

The Washington Times

1911



2011

CENTENNIAL



Ronald Reagan

“Government is not the solution to our problem. Government IS the problem.”

— Ronald Reagan, first inaugural address, Jan. 20, 1981

- **Reagan and his legacy:** His enduring impact / 2
- **Freedom in Europe:** Tearing down a wall / 4
- **Nancy Reagan:** A partner for life / 4
- **Commentary:** Ed Meese / 8 Michael Reagan / 9
- **Hollywood:** An actor on the world stage / 10
- **Democrats:** Reaching across the aisle / 12
- **The Reagan library:** Simi Valley attraction wows the crowds / 13

1911 2011



Reagan's enduring legacy



Ronald Reagan, who would have turned 100 on Sunday, is remembered by many Americans for his sunny disposition and bold rhetoric.

ASSOCIATED PRESS PHOTOGRAPHS

Historians and contemporaries measure his impact

By **STEPHEN DINAN**

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

From the granite facade of Mount Rushmore to road signs and school buildings in communities across the country, the push is going strong to enshrine Ronald Reagan's legacy in stone and steel — a fitting tribute, admirers say, to the man who ended communism in Europe and turned the political debate from Roosevelt's New Deal to supply-side economics or, more simply, Reaganism.

More than two decades after he left office, the 40th president, whose 525 electoral votes in 1984 are an all-time record, is a hot topic for historians, who debate his place among the top chief executives of all time, and for lawmakers, who still spar over who best lays claim to his legacy.

"There is a growing sense that we need to reckon with Reagan, reckon with his legacy to understand the broad political culture over the past three decades," said Matthew Dallek, a historian who has written about Reagan's 1966 campaign for California governor. "His presidency and the movement he led and his ideas really matter."

During Reagan's eight years in office, inflation fell from its staggering late-1970s peak, relations with the Soviet Union thawed, the unemployment rate fell and incomes rose. But measured by other standards, income inequality grew and federal spending ballooned. Historians still debate how much credit Reagan should get for his management of foreign relations.

More than anything else, though, Reagan's sunny disposition helped Americans recover from the cultural and economic shocks of the 1970s, and has made Reagan an icon for many.

"The last century, I believe, he would go down as the most effective president," said former Rep. Matt Salmon, an Arizona Republican who in the 1990s sponsored legislation trying to get Reagan's face carved onto Mount Rushmore beside those of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson and Theodore Roosevelt. "He certainly goes down as [among] a handful of presidents who have shaped this nation's future."

Some presidents belong to the historians — the debates over John F. Kennedy, Harry S. Truman and Franklin D. Roosevelt have passed from the politicians to the academics — and others, such as Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, remain firmly rooted in the political zeitgeist, picked apart in Congress and on talk shows.

Reagan, however, is claimed by historians and present-day politicians alike — as the proliferation of biographies and the ongoing debates in political weeklies attest.

It's one of the ironies that the historians tend to focus on Reagan's shortcomings and failures to live up to his rhetoric, while average Americans instead remember the sunny outlook and the bold rhetoric.

"If you look at the specifics of his agenda — cutting federal spending — well, he didn't. . . . He readjusted [taxes] somewhat, but total federal tax takes were the same when he left office as when he came in," said Michael Schaller, a professor at the University of Arizona who has just published a book, "Ronald Reagan." "Somehow those details are forgotten, and what we tend to remember is the ceremonial president who tends to evoke a sense of pride and can-do spirit."

"Parts of him have aged very well — the Reagan image. Even I, who disagreed with almost all the substance of his policies, have come to have a higher regard for his skills. I think those will last, you can't deny them," Mr. Schaller said. "The public Reagan is probably here to stay, like the public FDR, the public Teddy Roosevelt. That's pretty well enshrined now. I think the substance of the policy is still much contested."

Perhaps it's because Reagan is still within the purview of present-day and historical debate that efforts to enshrine him have not been mammoth successes. His backers are trying to change that.

"We aren't past the number of things that ought to be named after Reagan. We have a ways to go," said Grover Norquist, president of Americans for Tax Reform and chairman of the Ronald Reagan Legacy Project, whose goal is to have something named after Reagan in every one of the country's 3,140 counties.

Mr. Norquist said 600 to 800 public

works are named after Kennedy and civil rights legend Martin Luther King Jr., and reaching those levels is his group's next milestone. As of mid-January, members counted 107 Reagan listings.



President Reagan and first lady Nancy Reagan, with their dog Rex, wave to White House visitors on July 27, 1986.

"There are 100,000 teaching moments that flow from these things," Mr. Norquist said. "Somebody who's got something named after him is important."

Opponents were enraged when the former president's supporters pushed to have Reagan's name added to Washington National Airport in commemoration of his birthday in 1998. They called it an unfitting tribute because Reagan, in one of the defining moments of his presidency, in 1981 fired thousands of striking air traffic controllers who refused his order to return to work.

During a fiery debate in Congress, some were harsher still.

"The average black American thinks Reagan is responsible for the rebirth of racism in this country," said Rep. Eddie Bernice Johnson, Texas Democrat. The legislation to rename the airport passed the House by a 240-186 vote and the Senate by a 76-22 vote. President Clinton signed it into law.

Fights to add the Reagan name continue over whether other public works, such as the Washington area's Metro subway system, would change their signage

to reflect the new name of the airport.

At the height of the movement to commemorate Reagan, some wanted his visage on the dime or the \$10 bill.

Historians say Reagan has benefited from a concerted effort by backers to defend his legacy, particularly against what they perceive as press coverage stacked against him. Former aides do that for every president, but Mr. Dallek, the historian, said Reagan's backers are particularly adept and committed.

A 2005 Wall Street Journal survey of an ideologically balanced group of political scientists, historians and law professors rated Reagan as sixth most successful among the nation's 45 presidents. Liberal historian Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr.'s 1996 survey designated him as "average."

Historians in a 2010 Siena College poll ranked the greatest and worst presidents. Reagan came in 18th, three behind Barack Obama and five behind Mr. Clinton. He scored high marks on leadership, communication ability and "luck" but was rated near the bottom on "intelligence."

Surveys of broader America taken over the past decade regularly find Reagan immensely popular among average voters. On polls asking who the greatest president was, Reagan's name is almost always in the top three or five.

Whether he was great or merely average, his influence stretches to modern-day politics — so much so that Mr. Obama, on the campaign trail in 2008, said Reagan "changed the trajectory of America in a way that Richard Nixon did not and in a way that Bill Clinton did not." During his Hawaiian vacation

in December, Mr. Obama read a biography of his predecessor, Lou Cannon's "President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime."

"In some ways both Obama and Clinton have had to deal with Reagan's legacy," Mr. Dallek said. "Yes, Obama's supporters talk about the mess that George W. Bush left — whether it's Afghanistan, deficits, there's something to that. But if you take the longer view, I think Obama and Clinton are very much grappling with Reagan's rhetorical commitment to smaller government and trying to figure out how they are going to pursue a more progressive agenda while still maintaining their hold on the country."

Republicans' assertions that Reagan is still the dominant figure of their party could be an understatement.

At last month's debate among candidates for chairman of the Republican National Committee, the party's central office, Mr. Norquist asked the con-

tenders who their political hero was — "aside from President Reagan."

Mr. Dallek, though, said the irony is that there's not even consensus among his supporters about why he should be revered. Instead, Reagan is "a bit of a Rorschach test" for conservatives, who see what they want to see in his legacy.

Reagan is unique in the current time in that both historians and present-day politicians claim him as theirs.

Some Republicans, particularly those from the tea-party wing of the party, appreciate his support of limited government, though they tend to look past the explosion of the federal bureaucracy during his two terms in office. Hawkish conservatives admire his foreign policy, especially his uncompromising rhetoric about communism.

Reagan also is benefiting from nostalgia for George W. Bush, another two-term Republican president who left office scorned by many conservatives.

In one of the stranger juxtapositions, Reagan also has become a favorite for those on the left who once reviled him but now paint him as a courteous and optimistic statesman willing to cross party lines to work with Democrats.

In a House floor debate in January over campaign financing in presidential elections, Democrats pointed to Reagan's participation in the public financing system as ammunition to use against House Republicans trying to dismantle the system. Rep. David E. Price, North Carolina Democrat, called Mr. Reagan "the best example of this program's success."

That prompted some head-scratching from Republicans.

"When I find myself on the floor listening to my colleagues on the other side declaring Ronald Reagan to be the patron saint of Democratic Party ideas, I am bemused a bit because I served here when Ronald Reagan was president, and I don't recall those same words at that time," said Rep. Dan Lungren, California Republican.

In many ways, the fight over Reagan's legacy has intensified because of the rise of the tea-party movement.

For two decades, Reaganism was the goal of Republicans — a unifying theme and a governing philosophy. But over the past two years, some of that focus has shifted to the tea party, which is the first post-Reagan conservative governing philosophy to emerge.

"Reagan's policies do not sync up with the tea party's agenda or Sarah Palin's agenda," Mr. Dallek said. "Sarah Palin and the tea party are really to Reagan's right. They really are more extreme, and so in that have made Reagan look tamer."

Reagan defenders, though, say Reaganism and the tea party philosophy are one and the same. Mr. Reagan in his day also was unafraid to challenge "establishment" Republicans, including a sitting GOP president in Gerald Ford, in his drive to see his conservative ideas prevail.

"The tea-party movement was parallel to the Reagan movement within the Republican Party, the party that wants limited government and free markets — that's what the tea party means," Mr. Norquist said.



Mr. President, you came to Washington

not a moment too soon.

Sadly, you also left a Grateful Nation

far too soon.

On this, your 100th birthday, that Grateful Nation

wants you to know... America misses you.

Ronald Wilson Reagan was one of only a handful of "common stock" Americans to become President of the United States. Most of America's presidents had blue blood ties to the royals of Europe. What resident of Tampico, Illinois on February 6, 1911, walking past the town's General Store, took a moment to glance at the small apartment above the store and wonder if the baby born to John and Nellie Wilson Reagan that day might grow up to become the President of the United States?

Or, for that matter, the common folks who raised their children in Dixon, Illinois where John Reagan lost his shoe store during the Depression? Or, even Reagan himself, who believed that Franklin D. Roosevelt was the greatest President in the world when the New Deal put his father back to work — did he aspire to greatness?

As America remembers this great man let them also remember the simple man that he was. A simple man with a simple wish. A wish that everyone would treat their fellow man with dignity and respect; and that all people, everywhere, would be able to enjoy liberty in a free society. And, for those who live in America, he strengthened the bonds of liberty and made a free nation even more free by dissolving the Iron Curtain and crushing the Berlin Wall.

To most of us, he was the Great Communicator who spoke the words of the common man in a working man's world. He spoke the words of Hope; and he made us all believe we could be more than we thought we could be.

He was George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Andy Jackson all rolled into one. He was our leader. Then, he was gone.

