enjoying himself and for the messages of bon homie which Reagan gave in little jokes and asides.

Reagan's presidency, which lasted from 1981 to 1989, may be divided into five acts.

#### ACT ONE: THE HEROIC STAGE (1981)

Reagan appears as the "Dutch Uncle," avuncular and folksy, but does not shirk from appearing to be an avenger against the welfare state.

He sets out a program of budgetary changes which leaves the Northern Democrats in Congress reeling, but delights the Southern Democratic conservatives. As then House

Speaker Tip O'Neill put it, "He pushed through the greatest increase in defense spending in American history, together with the greatest cutbacks in domestic programs and the largest tax cut the country has ever seen."

"I think he's wrong on every issue . . . he doesn't work very hard; he doesn't immerse himself in issues . . . he doesn't spend a lot of time thinking about things . . . What bothers me most is that he seems not to be educable . . ." (Rep. Anthony Beilenson (D-CA), *Los Angeles Times*, January 22, 1981, IX, p. 1.)

Most Democrats bow before Reagan's leadership. Not surprisingly, the nation goes into a psychological and economic tailspin. Programs organized during the Great Society period are painted as failures. "Throwing money after problems" is the effective political slogan which is used continuously to discredit past presidents who built a modified but flawed welfare state. However, in this act Reagan identifies himself with Roosevelt, perhaps because he was a cripple without use of his legs and

Reagan's greatest film success was *Kings Row*, in which his legs are amputated.

President Reagan adds to the nation's discourse with unremitting praise for market deregulation and the need to teach unions a lesson. This last he accomplishes by firing the air controllers union for striking on issues of air safety and wages. Reagan claims that runaway federal spending and an expansion of the money supply is leading to inflation and unemployment at the same time, that is, stagflation.

He is also seriously wounded in an assassination attempt, adding to his heroic, invincible image.

## ACT TWO, THE CONSOLIDATION STAGE (1982-84)

President Reagan appears to be invulnerable as a personality. In 1984 he beats Walter Mondale for the presidency by a landslide vote of 59% to 41%, with Mondale carrying but 13 electoral votes. The voters are clearly enjoying the show and the fact that Reagan is continuing to enjoy himself without feeling overburdened by the task.

In his second term he moves with the Congress towards modest tax increases in line with the "new" wisdom that the federal government should be smaller and not the employer of last resort, the latter being a staple of New Deal and Fair Deal thought and practice. Columnists and journalists claim that Reagan's ideas of government are the "new" ideas the nation has been waiting for.

He orders a successful invasion of Grenada, ostensibly to stop the spread of Marxist chaos, but does so to take people's minds off of the 249 marines who were killed in Lebanon by a car bomber. Reagan administration officials initially said that no one would push American forces out of Lebanon, but after the tragedy American engagement with Lebanon quickly disappeared from the front pages and daily television news. And the marines left.

### ACT THREE, AGING WARRIOR (1985-87)

Through covert actions and military assistance, Reagan leads his administration to intensify a sublimated war in Nicaragua and El Salvador. Reagan fears that American authority will be undermined in Central America unless the Sandinistas are stopped in

Nicaragua and the rebel resistance in EL Salvador survives.

“[Ronald Reagan is a] cruel man with a steady smile . . . we’re dealing here with a philosophy of anarchy and reactionism.” (Ralph Nader, consumer rights advocate), *Los Angeles Times*, March 30, 1981, p. 11.)

He sanctions a series of maneuvers within his administration and through the White House National Security Council's Admiral Poindexter, Oliver North and Robert McFarlane, who order

over 2000 TOW missiles to be given to the Iranians in exchange for three hostages who, are then replaced with three other hostages. He also encourages a breach of Congress's Boland amendment, which was intended to stop any more aid to the rebel forces of Nicaragua, the Contras. Leading figures of the Reagan administration are indicted and

fingers point to Reagan as the chief initiator of a program to break a number of laws, including lying to Congress, use of unauthorized funds and destruction of documents.

Reagan loses his nominee for the Supreme Court in a bitter fight. Robert Bork, a serious and pedantic legal scholar, loses because of his widely advertised acerbic conservatism and his part in the Saturday Night Massacre during Watergate, in which he fired the Democratic Special Prosecutor, a friend of the Kennedy family, after two attorney generals refused. However, Reagan is to choose three nominees to the Court including the first woman justice, Sandra Day O'Connor.

#### ACT FOUR: REAGAN IS VICTORIOUS OVER COMMUNISM (1988)

By the late nineteen forties, Reagan was a strong anti-Communist who fought Communists and leftists in Hollywood. He helped the FBI from time to time as an informer on Hollywood Communists and sympathizers. When he became president, he pronounced the Soviet Union as an evil empire, which caused dismay among the diplomatic minded and faint hearted. However, the phrase turned out to resonate with many people in the Soviet Union who saw the importance of profound change.