Reagan's burial odyssey began with a week of mourning as he lay in state at the Reagan Library in Simi Valley. Over 100 thousand Californians lined the roadway to say goodbye as his funeral procession traveled to the airport for the flight to Washington where he would lay in state in the Capitol Rotunda where millions of Americans would come to say goodbye.

The outpouring of affection for America's most adored President was expressed by hundreds of thousands of those who voted for him and those who did not, who lined the procession routes of the limousines that transported him on both coasts as simple Americans expressed their love and admiration of another simple American — Ronald Wilson Reagan.

A great man crossed the nation that day. June 11, 2004. A grateful nation wanted to say goodbye to a leader that nation loved.

Reagan is gone. But the sound of his footsteps, and his favorite phrase, "...there you go again..." will remain enshrined in our minds and our hearts for an American eternity.

On February 6, 2011, Ronald Wilson Reagan's legacy and the legend of a man bigger than the life he lived, will be a century old. He was the "George Washington" we actually knew, the "Thomas Jefferson" we respected, and he was the "Andrew Jackson" the enemies of the United States came to respect and trust.



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To Eastern eyes, a liberator

His steadfastness freed millions from communism

By Roman Joch

SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES

PRAGUE
You know the story. There was Athens, and there was Sparta. Athens was a commercial republic, a democracy. Sparta was a militarist oligarchy. Athens had philosophy, academia, arts, sciences. Sparta had military drills. Sparta won.

In the 1970s, America was the new Athens, the Soviet Union the new Sparta. Who would win this time? There was no reason to expect the modern era would be any different. Militarist oligarchies always seemed to triumph over weak, self-doubting democracies.

The communist ruling classes in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1970s and '80s were cynical opportunists. They cared only for power, wealth and status. And they simply knew that power, brute force, would always prevail over human desires for freedom and democracy. Western self-doubt only aided their cause.

Then Ronald Reagan appeared on the scene. He terrified the brutes, scared the hell out of them, compelled them — for the first time in their lives — to entertain a terrible thought: “What if Athens (Western democracy) is not conquered by Sparta (Soviet militarism) after all? What if, this time, Athens defeats Sparta? With that man in the Oval Office, it's possible. Nay, it's likely. Inevitable...”

We can only guess their mental processes: “Comrades, we must be careful. He is tough, probably a madman. We must avoid conflicts with him; otherwise we lose. In fact, we already have lost the arms race. We must take precautions, negotiate a smooth transition of power

from communism, embrace democracy and a free-market economy; otherwise a bloody revolt of the people would smash us. We shall surrender power to dissidents — in exchange for our immunity and amnesty. After all, we do not care about socialism at all. In the new capitalist society, we could be happy capitalists.”

That, in short, is the basic story of how Reagan won the Cold War. For those of us who suffered under communism, he was our liberator. As Britain's Margaret Thatcher said: “Ronald Reagan won the Cold War without firing a shot.”

Reagan was the first American president who did not wish merely to coexist

Mr. Gorbachev's intent was not to abolish communism but to reform and strengthen it.

with Soviet communism but sought to destroy it instead. His approach to that crazy ideology and to its monstrous regimes is best illustrated by his own words, spoken the very first year of his presidency: “I believe that communism is another sad, bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages even now are being written.”

The words kept coming. He infuriated Moscow's leaders a year later, telling the British Parliament in 1982, “The march of freedom and democracy will leave Marxism-Leninism on the ash heap of history as it has left other tyrannies.”

And again, in 1983, in his immortal — and much-criticized at the time — “evil empire” address: “Let us be aware that while Soviet rulers preach the supremacy of the



President Reagan is flanked by West German Parliament President Philipp Jenninger (left) and Chancellor Helmut Kohl at West Berlin's Brandenburg Gate, where he said, “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!”

state, declare its omnipotence over individual man and predict its eventual domination of all peoples on the earth. They are the focus of evil in the modern world. . . . I urge you to beware the temptation . . . to ignore the facts of history and the aggressive impulses of an evil empire.”

How did Reagan win the Cold War? He deployed medium-range missiles in Western Europe to counter-

balance Soviet SS-20s already deployed in Eastern Europe. He imposed an embargo on construction of Soviet pipelines to the West (restricting revenue of hard currency). The Polish Solidarity labor movement received secret funding. Anti-communist guerrillas in Nicaragua, Angola, Afghanistan and Cambodia received aid, and Grenada was liberated by military action in 1983.

The Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), announced in 1983, was perhaps the most crucial factor. The idea of a high-tech missile defense scared the Soviets to death. They knew their moribund socialist economy would not be able to compete with such a massive buildup. They had to negotiate — and from a position of weakness, at that.

Until 1983, the Soviets had a fighting chance to win the

Cold War. After 1983 and the deployment of U.S. Pershing 2 and cruise missiles in Western Europe, they could hope only for a stalemate.

Then in 1986, when Reagan refused to give up SDI — derisively dubbed “Star Wars” by skeptics — at the Reykjavik summit, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev had only one option left: Negotiate from a position of weakness, quit the arms race, let Russia cease being a superpower on an equal standing with the U.S., and hence lose the trust, allegiance and healthy fear of his collaborationist allies abroad. By the late 1980s, the game was over.

Mr. Gorbachev's intent was not to abolish communism but to reform and strengthen it. In order to compete with Reagan economically and militarily, he also introduced economic reforms under his “perestroika” program. In order to have perestroika work, he needed to allow at least limited freedom of speech for economic matters, and thus “glasnost,” or openness, was born.

And still the people demanded more.

Communism did not collapse on its own. Tyrannies can endure for long periods if they are brutal enough. Why did the Soviet empire collapse in the late 1980s instead of the late 1970s? Because previously, there was no Western pressure against the Soviets. It was the time of President Carter and detente.

There was, however, very definite and sustained pressure in the 1980s — generated by Ronald Reagan.

The American people had the good sense to elect him president in 1980, and as a result, tens of millions of people in Central and Eastern Europe are free.

Roman Joch is director of the Civic Institute, a conservative think tank in Prague, and an adviser to Czech Prime Minister Petr Necas on human rights and foreign policy.

First lady was a true political partner

Nancy helped shape her husband's legacy

By Andrea Billups

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

She was a size-2 fashionista, a former actress who inspired media wrath decades ago for her couture and decorating appetites — not to mention her proximity to power.

The 4,372-piece red china she sought to gussy up White House entertaining — a gift from a private foundation, not a taxpayer expense as some thought — cost more than \$200,000. At the time, critics denounced it as an unseemly show of excess in the depths of a national recession. Now, like Nancy Reagan herself, the china set has endured to become an iconic treasure.

Mrs. Reagan's value in the White House was much more than as a sidelines tea-pourer with a penchant for Galanos gowns and a distrust of outsiders. She loomed large — often in her famed red power dress — in all aspects of her husband's life and career, wielding outsized political influence for a first lady and helping to shape Reagan's now-lauded and history-making Cold War policy.

Much more than many knew during his presidency, Ronald Reagan relied mainly on the council of his wife, even on the big issues. Some say she was likely his only true friend in Washington — much to the chagrin of his power-player associates, many of whom regarded her as the tiny but ferocious pit bull guarding the Oval Office door.

“I think she was the only person he really listened to, the only person he was really close to,” historian Kathy Olmsted, a professor at the University of California at Davis, said about Reagan's

complex personal-political relationship.

“A lot of what is known about her comes from the memoirs of Reagan's advisers, who wrote a lot of kiss-and-tell books after they were out of office. They did disclose that there was this tug of war between her and some of his hard-line advisers, which made them despise her but made many historians see her as a moderating influence.”

Mrs. Reagan's push against those from the far right helped save her husband's presidency, Ms. Olmsted said.

“After [the Iran-Contra scandal], his approval ratings were abysmal,” the historian said. “There was talk of impeachment. She was perhaps his most forceful adviser in counseling him to meet with [Soviet leader Mikhail] Gorbachev and come to some sort of deal that led to the [Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces] Treaty to cool tensions. It encouraged Reagan to go away from hard-line, hawkish policies and make peace and agree to reduce the nuclear arsenal. She played a big role in ending the Cold War.”

Born Anne Francis Robbins in 1921, the daughter of an actress and car salesman, she was raised for a time by relatives because her mother's career kept her away from home. After her mother remarried, she was adopted by her stepfather, Loyal Davis, a well-known neurosurgeon and conservative whose name she took. She grew up in Chicago and graduated from Smith College in Massachusetts in 1943.

After working several jobs, she followed her mother into acting, performing on Broadway in 1946 in



Ronald and Nancy Reagan were deeply affectionate, close friends say.

a minor role in the production of “Lute Song.” Soon, after a screen test, she was working under contract for MGM in Hollywood, where she played small roles in 11 films. In her next to last movie, “Hellcats of the Navy,” she was joined on the screen by actor Ronald Reagan, whom she married in a simple ceremony in 1952. She retired from movies in 1962, her heart more devoted to marriage and a family than to a career on the silver screen.

The blended family included two children from Mr. Reagan's first marriage to actress Jane Wyman and two children born after the couple married. It also became a lifelong partnership, with Mrs. Reagan famously devoted to her “Ronnie.”

Over her lifetime in the public eye, including during

her husband's tenure as governor of California, those closest to the handsome couple described them as deeply affectionate. Actor Charlton Heston, upon Mr. Reagan's death, called their relationship “the greatest love affair in the history of the American presidency.”

A book chronicling their romantic relationship in letters, “I love you, Ronnie,” was published in 2000. Although Mrs. Reagan was criticized in the press for her fashion tastes and formality, her enduring devotion to her husband and her grace in dealing with his final illness and death have softened her image with time.

Political pundit Andrea Tantaros said Mrs. Reagan's strength on behalf of her husband has been inspirational across generations.

“Behind every successful

NANCY REAGAN

Former First Lady of the United States

Born: July 6, 1921, New York; Protestant

Education: B.A., Smith College, 1943

Family: Married Ronald Reagan, March 1952; two children, two stepchildren

Career highlights: First lady, 1981-1989; launched “Just Say No” anti-drug campaign, 1982; first lady of California, 1967-1975; actress, New York and Hollywood, 1945-1962.

Of note: Mrs. Reagan published a memoir, “My Turn,” in 1989. In 2002, President George W. Bush awarded her the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian award.

Source: Reagan Presidential Library and Museum; www.firstladies.org

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

man is a strong woman: Nowhere was this more clear than the relationship between Ronald and Nancy Reagan. She was the backbone of that White House during her husband's tenure, and her style was fierce and unique — and I'm not just talking about fashion,” Ms. Tantaros said. “Despite the controversy she invoked during her years in the West Wing, she was a role model for wives, mothers, young people and anyone who deeply loved the United States.”

Robert Watson, a professor of American studies at Lynn University in Boca Raton, Fla., calls Mrs. Reagan “one of the most influential first ladies in modern times.”

“A lot of the people who were not following politics didn't believe she was [influential], but people who had known Reagan and studied his governing knew Nancy was a power broker,” Mr. Watson said.

“In some ways, I've always felt that each first lady makes the next one possible,” he added. “And I think [Mrs. Reagan] made Hillary Clinton and Michelle Obama a little more possible. Both are Ivy League lawyers who are seen as full political and policy partners” with their presidential spouses.

Mr. Watson said Mrs. Rea-

gan deserves much credit for starting an open conversation about Alzheimer's disease, the affliction that clouded the last decade of her husband's life. Her stoicism in handling Reagan's death in 2004 “brought the issue into every dining room and every office water-cooler discussion,” he said.

“She really displayed grace under pressure. It's such a tough job for a loved one dealing with it, and I absolutely do think part of her legacy is the Alzheimer's conversation.”

Mr. Watson also praised Mrs. Reagan, now 89, as “a legacy-shaper and advocate for her husband.”

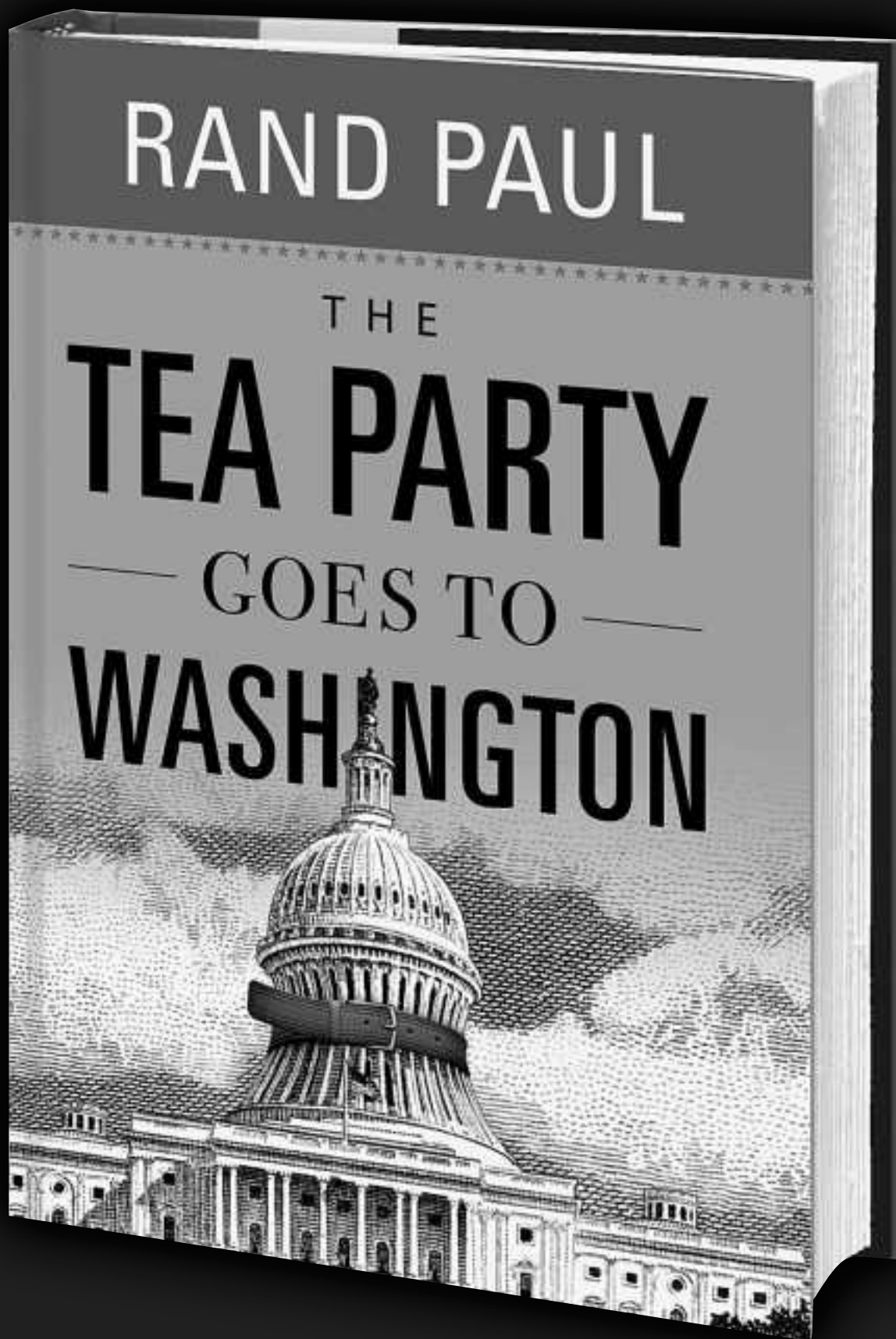
“All presidents are concerned about legacies when they leave office. They invite historians to meet with them, their proxies go on talk shows. They write books to make their case,” Mr. Watson said. “The fact that Reagan was stricken with [Alzheimer's] so early after leaving the White House, he never got the chance to do that. What we have seen with Nancy is that she has stepped up, consistently and quietly reaching out to his inner circle to make the case for her husband's legacy.”

“I think she was more ambitious than he was. And I think in a lot of ways, she is even more relevant today than she was a few years ago.”

“Senator Paul has given us a blueprint for limited government that would make Jefferson ecstatic.”

—Judge Andrew P. Napolitano

Senior Judicial Analyst, Fox News Channel, and Host of *Freedom Watch*, Fox Business Network



Millions of concerned Americans found their voice in the Tea Party movement and have rallied to support one of its most vocal champions, Rand Paul. In this fascinating account, Senator Paul describes the inspiration for this amazing grassroots movement and lays out a plan that will get America back on track.



“Perhaps the most influential Tea Party member in the incoming class.” —*New York* magazine

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—Time.com

“Paul turned out to be a better candidate than advertised. He’s likely to be a more effective senator than the man he replaces.”
—WSJ.com Opinion Journal

“A true conservative who will stand up to the Washington establishment.” —Senator Jim DeMint



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The life of Ronald Wilson Reagan

1911

Feb. 6: Born in Tampico, Ill., to itinerant shoe salesman John Edward "Jack" Reagan and his wife, Nelle Wilson Reagan.

1920

The Reagan family settles in Dixon, Ill., where his parents continue to instill a ruggedly individualistic, optimistic ethic in young Ronald that reflects Midwestern values of home, family and patriotism.

1928

Graduates from Dixon High School, where he was active in sports and drama and was elected president of the student body.

1932

Graduates from Eureka College, a small liberal arts college affiliated with the Disciples of Christ, where he played football, was elected student body president and supplemented a partial scholarship by working as a lifeguard, swimming coach and dishwasher.

1933

Hired as a sports announcer at WOC; after it is consolidated with WHO in Des Moines, he announces Chicago Cubs baseball games throughout the Midwest.

1937

Discovered by an agent for the Warner Bros. movie studio while covering Cubs spring training near Los Angeles. After a screen test, he signs to play the leading role of a crusading radio announcer in "Love Is On the Air," the first of 55 films in a 28-year acting career.

1940

Stars as George Gipp, the University of Notre Dame football player who died young, in "Knute Rockne, All American." Marries actress Jane Wyman.



Conferring with British leader Margaret Thatcher at Camp David Dec. 22, 1984.

1941

Daughter Maureen Elizabeth is born. His father dies.

1942

Stars in the critically acclaimed "Kings Row." Enters Army Air Corps as a second lieutenant. Disqualified from combat duty for nearsightedness, he is assigned to make Air Force training films in Hollywood.

1945

Discharged with the rank of captain. Adopts a son, Michael Edward.

1947

Elected to the first of five consecutive terms as president of the Screen Actors Guild. Appears as a friendly witness before the House Un-American Activities Committee, supporting Hollywood producers' blacklist of actors and writers suspected of communist ties.

1948

Campaigns for President Truman's re-election. Is divorced from Jane Wyman.

1952

Marries actress Nancy Davis. Campaigns as a Democratic supporter of Republican presidential nominee Dwight D. Eisenhower. Daughter Patricia Ann is born.

1954-1962

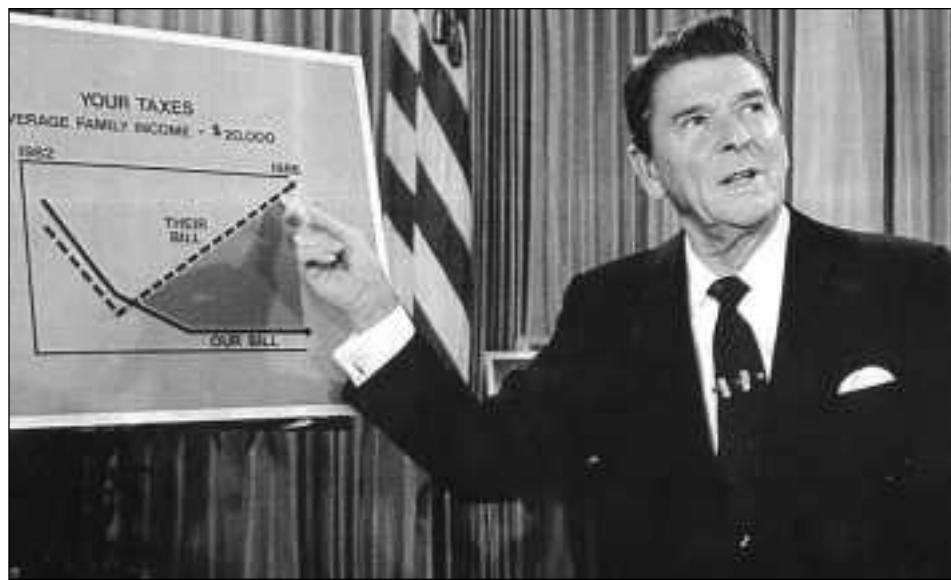
Hosts and occasionally stars in a television drama series, "General Electric Theater." Tours the country as a spokesman for GE, including speeches to factory workers stressing the dangers of too much government regulation.



Working as a sportscaster in the 1930s.



Talking with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in Washington Dec. 8, 1987.



Proposing "Reaganomics" tax cuts July 27, 1981.

1956

Campaigns for President Eisenhower's re-election.

1957

Co-stars with his wife in "Hellcats of the Navy," his last theatrical release.

1958

Son Ronald Prescott is born.

1960

Campaigns for Vice President Richard M. Nixon, the Republican nominee for president, against Sen. John F. Kennedy, Massachusetts Democrat.

1962

Leaves the Democratic Party and registers as a Republican. His mother dies at 76.

1962-1965

Hosts and performs in the television Western series "Death Valley Days." Does commercials for the sponsor, United States Borax & Chemical Corp., which makes cleaning products. Stars in his last film, the made-for-television "The Killers" (1964).

1964

Oct. 27: Gains widespread attention with a nationally televised speech, "A Time for Choosing," on behalf of the Republican presidential nominee, Sen. Barry Goldwater of Arizona. It establishes him as a spokesman for conservatism and spurs California's Republican leaders to ask him to run for governor.

1966

June 7: Wins the Republican nomination for governor of California with almost 65 percent of the vote in a five-candidate primary.