One of those people was Mikhail Gorbachev, who had been looking for a way to end the Cold War and transform the Soviet Union. Gorbachev concludes that the Soviet Union would collapse from within and from budgetary pressures because of the costs of the arms race unless major political surgery is performed on the tottering empire. His attitude opens the way for a wholly new relationship with the United States and inside East Europe, which for the Soviets had become a large financial burden that they thought unnecessary to their security.

Through the extraordinarily adroit bureaucratic and diplomatic work of George Shultz, Reagan's second secretary of state, and with the encouragement of Reagan's wife, Nancy Reagan, an accommodation is reached with the Soviet Union as it began its descent and

collapse. Reagan and Gorbachev become friendly and almost sign an agreement to get rid of all nuclear weapons, but their advisors pull them back from this seemingly radical course.

## ACT FIVE: AMERICAN AMNESIA

In retirement President Reagan is found to have Alzheimer's disease, which may explain why he couldn't remember various events and details of the Iran-Contra affair. The nation also has an amnesia about Reagan's policies, but his supporters say that Americans have confidence in themselves again, and no longer doubt their institutions and legitimacy. As a society, Reagan supporters say, the nation has found the rest of itself.

As a man, Ronald Reagan retained a remarkable sturdiness although physically he had a number of problems, from poor hearing and impaired eyesight to colon cancer and other malignancies.

### ***A President's Beginnings***

Ronald Reagan was born February 6, 1911 to Nellie Wilson Reagan and Jack Reagan. His father, Jack Reagan, was an alcoholic who died in 1940. According to some accounts he was a violent man whom the young Reagan disliked. After assorted failures as a storeowner, he ended by working in public works projects sponsored by the New Deal.

Reagan's mother lived 72 years, dying in 1962. She mended and sold clothes in a woman's dress shop to feed her family during the depression.

Reagan worked his way through Eureka College in Illinois, graduating in 1932. He was a popular student who excelled in non academic pursuits including sports and acting. Reagan became a radio announcer mostly for sports games from 1932-37 and then moved on to Hollywood where his most important roles were those of playing a sick man as in Knute Rockne - All American, Kings Row and The Winning Team.

Reagan's marriage to the successful actress Jane Wyman, which officially lasted eight years, from 1940-48, was presented by Hollywood as idyllic. Some have speculated that it failed because of her uninterest in pursuing Reagan's interests, his tenuous hold on reality, the death of their newborn infant, and her success as an actress as his film career failed.

### ***A Second Chance***

Two influences gave Reagan a chance at "rebirth." One was his marriage to Nancy Davis in 1952, when she was 30 and he 42. The other was the corporate influence of Music Corporation of America (MCA) and General Electric (GE).

“What this country needs is a good do-nothing president . . . Ronald Reagan fans . . . can point with pride to their candidate’s record as Governor of California. And they will rightfully contend that he’s also done nothing for the last 6 years, except run for president and write a newspaper column.”  
(Arthur Hoppe, columnist, *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 8, 1980, p. 39.)

Nancy Davis Reagan was an actress and graduate of Smith College who was the adopted daughter of a Chicago brain surgeon, Loyal Davis. Nancy Reagan became a powerful behind-the-scenes political player in the Reagan White House. She was thought to be aggressive and very protective of Reagan's reputation, wanting him to be known in history as a great president who brought world peace.

The corporate influence, General Electric, gave him a substantial salary over an eight-year period, from 1954-62 as a host for General Electric Theater. Music Corporation of America both promoted Reagan and helped him with special gigs to pay for back taxes. When he was governor of California, the owners of MCA arranged for Reagan to sell a piece of property at much greater than market cost.

Reagan's victory over Pat Brown ushered in a conservative era in American politics. He successfully campaigned against the universities, which he charged with being too

permissive and promoting revolution. As governor, he cut welfare rolls and balanced the state budget. His second term as governor was that of a political moderate.

He first ran for president in 1976 but lost to Gerald Ford at the Republican convention. With Ford's 1976 loss to Carter, Reagan became the Republican Party's principal candidate. He spent the period between 1977 and 1980 campaigning through radio, television and op-eds, as well as traveling through the nation to aid Republican candidates for local and federal offices. Nevertheless, there was an undertone in the Republican Party and the nation at large that he was not "presidential material." Ford was proposed as a possible vice presidential candidate but Reagan's concern, and that of his advisors, was this would be an opening to Henry Kissinger (and others with whom Reagan felt no kinship) to run the major departments of the government. The idea was dropped.

After eight years in the White House, Edwin Meese, Reagan's counselor said that they had come to Washington to change the nation and they ended up changing the world. And there was truth to his comment.