1967

Jan. 2: Sworn in as California's 33rd governor.

1968

May: Though not a formal candidate for the presidential nomination, issues "position papers" and makes a five-state fund-raising tour for the party.

1969

January: Asks state legislators to help him drive "criminal anarchists and latter-day Fascists" off California campuses.

Feb. 4: Calls for a \$100 million tax rebate.

April 8: Proposes reforming the state tax structure, including ceilings on local property taxes and an average reduction of 80 percent in residential property taxes levied for education.

1970

Nov. 3: Handily wins re-election, defeating State Assembly Speaker Jesse Unruh by 3.4 million votes to 2.9 million.

1971

July: Vetoes \$503 million in the state budget for salary increases and for education, welfare and medical care.

Aug. 13: Signs a welfare reform measure that tightens residency requirements and increases protection against fraud.

1972

March: Announces that about 30,000 welfare recipients would lose benefits if they did not work off the grants in part-time jobs.

1975

Jan. 6: Leaves office after eight years as governor of California.

Nov. 20: Opens his campaign against President Ford for the Republican nomination.

1976

Feb. 24: Narrowly loses the New Hampshire primary to Mr. Ford, 51 percent to 49 percent.

March 23: Pulls an upset of Mr. Ford in the North Carolina primary, 52 percent to 46 percent.

Aug. 19: Falls only 60 delegates short of making Mr. Ford the first incumbent of the century to lose his party's nomination (claiming 1,070 delegates to the president's 1,187 with 1,130 needed to win). The convention requires Mr. Ford to run on a conservative platform.

Nov. 2: Becomes the Republican favorite for 1980 when President Ford is defeated by his Democratic challenger, Georgia Gov. Jimmy Carter.

1979

Nov. 16: Announces his bid for the Republican nomination for president, entering the race as the front-runner among 10 declared candidates.

1980

July 14-17: Accepts the Republican nomination for president in Detroit after winning 1,939 of 1,994 delegates and chooses George Bush as his running mate on a conservative platform.

Nov. 4: Confounds predictions of a close contest, carrying 44 states and routing Mr. Carter by 51 percent to 41 percent of the popular vote. Republicans take control of the Senate for the first time in a quarter-century; Democrats lose 33 seats in the House.

1981

Jan. 20: In inaugural address, calls upon Americans to "begin an era of national renewal." Iran releases 52 American hostages held for 444 days.

1984

Aug. 20-23: Republicans renominate the Reagan-Bush team in a single roll-call vote in Dallas. His acceptance speech criticizes Democrats as the party of higher taxes and inflation.

Nov. 6: Wins re-election with 59 percent of the vote, carrying 49 states in a record landslide. Republicans gain 14 seats in the House but lose two Senate seats.

1985

March 13: Vows to veto any tax increase by Congress, saying: "Go ahead, make my day."

June-December: Consistently condemns acts of terrorism throughout the world that kill or threaten Americans, vowing never to negotiate with terrorists.

Dec. 12: Signs the Gramm-Rudman Act providing for him to impose spending cuts if Congress does not meet yearly targets designed to eliminate the federal deficit by 1991.

1986

Oct. 11-12: Deadlocks with Soviet leader Gorbachev during a summit in Reykjavik, Iceland, over U.S. plans to deploy a space-based missile defense system.

Oct. 22: Signs a bill enacting sweeping tax reforms that benefit individuals and the poor and give the biggest windfall to the wealthiest Americans.

1987

Jan. 5: Undergoes "routine" prostate surgery.

June 12: Challenges Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to "tear down this wall" during a speech on the west side of the Berlin Wall dividing the city.

Oct. 23: The Senate, after a bitter fight, votes 58-42 to

Winter-spring: Pushes budget and tax cuts dubbed "Reaganomics."

March 30: Wounded by a bullet in his left lung in an assassination attempt outside the Washington Hilton.

July 7: Nominates Sandra Day O'Connor to become the first woman on the Supreme Court.

Aug. 4: Congress approves his income tax cuts, at \$33 billion the largest in history.

August-October: Faces down striking air traffic controllers by firing those who refuse to return to work and ordering the Federal Aviation Administration to recruit new ones.

Fall: Deep recession begins, national debt surpasses \$1 trillion for the first time.

1982

June 8: In a speech to the British Parliament, asserts that "the march of freedom and democracy" will "leave Marxism-Leninism on the ash heap of history."

September: Sends U.S. troops to Lebanon as part of a peacekeeping force to ease tensions between Israel and the PLO. Monthly unemployment climbs to 10.8 percent, the highest since the Depression.

1983

March 8: Reasserts conservative roots and calls the Soviet Union an "evil empire" in a speech to Protestant evangelicals.

March 23: Proposes to develop a space-based defense against nuclear missiles called the Strategic Defense Initiative.

Nov. 2: Signs a bill creating a federal holiday honoring Martin Luther King.

Winning after a bullet strikes March 30, 1981.

reject his nomination of Robert H. Bork to the Supreme Court.

Nov. 11: Nominates Anthony M. Kennedy for the Supreme Court.

Dec. 8-10: Hosts Mr. Gorbachev at a three-day summit in Washington that produces a treaty calling for the dismantling of all Soviet and U.S. medium-range nuclear weapons.

1988

January: Signs a free-trade agreement with Canada.

Aug. 15: Passes the torch of Republican leadership to Vice President Bush in a speech at the national convention in New Orleans.

Nov. 8: Mr. Bush wins the presidency over Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis, a victory widely seen as an extension of the Reagan presidency.

1989

Jan. 11: Delivers his farewell address to the nation.

Jan. 20: Leaves office for retirement in Los Angeles. His job-approval rating of 68 percent is the highest to be received by a president at the end of a term since World War II.

1990

November: Publishes his autobiography, "An American Life."

1991

Nov. 4: Dedicates his presidential library in Simi Valley, Calif., in a ceremony attended by all five living U.S. presidents.

1992

Aug. 17: Endorses President Bush's re-election in a speech to the Republican National Convention in Houston.

Nov. 27: Meets with President-elect Clinton in his Los Angeles office, suggesting how to cut spending and recommending that he seek "peace of mind" often at the presidential retreat at Camp David, Md.

1994

Nov. 5: In a handwritten letter, he tells the American people that he is in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease; his decision to increase public awareness of the disease is widely praised.

1997

Oct. 2: The New York Times reports that he no longer can remember that he had been president, nor recognize close friends and former aides.

1998

Feb. 6: In an honor timed to mark Mr. Reagan's 87th



birthday, Mr. Clinton signs legislation renaming Washington National Airport as Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport.

May 5: Mr. Clinton and Mrs. Reagan dedicate a new federal office complex, the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center. At 3.1 million square feet, it is the second-largest federal building, after the Pentagon.

1999

December: Deteriorates to the point that he no longer can hold a coherent conversation or engage in recreational activities.

2001

Jan. 12: Breaks his hip in a fall at home.

Aug. 8: Daughter Maureen dies of cancer.

Oct. 11: Becomes the longest-lived president.

2003

July 12: U.S. Navy commissions its newest aircraft carrier, the USS Ronald Reagan, the first carrier named for a living ex-president.

2004

June 5: Dies at his Bel Air, Calif., home.

The Washington Times



Eliminate Pain WITHOUT A PRESCRIPTION!

OsteoArthritis Sufferers Experience Dramatic Improvement in Clinical Study

A clinical study published in the *Journal of Rheumatology* evaluated the pain relieving effectiveness of *JointFlex*® Pain Relieving Cream versus a placebo. *JointFlex* is a non-prescription pain relieving cream that is available in retail stores everywhere. The eight-week clinical trial involved 63 patients who had suffered from chronic osteoarthritis knee pain for an average of 10 years!

Fast Acting, Effective Pain Relief

The study clearly showed that the users of *JointFlex* experienced substantial pain relief shortly after application. The study confirmed what thousands of satisfied *JointFlex* customers around the world already know...*JointFlex* helps you achieve a better quality of life because of its powerful and fast-acting pain relieving action. But there's more!

LONG-TERM IMPROVING Pain Relief

The users of *JointFlex* also experienced a totally unexpected and dramatic result. With continued use, a majority obtained long-term pain relief that continued to improve throughout the entire eight-week study. But that's not all!

“JointFlex provides significant, fast acting pain relief, plus IMPROVING pain relief with continued use”



“JointFlex is easily applied to painful areas, leaves no greasy residue, has no lingering pungent smell and there are NO PILLS/NO SYSTEMIC SIDE EFFECTS”

Why Continue To Take Pills?

If you are concerned about the negative side effects of the pills you are taking or tired of the stomach discomfort that often goes along with them, it may be time to switch to *JointFlex*. Just rub *JointFlex* onto your painful areas. It's that easy. Soon after applying *JointFlex*, you won't even know you have it on other than the soothing pain relief you will be experiencing. With *JointFlex*, there are NO pills to swallow and NO negative systemic side effects to worry about like those associated with NSAIDs or oral prescription pain relievers.

Is Pain Keeping You Awake at Night?

If you are among the millions who cannot get a good night sleep because of nagging arthritis aches and pains, why not try *JointFlex*? You'll get fast acting pain relief targeted directly where you need it, and by using *JointFlex* daily, you will get long-term continually IMPROVING pain relief or your money back. With *JointFlex*, you can finally get a good night sleep. Plus, you can use *JointFlex* daily with confidence since there is no burning sensation, no lingering medicine smell and no greasy residue.

OsteoArthritis Pain ELIMINATED!

Even more amazing, one-third of the *JointFlex* users had their pain gradually decrease to the point where it was completely or nearly completely eliminated! By using *JointFlex* daily as directed, you too may be able to substantially reduce or even eliminate that arthritis pain that's been nagging you for years.

The gradual and continual improvement in long-term pain relief observed in the *JointFlex* clinical study was found to be consistent with previous studies conducted with orally administered Glucosamine and Chondroitin Sulfate.¹ As with any medication individual results may vary. Highlights of the study are available by calling the toll free number or they can be viewed online at www.jointflex.com.

How Does *JointFlex* Work?

JointFlex formulation contains the active ingredient camphor plus Glucosamine and Chondroitin Sulfate for skin conditioning. Only *JointFlex* offers the proprietary FUSOME® skin delivery system - this technology is believed to be a key factor in the amazing clinical results. This skin delivery system, available only from *JointFlex*, has been designed to deliver all beneficial ingredients quickly and safely to the skin. The *JointFlex* formula provides deep penetration and powerful relief when applied to areas where it hurts.²

No Risk Trial Offer

Now you can try *JointFlex* without any risk. Simply purchase a tube of *JointFlex* at your favorite store, online, or by phone. Your pain is guaranteed to reduce or disappear shortly after your first application.

To experience the long-term benefits of *JointFlex*, continue to apply *JointFlex* daily, preferably twice a day. Use up the entire tube of *JointFlex* and watch your osteoarthritis pain gradually and continually reduce or disappear altogether. If you're not completely amazed with the results, just send the tube and cash register receipt to us, even if the tube is empty, and we will mail you a refund. No questions asked.

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¹JointFlex will be further studied to determine the mechanism of these dramatic results and to verify that they are not due to random chance alone. ²Use only as directed.

1911 2011



Upholding the rule of law

Ronald Reagan rekindled the principle of judicial restraint

By Ed Meese

Both as governor of California and as president of the United States, Ronald Reagan was devoted to the appointment of judges who understood the proper role of the judiciary and the important limitations the U.S. Constitution sets on government.

He took office as governor amid great controversy

Commentary

about the politicization of the judiciary and the quality of judicial appointments. So he initiated a new system for considering the candidates for California's courts.

He organized in each county a group composed of a presiding judge, the president of the local bar association and one to three residents knowledgeable about the court system and the candidates. From their individual assessments, he was able to select the judge with the best qualifications and eliminate any who did not measure up to his exacting standards. As a result, he was recognized by members of both political parties as having appointed the best judges in California history.

As he was running for president, Ronald Reagan raised the issue of "judicial activism" among the federal courts. He noted that too many judges were substituting their own personal views, policy preferences and political ideas for what the Constitution and the statutes enacted by Con-



President Reagan announces the resignation of Chief Justice Warren E. Burger (right) during a briefing at the White House on June 17, 1986. Reagan said he would nominate Justice William H. Rehnquist (second from right) to the post of chief justice and Antonin Scalia (left) as a member of the Supreme Court.

gress actually provided. Many legal scholars and knowledgeable observers were concerned that we were no longer a government of laws, but a government where the result depended on who the judge might be. This was particularly true in such cases as religious liberty, freedom of speech, economic affairs and criminal justice. These were matters that most affected the personal lives of American citizens.

Most important to the president was the fact that judicial activism violated the basic constitutional principles of limited government and of checks and

balances. When the federal courts turned from interpreting the law to making the law or improperly interfered with the actions of the executive branch, they

He said that the courts, like the Constitution itself, must not be liberal or conservative, but solely focused on following the law and preserving justice.

usurped the powers of the other two branches.

Ronald Reagan was committed to restoring the concept of constitutional fidelity. Judges, he maintained, should base their decisions on the original meaning of

the Constitution and of the federal statutes. He explained that the Founding Fathers had given careful thought to the role of the federal judiciary and thought

that it should be independent and strong, but with its powers confined within the boundaries of a written Constitution and laws.

He considered this principle, known as judicial restraint, critical to the fair

administration of justice. He said that the courts, like the Constitution itself, must not be liberal or conservative, but solely focused on following the law and preserving justice.

To remedy this situation, the president directed the Department of Justice to develop a method for examining candidates for the federal judiciary. In addition to the usual background investigation and evaluation by the American Bar Association, the attorney general and his staff established a system of interviews and extensive research into the candidates' prior writings, speeches

and judicial decisions to determine their proven understanding and allegiance to constitutional values.

By instituting within his administration this emphasis on judicial restraint and constitutionalism, President Reagan produced a virtual revolution in judicial philosophy. For years, the courts had departed from their legitimate role with little criticism from the legal community, the news media or political commentators. Now the question of "judicial activism" or "judicial restraint" became a matter of debate among law schools, the legal profession and public discourse.

The work of the Justice Department in carrying out the president's directions on judicial selection provided the implementation of the "originalism" philosophy. Justices of the Supreme Court, as well as appellate and trial court judges, were appointed on the basis of this doctrine. To make clear his personal interest in restoring the rule of law and constitutional fidelity to judicial proceedings, President Reagan personally telephoned each of the new judges as he appointed them.

The president's careful efforts produced the same results at the federal level as he had in California: a judiciary of increasingly high-quality judges committed to constitutional government.

Ed Meese holds the Ronald Reagan Chair at the Heritage Foundation and was U.S. attorney general during the Reagan administration.

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"Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same."

— Ronald Wilson Reagan

God Bless America!

Humorist in chief

Reagan left a legacy of laughs

By Martin Tullai

There's debate about where Ronald Reagan ranks among America's greatest presidents, but there is far less doubt whether he should be recognized as our "most humorous president."

President Reagan's demeanor after the attempt on his life offered testimony that he, like many of his predecessors, found humor an effective antidote to the burdens of the presidency.

"Honey, I forgot to duck," he cracked to his wife.

As he was being wheeled into the operating room, he grinned and kidded with the doctors, "I hope you're all good Republicans."

Following surgery he came off with, "All in all, I'd rather be in Philadelphia."

Later, he sent a note to waiting White House aides: "Winston Churchill said, 'There's no more exhilarating feeling than being shot at without result.'"

Several hours later came another message: "If I had had this much attention in Hollywood, I would have stayed there."

President Reagan's use of humor was as widespread as it was varied.

Much of his humor was self-effacing. When shown a picture of himself with Bonzo, a chimpanzee he had appeared with in a movie, he cracked, "I'm the one with the watch."

From the beginning, the question of Reagan's age prompted much discussion. By kidding it to death, he effectively defused it.

After quoting Thomas Jefferson's advice that "We should judge a president not by his age, but by his deeds," he declared, "And ever since he told me that, I stopped worrying." When he and Jimmy Carter attended the Al Smith dinner in New York in 1980, he told the story about how he had received a call from President Carter asking, "Mr. Reagan, how come you always look younger each time I see you riding a horse?" Reagan's reply: "Jimmy, I just keep riding older horses."

His quip during the second debate with Walter Mondale in 1984 put the issue at rest. "I am not going to, for political purposes," he

said, with mock seriousness, "exploit my opponent's youth and inexperience."

During the 1980 campaign, with the state of the economy a significant issue, he offered this definition: "Recession is when your neighbor loses his job, depression is when you lose yours and . . . recovery will be when Jimmy Carter loses his."

Like all good politicians (Abraham Lincoln included), Ronald Reagan realized a little self-effacement about the recognition factor helps one to maintain a sense of proportion, like the story about his experience in New York.

One day while hurrying down Fifth Avenue back to his hotel, he was suddenly confronted by a man who pointed his finger at him and said, "Ah, hah! I know you — I see you all the time in the 'pitchas' and on the TV." As he spoke, the man fumbled in his pocket for pen and paper. Finally, he triumphantly thrust the pen and

paper in his hands and said, "I gotta have your autograph, Ray Milland!" So Reagan signed: Ray Milland.

He also enjoyed Russian jokes, like the story he told about Adam and Eve. "I sometimes think Adam and Eve were Russians," he said. "They didn't have a roof over their heads, nothing to wear, but they had one apple between them, and they thought that was paradise."

Speaking at a Veterans of Foreign Wars convention, he quipped, "The Russians have a new million-dollar lottery. The winner gets a dollar a year for a million years."

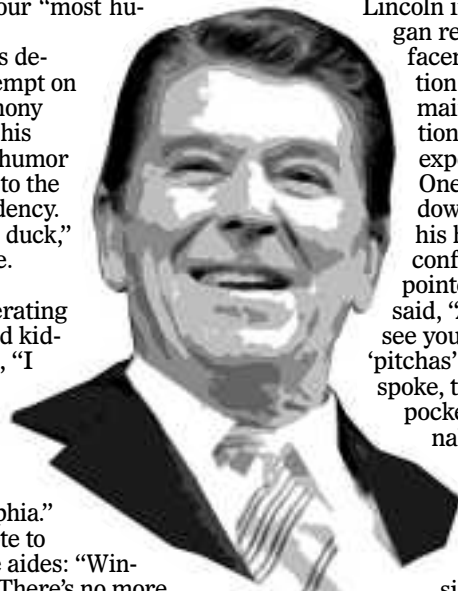
Forever the optimist and positive thinker, he told a Gridiron Dinner, "Since I came to the White House, I got two hearing aids, a colon operation, skin cancer, a prostate operation and I was shot. The damn thing is, I've never felt better in my life."

Not surprisingly, Ronald Reagan once pointed out that politics is like show business. "You have to have a hell of an opening, you coast for awhile, you have to have a hell of a closing."

Nearing his 100th birthday, it is safe to say we remember him because he never coasted, and he did have one hell of a closing.

Martin Tullai is author of "The Presidency — Once Over Lightly" and "Speaking of Abraham Lincoln."

"Recession is when your neighbor loses his job, depression is when you lose yours, and recovery will be when Jimmy Carter loses his."



1911 2011



By Michael Reagan

An actor on God's stage

The moment has come for a new champion of freedom

On June 11, 2004, we buried my father at his presidential library in Simi Valley, Calif. I kissed my father's casket and said goodbye to the greatest man I've ever known — one of the greatest men the world has ever known.

The next morning, at the Bel Air Hotel, I saw one of my father's dearest friends, Lady Margaret Thatcher. She greeted me warmly, and we talked about her friendship with my father. "Michael," she said, "I've often thought it was tragic that your father was not elected in 1976. Perhaps the Cold War would have ended four years earlier. The world would have been spared so much suffering."

"Actually," I said, "I think Ronald Reagan became president at exactly the right time. If he'd been elected in 1976, I don't think he would have accomplished so much."

"What do you mean?" "My father needed allies to bring down the Iron Curtain. Lady Thatcher, you were Dad's strongest ally, and you became prime minister in 1979. Pope John Paul II came on the scene in 1978 — and his visit to Poland in 1979 sparked the rise of Lech Walesa and the Solidarity movement. And there was Vaclav Havel in Czechoslovakia in 1977. And Mikhail Gorbachev didn't come to power until 1985. None of Dad's allies were in place in 1976 — but nearly all of you were there in 1981. It took all of you, working together, to end the Cold War."

"Why, I never thought of that," she said.

The challenges we face today are startlingly similar to conditions at the dawning of the Reagan era.



ILLUSTRATION BY GREG GROESCH

I believe God chooses the times and selects the people to accomplish His purpose in the world. He brought the Founding Fathers together in Philadelphia in 1776 to craft the Declaration of Independence. He assembled the Constitutional Convention in 1787, so the Founders could draft a Constitution to bind us together as "We the People."

God chose the right time for Ronald Reagan's election. On March 30, 1981, He arranged events to the split-second to prevent my father from being killed by an assassin's bullet. And He chose the right time for the Iron Curtain to fall. God places the actors on the grand stage of history. As they play their parts, the

drama of history unfolds.

In 1976, after Dad lost the nomination to Gerald Ford, we in the Reagan family thought his career was over, too. My sister Maureen took it the hardest of all. She was a weeping mess for days after the convention.

Commentary

Finally, Dad sat Maureen down and said, "Everything happens for a reason — even this loss. Whenever you get knocked down, you have to get up and keep going. When the time is right, you'll do what you were born to do."

My father seemed unfazed by defeat. We all thought it was the

end of the road. He saw defeat as a bump in the road. He seemed to know he'd be back to win it all in 1980. I don't think he ever doubted it.

Dad watched from the sidelines as Jimmy Carter took America to the brink of economic disintegration and military collapse. Then, when the country turned to my father for leadership, he pulled America back from that brink.

Now, on the 100th anniversary of my father's birthday, our economy is dangerously weakened once more. Our national debt is unsustainable. Trillions of dollars of Social Security and Medicare payouts are scheduled to hit us like a tsunami. Our na-

tional security is dangerously undermined by political correctness. Our government has nationalized banks, car companies and the health care system. We have more government and less freedom than at any other time in our history.

The decisions we make as a nation will determine whether or not we leave to our children the same American dream that was entrusted to us. As Abraham Lincoln said in 1862, "We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best hope of earth." Or as Ronald Reagan said in 1983, "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction."

The challenges we face today are startlingly similar to conditions at the dawning of the Reagan era. The good news is that, with the hindsight of history, we now know what works. We know that a free economy, lower tax rates, and a pro-business regulatory climate can bring an ailing economy roaring back to life. We know that a strong military and a coalition of staunch international allies can topple an evil empire.

Some say that America's best days are over, that we must learn to accept increasing scarcity and rising terrorism as facts of life. Ronald Reagan rejected the pessimist view. He told us that America's best days were ahead, that American ingenuity and free enterprise could defeat any enemy. Then he set out to prove it.

It's time to listen and learn from him again. It's time to prove him right once more. It's time for a new Reagan revolution.

Michael Reagan is the son of President Ronald Reagan and a political consultant. He is the founder and chairman of the Reagan Group and president of The Reagan Legacy Foundation (reagan.com). Portions of this column are adapted from his book "The New Reagan Revolution" (St. Martin's Press, 2011).

By Donald Lambro

Conversations with Reagan

He was always anxious to share conservatism

Centennial events here and around the world officially begin this week to commemorate Ronald Reagan's 100th birthday that will mark the 40th anniversary of his historic legacy.

Celebrations were planned from Prague to Washington, where the National Archives will display an array of Reagan's papers, including a copy of his "Evil Empire" address, with his handwritten changes, and his correspondence with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev that led to a historic U.S.-Soviet nuclear arms reduction treaty.

The theme of these centennial observances — which will mark his role in the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War — is "Ronald Reagan: Inspired freedom, changed the world."

These events, which will formally get under way on his Feb. 6 birth anniversary, have rekindled a lot of fond memories of my interviews with Reagan, as well as private conversations, before his presidency, on the campaign trail and in the Oval Office soon after his remarkable recovery from an assassination attempt that nearly took his life.

They began in the 1970s, after he had completed his two terms as California governor and was gearing up to challenge President Ford for the Republican nomination. I was a young Washington

reporter for United Press International at the time, and whenever he came to the capital to address some group, we would meet in his room at the Madison Hotel and talk policy and politics for more than an hour.

On his bed was his well-worn leather attache case, filled with lots of newspaper clips and legal pads on which he wrote his five-times-a-week radio commentaries on a broad range of issues, from nuclear-arms policies to farm price supports. While reporters saw him only as a little-known, right-wing former governor, Reagan was reaching millions of listeners across the American heartland on hundreds of radio stations, building an army of grass-roots supporters.

I had begun writing books about wasteful federal spending at this time, a favorite topic in his speeches, so we immediately connected with one another. Because of that comfort level, he was candid and forthcoming in his views with me, but always on his guard with liberal reporters looking only for a "gotcha" moment. Still, he understood that I was looking for a good story, and he always gave me one.

Reagan believed the Republican leadership — Ford in particular — was too namby-pamby in its views, too eager to get along and go along

with Democrats, rather than fight for party principles. Reagan believed the GOP needed to strike out with bolder strokes on foreign policy toward the Soviet Union, federal spending and tax policy. "No more pale pastels" was his motto.

I would always ask him if he had other interviews scheduled while he was in Washington, and, surprisingly, he would have none. The dominant national news

Reagan believed the GOP needed to strike out with bolder strokes on foreign policy toward the Soviet Union, federal spending and tax policy.

media dismissed him as someone who was too conservative to be electable. Notably, The Washington Post was just across the street from his hotel.

But the national news media establishment began to gain grudging new respect for Reagan's popular appeal when he suddenly began gaining on Ford in the race for delegates in the GOP's 1976 presidential primaries.

Reagan had stuck to his 11th

commandment against "speaking ill" of fellow Republicans. But when Ford began attacking him as a warmonger, Reagan exploded in anger during an interview with me on his campaign plane that June, calling the president "a cry-baby" whose attacks threatened his "spirit of unity," warning Ford that he was "playing with fire" if he continued the "phony war ads" against him that he said threatened to divide the party.

"This angered me. Because again, it seemed to be . . . pushing beyond a point in which you'd have to say, don't they realize that they could? . . . well, sometimes I think he'd rather win a convention than win an election."

Ford won the nomination in a squeaker, but lost to Jimmy Carter, and Reagan began at once to prepare for the 1980 election, which he won with ease.

Flash forward to the Oval Office on Nov. 16, 1981, when Reagan had fully recovered from an assassination attempt and was grappling with the worst recession since the 1930s. On the day of my interview with him, both his economic and fiscal program had been hit by a bombshell story from his own budget director David Stockman, who said the budget numbers didn't add up, the deficits were worse than expected, and his tax-

cut plan wasn't working.

But Reagan, who took Stockman to the proverbial "woodshed" for criticizing his policies in a series of meetings with a reporter for The Washington Post, still stuck by his brilliant budget chief and his recovery plan. Instead, he blamed the reporter for taking quotes "out of context" and inserting his own views as if they were Stockman's.

"I think the real cynicism and the doubts in the plan were written by the author and his interpretation," Reagan told me. The Post played my exclusive story across the top of the front page the next day.

When I walked into the Oval Office again on Oct. 6, 1983, Reagan was getting ready to run for a second term, despite a steady wave of pleas from critics and assorted talking heads that he was too old to serve another term.

But he dismissed such suggestions out of hand. "I haven't found that it is deleterious to my health so far," he said, despite his brush with death. "As a matter of fact," he added, "I've gained an inch and three-quarters around my chest in the exercise that I'm doing."

Pressing him further about his health, I asked if it was his "intention to fill out the entire four-year term." Reagan replied with characteristic wit, "Considering the alternative, yes."

Donald Lambro is a syndicated columnist and former chief political correspondent for The Washington Times



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1911 2011



How Hollywood shaped Gipper

Long movie career helped mold 'The Great Communicator'

By Christian Toto

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

His many political critics used Ronald Reagan's work in the fluffy 1950s comedy "Bedtime for Bonzo" to remind voters that he was just an actor — and a B-movie player, at that.

The president's days as an in-demand actor weren't merely a table read for the biggest role of his life. His Hollywood tenure helped shape his character, refine his communication skills and hone negotiating tactics that would serve him — and the country — well during his two-term presidency.

And purely on aesthetic grounds, it's simply wrong to say Reagan's film legacy was that of a glorified set-filler.

John Meroney, author of an upcoming book on Reagan's role in the Hollywood labor movement and battles with industry communists, argues that the public has been badly misinformed about the future president's time in Hollywood.

Mr. Meroney recalls a project that cried out for a Gregory Peck-type actor to play the lead. Industry titan Jack Warner told the film's producers they didn't need to go outside the Warner Bros. studio.

"We have Ronald Reagan. He's our Gregory Peck," said Mr. Warner, according to Mr. Meroney.

"He had a face and demeanor that was made to be an A-movie star. Audiences responded to him that way," said Mr. Meroney, who provides audio commentary for a new Warner Bros. DVD set "The Ronald Reagan Centennial Collection."

Bob Birchard, editor of the American Film Institute Catalog of Feature Films, said that while Reagan never attained major star status, he provided directors with a "solid leading man" who could break through at times to a top-quality performance.

Critics generally contend Reagan's best screen work came in the 1942 drama "Kings Row," in which he famously cried, "Where's the rest of me?" after a botched surgery. He also drew acclaim for the 1949 drama "The Hasty Heart," as well as his gridiron heroism in "Knut Rockne, All American" (1940). The latter earned him the nickname "The Gipper," one he dusted off during his political career to colorful effect.



He provided directors with a "solid leading man" who could break through at times to a top-quality performance.

reer to colorful effect.

What Reagan lacked, Mr. Birchard said, is a signature role like a Dirty Harry or John Rambo that could have helped define his career.

And "Bonzo," in which Reagan's co-star was a chimp, didn't qualify on any level.

That movie "made good political

fodder," Mr. Birchard said. "But it's a perfectly entertaining film, nothing to be ashamed of. It only became an issue because he was in the political arena."

Mark Joseph, producer of an upcoming biopic of the 40th president, said Reagan's days as a union leader as head of the Screen Actors

Guild gave him a crash course in conflict resolution. Those experiences taught him how to threaten, when to cajole and an "incredible sense of timing," Mr. Joseph says.

The president's sense of humor didn't hurt.

Reagan as president once told an aide prior to meeting Russian

leader Mikhail Gorbachev, "I dealt with the communists back in Hollywood. I've got this under control," Mr. Joseph recalled.

But having a skilled actor in the White House wasn't a plus at all times.

"The downside of this type of a presidency is you're only as good as the people around you," Mr. Joseph said. "When they fail you, you're more at risk than in a typical presidency... like with [the Iran-contra scandal]."

But being a familiar presence on both the big and small screen usually worked to his advantage, said Christopher C. Presley, director of professional development for the Actors Studio Drama School at Pace University.

"When you've seen an actor in so many roles, you feel like you have an intimacy with them," Mr. Presley said.

For Reagan, acting allowed him to convey the sense of self he wanted, the one that fit the needs of a given moment.

"A trained actor knows good acting is the honest expression of themselves within a given set of circumstances," Mr. Presley said. "A bad actor will play an idea or type, a stereotype, without even realizing it. A good actor will put themselves in the circumstance and let whatever's unique about them come out."

Seth Linden, a media coach and executive vice president of Dukas Public Relations, said Reagan's lengthy film career afforded him decades to sharpen his ability to connect with the masses. By the time he switched gears to politics, he knew precisely how to phrase what he wanted to say.

But great speechmaking isn't simply about proper enunciation. It involves knowing what not to say as well.

Former presidential speechwriter James Humes wrote for Reagan as well as Presidents Ford and Nixon. According to Mr. Linden, Mr. Humes once said when he submitted a speech to Nixon he would edit it for policy issues. When he did the same for Reagan, the man known by many as "the Great Communicator" edited it for style.

"He had the ear and knew how language affects people," Mr. Linden said. "And he understood what an audience needs to hear. It's why he resonated so well in his first term. The country needed a hopeful message."

The timbre of Reagan's voice and his natural charm did the rest.

"He was clearly born with tremendous talent," Mr. Linden said.

Alzheimer's: The long goodbye

Reagan opted to announce his affliction to raise awareness

By Cheryl Wetzstein

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The shaky, handwritten words of the Nov. 5, 1994, note got straight to the point.

"My fellow Americans, I have recently been told that I am one of the millions of Americans who will be afflicted with Alzheimer's disease," wrote Ronald Reagan, a simple admission of the illness the former president would live with for the last decade of his life.

"[W]e feel it is important to share it with you," he wrote, because when he and first lady Nancy Reagan spoke openly about their previous health problems, "we were able to raise public awareness."

Now, with an Alzheimer's diagnosis, "we hope this might promote greater awareness of this condition."

While other famous people had succumbed to this irreversible, progressive neurological disease — including such figures as actress Rita Hayworth, writer E.B. White and British Prime Minister Harold Wilson — the Reagans' admission took the prominence and public awareness of Alzheimer's to a new level.

Within a year, the first couple created the Ronald Reagan Research Institute with the Alzheimer's Association, the nation's oldest and largest advocacy, care and research organization for the disease.

For years, Mrs. Reagan and daughter Maureen Reagan, a former Alzheimer's Association board member who died of skin cancer in 2001, spoke about the disease.

As a presidential couple, there's no doubt the Reagans did great things "for the cause," said Eric Hall, founder and chief executive of Alzheimer's Foundation of America, another advocacy and educational nonprofit organization.



Former President Ronald Reagan celebrates with his wife, Nancy, at their Bel-Air home in Los Angeles on Feb. 6, 2000, Reagan's 89th birthday. Reagan died four years later of pneumonia, a common Alzheimer's disease complication.

"I think he was really the first to lay it out," said Mr. Hall, adding, "Mrs. Reagan's championing of the cause has played an enormous role" in putting a spotlight not just on the disease, but also the challenges of caregiving and the need for more research.

Since that 1994 announcement, there has been a "groundswell" of interest in Alzheimer's disease, he said, adding that the AFA, founded in 2002, now has 1,600 member organizations and 13 websites dealing with aspects of the disease.

Reagan's diagnosis even arguably accelerated the disease

INCREASINGLY DEADLY

Alzheimer's mortality figures have been on the rise, even as they fall for other diseases.

Change in mortality rates, 2000-2006

Alzheimer's:	+46.1 percent
Strokes:	-18.2 percent
Prostate cancer:	-8.7 percent
Breast cancer:	-2.6 percent
Heart disease:	-11.1 percent
HIV/AIDS:	-16.3 percent

Source: "2010 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures," Alzheimer's Association

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

being officially identified as a leading cause of death in America.

Prior to 1994, Alzheimer's was considered a debilitating disease, but not a fatal one. But in 1995, the

ALZHEIMER'S BY THE NUMBERS

Key facts and figures regarding Alzheimer's in the United States

5.3 million: The number of Americans who suffer from Alzheimer's

7th: Rank of Alzheimer's among the leading causes of death in 2006

\$172 billion: Annual health care costs related to Alzheimer's

10.9 million: Number of unpaid caregivers aiding Alzheimer's patients

13 percent: Percentage of Americans 65 or older with Alzheimer's

Source: "2010 Disease Facts and Figures," Alzheimer's Association

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

after taking office in 2001.

In 2009, the former first lady applauded President Obama's executive order reversing the Bush policy. "We owe it to ourselves and our children to do everything in our power to find cures for these diseases," Mrs. Reagan said at the time.

When Reagan, who was 83 when he made his fateful announcement in November 1994, he wrote that he was feeling "just fine." But his last public speech had already occurred earlier that year, and his last public photograph was taken a few years later, at his 89th birthday celebration.

He died June 5, 2004, aged 93, from pneumonia, a common complication of Alzheimer's.

Over those 10 years, Mrs. Reagan and other family members occasionally talked about how Alzheimer's stole away their beloved husband and father. "The Great Communicator," for instance, was strangely quiet at the dinner table or couldn't remember jokes he had told for years.

In a 1996 speech to the Republican National Convention, Mrs. Reagan poignantly talked about "the terrible pain and loneliness that must be endured, as each day brings another reminder of this very long goodbye."

A few years later, Mrs. Reagan sadly told ABC newscaster Diane Sawyer that "his days are pretty well-defined, I don't have to plan anything."

"Occasionally" the clouds part and her husband was like himself again, Mrs. Reagan told Ms. Sawyer.

"If it comes, it comes, and you are happy, grateful," she said. But while she felt he always could tell how much she loved him, he only "sometimes" knew who she was.

"You come to realize more than ever that we're all here for a certain space of time, and then it's going to be over. And you better make this count," Mrs. Reagan said.

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1911 2011



'Bipartisan spirit' part of legacy

Democrats recall Reagan's ability to reach across the aisle

BY SEAN LENGELL

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

Ronald Reagan, despite his status as the "Great Communicator," was a polarizing figure during his eight years in the White House. While successful at wooing millions of "Reagan Democrats," Reagan was vilified by liberals during his tenure at levels perhaps rivaled only by such Republican presidential figures as Richard M. Nixon and George W. Bush.

But the Reagan legend has proven malleable and open to shifting interpretations over time. In a curious twist, many Democrats have begun to evoke Reagan's "bipartisan spirit" in an attempt to prove they are above the partisan fray and draw a contrast with what they say is a more partisan spirit prevailing in today's GOP.

Sen. John Kerry, Massachusetts Democrat, recently chastised Republicans for failing to be more like Mr. Reagan, who he said "put politics aside" to work with Capitol Hill Democrats during his presidency.

Mr. Kerry especially lauded the California Republican for forging a working relationship with Democratic House Speaker Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill Jr. and former GOP Sen. Bob Dole in the early 1980s on an issue as difficult and politically risky as Social Security reform.

"They didn't capitulate, they compromised," said Mr. Kerry during a speech last month at the Center for American Progress. "They agreed not to let either party demagogue the issue against the incumbents who cast the tough votes in order to pass the bill."

Mr. Kerry added that, "We'd all be better off if some of these Republicans remember that their favorite person, Ronald Reagan, worked across the aisle to solve big problems."

President Obama also has tried to tap into — or at least understand — the Reagan mystique.

Mr. Obama took the Rea-



House Speaker Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill Jr. (right) leans forward to ask President Reagan a question during the Social Security bill-signing ceremony on the South Lawn of the White House on April 20, 1983, as various political figures look on.

gan biography "The Role of a Lifetime," by Lou Cannon, with him during his December vacation to Hawaii. The president also reportedly met with Reagan administration veterans David Gerger and Ken Duberstein in December.

"Americans generally outside of Washington ... tend to venerate people who were effective, good leaders. And President Reagan has come to be known as an effective, good leader," said Sean Gibbons, director of communications for Third Way, a centrist Washington think tank.

"He has sort of transcended party, and certain presidents have been able to do that. Lincoln is a guy who

transcended party, [Franklin] Roosevelt on some levels. ... John Kennedy has done it, and I think on some levels so has Reagan."

Democratic praise for Mr. Reagan has amped up in the

The public tends to remember presidents more for the accomplishments of their administration than for which party they belonged to.

wake of the party's "shellacking" — as Mr. Obama put it — during the Nov. 2 congressional elections, when Republicans made historic gains to recapture control of the House and increase their minority in the Senate.

As recently as President Obama's State of the Union speech, Democratic Sen.

Ben Nelson was invoking President Reagan's name and rhetoric as he urged lawmakers to reject the traditional partisan seating patterns in the House chamber for the presidential address.

a different context," Mr. Nelson said, "I hope colleagues will join me and say, 'Get rid of this aisle!'"

While Democrats still maintain a slight upper hand in the Senate and control the White House, the elections — aided by the surging conservative "tea party" movement — have emboldened Republicans to take the offensive against Mr. Obama and the Democratic agenda.

To counter the GOP wave, Democrats increasingly have co-opted their rival party's greatest modern-day hero in an attempt to deflect partisan attacks, said Norm Ornstein, a political expert with the American Enterprise Institute, a conserva-

tive-leaning Washington think tank.

But Democrats newfound appreciation for Mr. Reagan "doesn't comport with the reality we had during the times that he was here" in Washington, he said. Some of today's rhetoric is nostalgia for a time that never was.

"It was much more of a set of pitched battles, and for a lot of [Mr. Reagan's presidency] Democrats were thinking he was just this radical," Mr. Ornstein said.

"He did cut a lot of deals with Democrats, [and] he had, I think, an incredibly well-honed negotiating style," he added. "But this was not a period of sweetness and light where everybody was thrilled with each other and worked together in harmony."

A parallel example of this type of presidential "revisionist history," Mr. Ornstein said, is the recent fondness some conservatives have expressed for President Clinton, portraying him as a centrist always eager to work with Republicans — at least after the GOP congressional takeover of 1994.

"That's a complete denial of the reality," Mr. Ornstein said. "A lot of [Republicans] investigated [Mr. Clinton] every minute, they voted against his major legislation the years they were in power. ... They impeached him."

"There's a reality check that's needed at both fronts."

Few if any Americans will forget that Mr. Reagan was a Republican, Mr. Gibbons said. But over time, the public tends to remember presidents more for the accomplishments of their administration than for which party they belonged to.

"That's not to say that everybody agreed with every principle the guy had. ... But you can certainly say he was extraordinarily gifted at communicating with the American people, and was appreciated for that," he said.

"He didn't seem to be the president of half the Americans who voted for him. I always got the impression he strove to be a president for everybody."

Commander in chief of rearming

Rebuilding the military after Vietnam was a Reagan presidency hallmark

BY ROWAN SCARBOROUGH

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

When Ronald Reagan took office in 1981, he inherited a broken all-volunteer military force, still reeling from the traumas of the post-Vietnam era. When he left the White House eight years later, he left the nation a well-equipped, highly professional military on which the country has depended for three decades.

Reagan — whose presidency ushered in a \$2 trillion buildup that bought more manpower, tanks, jet bombers and a nearly 600-ship Navy — also elevated the theoretical idea of missile defense into actual Pentagon policy.

"President Reagan recognized the unique and special role that America's men and women in uniform played in keeping us free and strong," said former Rep. Pete Hoekstra, a Michigan Republican who headed the House Intelligence Committee. "He loved them, and it showed."

The U.S. today maintains active anti-missile batteries in Alaska, guarding against the possibility of a North Korean attack, because Reagan braved fierce opposition to spend the money on groundbreaking technology. And Europe this year set the construction of a defensive missile umbrella for the continent as a priority because Reagan made such defense a mainstream national security idea.

It was that missile defense program, coupled with his decision to modernize the country's nuclear arsenal,

that forced Soviet leaders to pursue economic and political reforms in a futile bid to keep pace. That, in turn, led to the collapse of the Soviet empire in Europe in 1989, Reagan supporters say.

Frank Gaffney was a hard-line cold warrior bent on confronting and undermining the Soviet Union when he arrived at the Pentagon in Reagan's first term. Mr. Gaffney had worked for Democratic Sen. Henry M. "Scoop" Jackson, an ardent

"Reagan gave America's military new equipment, better pay and a sense of worth that had been lacking for the last 20 years."

— Duncan Hunter

anti-Soviet, and then did staff work for the Senate Armed Services Committee. He knew firsthand that Washington's neglect during the post-Vietnam era had led to what the Army's own chief of staff termed in 1980 the "hollow Army."

"The hollowing out of our military was absolutely palpable," recalled Mr. Gaffney, who now runs the Washington-based Center for National Security Policy. "And Reagan saw that and he knew it needed to be fixed. And he did it."

Mr. Gaffney said the Pentagon's secretary, led by Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, became a "critical component" in a complex strategy to defeat Moscow, using economic as well as military weapons.

"Reagan did three things for the armed forces of the United States that were of incalculable importance," he said. "One is, he restored



Flanked by physicist Edward Teller (left) and Lt. Gen. James A. Abrahamson, director of the Strategic Defense Initiative, President Reagan arrives to address a conference marking the first five years of the SDI program on March 14, 1988, in Washington.

them to a position of respect and admiration in the America society. Second, he rebuilt their military capabilities specifically with respect to nuclear deterrence and power projection.

"And third, his investment ... built the forces that we still to this day largely rely upon. It wasn't just the folks serving in the 1980s being re-equipped with modern and highly effective weapons that was tremendously important in that moment, but [Reagan's military budgets] become even more impor-

tant because we have consistently failed to follow up on those kinds of investments. We're living off the legacy of Ronald Reagan's commitment to our military."

Along the way, Reagan coined Cold War phrases that irked Moscow — words such as "peace through strength," "the evil empire" and, to the British Parliament in 1982, "the ash heap of history" to describe — accurately, it turned out — the Soviet Union's final resting place.

In his book, "Ronald Reagan: How an Ordinary Man

Became an Extraordinary Leader," Dinesh D'Souza wrote of the president's subtle understanding of his adversary's vulnerabilities.

"This California lightweight turned out to have as deep an understanding of Communism as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn," he wrote. "This rank amateur developed a complex, often counter-intuitive strategy for dealing with the Soviet Union which hardly anyone on his staff fully endorsed or even understood. Through a combination of vision, tenac-

ity, patience and improvisational skill, he produced what Henry Kissinger terms 'the most stunning diplomatic feat of the modern era.' Or as Margaret Thatcher put it, 'Ronald Reagan won the Cold War without firing a shot.'"

Reagan's 1980 election also ushered in scores of young conservative congressmen who, like Reagan, believed the military was a force for good.

One of them was Duncan Hunter of San Diego, an Army Vietnam War combat veteran who would go on to head the House Armed Services Committee.

Now retired from Congress, Mr. Hunter recalls that morale and pay were so low at the time Reagan came to office that the Navy was losing 1,000 petty officers a month "because they weren't able to support their families." More than 50 percent of the nation's tactical aircraft were not fully mission-capable for lack of spare parts.

"Reagan gave America's military new equipment, better pay and a sense of worth that had been lacking for the last 20 years," Mr. Hunter said. "He rebuilt national defense. We started with a 12.6 percent pay raise. There was a sense of value that Ronald Reagan, in his unique fashion, embedded in the hearts of everyone who wore the uniform. Simply, Americans wanted to serve under Reagan."

Today, Reagan's legacy includes a massive projection of power — the carrier USS Ronald Reagan launched in 2001, three years before his death. Mr. Hunter said he had heard that sailors volunteer specifically to serve on the Reagan in the late president's honor.

1911 2011



Library update grabs attention and holds it

You-are-there sense keeps visits lively



Docents at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum in Simi Valley, Calif., try out a new multimedia exhibit, part of a \$15 million renovation and enlargement.



John Heubusch, executive director of the Ronald Reagan Foundation, shows off a new bronze statue of President Reagan and first lady Nancy Reagan.

By VALERIE RICHARDSON
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

There's nothing quite like the thought of visiting a presidential library to make the average American stifle a yawn and reach for the remote. As it turns out, the people behind the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum understand this.

That's why they never stop loading the library with goodies. Not interested in poring through the former president's official documents? Then how about getting up close and personal with a piece of the Berlin Wall? Or taking a tour of Air Force One — not a replica, but the real thing — big as life and on display in an enormous glass-walled atrium?

Attractions such as these have made the Reagan library the best-attended of the 13 presidential libraries, even though its location, atop a hill in the Ventura County suburbs almost an hour north of Los Angeles, isn't terribly convenient to anyone except local residents of Simi Valley.

Fortunately, a history-making presidency provides a lot of attention-grabbing raw material for a historical site.

"We're realistic. We're in Simi Valley," said Melissa Giller, spokeswoman for the Ronald Reagan Foundation, which runs the museum and library. "We're just outside Los Angeles, we're just outside Santa Barbara. You really have to make a choice to drive here. If you do drive here, we want to make it worth your while."

Deciding whether to make that drive just became a little easier. On Monday, in honor of the Reagan Centennial Celebration, organizers will open the newly renovated museum to the public for the first time. And while the old museum wasn't bad, certainly no more ennuui-inducing than any other presidential exhibit, the 2.0 version is a show-stopper.

For one, the revamped facility is huge: The designers spent \$15 million on renovations that added 26,400 square feet to the previous facility. This is no quickie tour; to experience fully the entire museum would take at least three hours. That's asking a lot of the average U.S. attention span, especially when it comes to the subject of history, but even those who flunked high school civics may find it hard to tear themselves away from the Reagan museum's action-packed story of the late 20th century.

This museum doesn't just display stuff: It grabs the visitor by the collar and pulls him inside, throws him in the middle of the action, demands his participation, lays him low with despair and then lifts him up, finally sending him back out into the world, exhausted but exultant.

And those are just the Mondale voters! Let's just say it would be difficult for even the most hardened progressive to emerge from the museum unmoved, and perhaps just a bit more inclined to entertain the possibility that Ronald Reagan may not have been a total disaster as president after all.

The museum is also a technological innovator. It's the first to employ the GuideCam, an Apple collaboration that looks like an iPhone but enables patrons to take photos and shoot video during their tour. When they're finished, they return the GuideCam, and before they've arrived home, their photos and



Among displays at the museum are a 1983 Cadillac presidential parade limousine that joined Reagan's motorcade in 1984, the real Air Force One and a bronze bust featuring his famous smile.

video have been sent to their e-mail addresses.

The museum's patent on the device is pending, but the GuideCam is just one way of compelling the attention of museum viewers. Every one of the museum's 18 galleries contains something to induce patrons to stop watching and start doing.

Kids can climb through the holes in a replica of the Berlin Wall and read messages about life behind the

Iron Curtain on the other side. Movie buffs can go before the cameras and appear in a scene from "Knut Rockne: All-American" with Ronald Reagan the matinee idol. Anyone who wants to experience the reality of living in America during Reagan's tenure as president can play a touch-screen version of the game of Life, complete with information about changing stock prices, tax rates and government regulations.

It may be one of the rare museums not specifically designed for adolescents that could successfully hold their attention for more than a few minutes. John Heubusch, the Ronald Reagan Foundation's executive director, said the idea was to make the museum as interactive as possible, with an eye toward engaging the younger generation.

"The way people are educated today isn't just by looking at artifacts. You want to



Employees Kate Suhosky (left) and Jen Hampson proofread and take inventory for exhibits in the newly renovated museum, which has gained an additional 26,400 square feet plus games, films and interactive and touch-screen displays.

tell the story, make it in 3-D, put them in the middle of it," said Mr. Heubusch. "We paid a phenomenal amount of attention to how we could use new technology and museum science to educate new Americans who might not have been alive when Reagan was president."

Then there are the films. Reagan knew a thing or two about playing to the camera, and the museum is generous in its use of his television and movie clips, along with films produced especially for the exhibit. It opens with a "movie trailer" that sets up the visit, takes a long pause toward the middle with a documentary

about the history of communism (during which viewers sit on faux ammunition crates) and concludes with a cathartic "Greatest Hits" version of Reagan's life.

Two aspects of the exhibit in particular are likely to generate comment. The first is the museum's treatment of the Iran-contra affair, considered the low point of the Reagan presidency. The museum devotes one 10-foot wall panel to a straightforward description of the events, including Reagan's televised explanation, which is more than the previous exhibit did.

"They say we didn't say enough about Iran-contra

before, so now we have this," Mr. Heubusch said.

The second is the museum's depiction of the 1981 assassination attempt. Visitors walk through the replicated doors of the Washington Hilton and find themselves on the sidewalk watching life-sized film footage of Mr. Reagan being shot from just a few feet away.

The effect is riveting — and disquieting. Clearly, museum designers want patrons to feel as though they are in the middle of the action, but when does being up close and personal step over the line into voyeurism and tastelessness?

Mr. Heubusch defended

the exhibit design.

"It's history. It's a defining moment of the Reagan presidency," Mr. Heubusch said. "It's not possible to tell his story without it, so we try to tell it in the most compelling way possible."

The museum also pulls no punches when it comes to fingering the bad guys. The section on the Cold War and international relations features a rogues' gallery of out-sized portraits, including Fidel Castro of Cuba, Yuri Andropov of the Soviet Union, Mao Zedong of China, Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua and Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini of Iran.

Politically correct? Hardly. This is the Reagan museum, not the Smithsonian. At a time when traditional U.S. museums are loath to display anything that hints of American exceptionalism, presidential museums may become the go-to destinations for Americans looking for a blast of patriotism to go with their history. That's a void the Reagan museum fills with aplomb.

After the addition of Air Force One in 2005, museum attendance shot up to 500,000 visitors per year. It's leveled off to about 375,000, but organizers expect the renovated museum to bring in an additional 100,000, maybe more. It's not hard to imagine families starting their vacations at Disneyland or Universal Studios, then tacking on a day for an entertaining yet educational afternoon at the Reagan Presidential Library and Museum.

It might even be worth the drive to Simi Valley.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GARRETT CHEEN/SPECIAL TO THE WASHINGTON TIMES



Ronald Reagan
coined the phrase
“Death Tax.”
His Hollywood friend,
Pat Boone and
Jim Martin took
the phrase to
Capitol Hill to help
end the “Widow’s” Tax.

When he argued on behalf of a provision in the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981 (Kemp-Roth), President Ronald Reagan outlined things in the bill that would benefit working women in America. He said: “For women we’ve provided several forms of tax relief--relief, by the way, which should have been passed long ago. We’ve greatly reduced the marriage tax penalty and we’ve almost doubled the child care tax credit...And we eliminated the widow’s tax--the estate taxes levied on a surviving spouse...This will help women who were hard-working partners on family farms and small businesses. There is no moral grounds for robbing widows and orphans, but the Death Tax does just that.”

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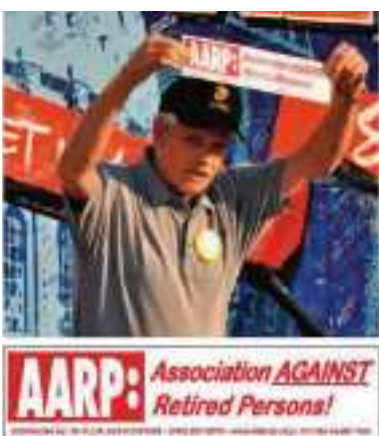
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