Barack H. Obama is the 44th President of the United States.

His story is the American story — values from the heartland, a middle-class upbringing in a strong family, hard work and education as the means of getting ahead, and the conviction that a life so blessed should be lived in service to others.

With a father from Kenya and a mother from Kansas, President Obama was born in Hawaii on August 4, 1961. He was raised with help from his grandfather, who served in Patton's army, and his grandmother, who worked her way up from the secretarial pool to middle management at a bank.

After working his way through college with the help of scholarships and student loans, President Obama moved to Chicago, where he worked with a group of churches to help rebuild communities devastated by the closure of local steel plants.

He went on to attend law school, where he became the first African—American president of the Harvard Law Review. Upon graduation, he returned to Chicago to help lead a voter registration drive, teach constitutional law at the University of Chicago, and remain active in his community.

President Obama's years of public service are based around his unwavering belief in the ability to unite people around a politics of purpose. In the Illinois State Senate, he passed the first major ethics reform in 25 years, cut taxes for working families, and expanded health care for children and their parents. As a United States Senator, he reached across the aisle to pass groundbreaking lobbying reform, lock up the world's most dangerous weapons, and bring transparency to government by putting federal spending online.

He was elected the 44th President of the United States on November 4, 2008, and sworn in on January 20, 2009. He and his wife, Michelle, are the proud parents of two daughters, Malia, 14, and Sasha, 11.

The airborne terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and the thwarted flight against the White House or Capitol on September 11, 2001, in which nearly 3,000 Americans were killed, transformed George W. Bush into a wartime president. The attacks put on hold many of Bush’s hopes and plans, and Bush’s father, George Bush, the 41st president, declared that his son “faced the greatest challenge of any president since Abraham Lincoln.”

In response, Bush formed a new cabinet-level Department of Homeland Security, sent American forces into Afghanistan to break up the Taliban, a movement under Osama bin Laden that trained financed and exported terrorist teams. The Taliban was successfully disrupted but Bin Laden was not captured and was still on the loose as Bush began his second term. Following the attacks, the president also recast the nation’s intelligence gathering and analysis services, and ordered reform of the military forces to meet the new enemy. At the same time he delivered major tax cuts which had been a campaign pledge. His most controversial act was the invasion of Iraq on the belief that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein posed a grave threat to the United States. Saddam was captured, but the disruption of Iraq and the killing of American servicemen and friendly Iraqis by insurgents became the challenge of Bush’s government as he began his second term. President Bush pledged during his 2005 State of the Union Address that the United States would help the Iraqi people establish a fully democratic government because the victory of freedom in Iraq would strengthen a new ally in the war on terror, bring hope to a troubled region, and lift a threat from the lives of future generations.

Bush was born in New Haven, Connecticut while his father was attending Yale University after service in World War II. The family moved to Midland, Texas, where the senior Bush entered the oil exploration business. The son spent formative years there, attended Midland public schools, and formed friendships that stayed with him into the White House. Bush graduated from Yale, received a business degree from Harvard, and then returned to Midland where he too got into the oil business. In Midland he met and married Laura Welch, a teacher and librarian. They had twin daughters, Jenna and Barbara, now out of college and pursuing careers.

When George W. Bush, at the age of 54, became the 43rd president of the United States, it was only the second time in American history that a president’s son went on to the White House. John Quincy Adams, elected the sixth president in 1824, was the son of John Adams, the second president. While John Adams had groomed his son to be president, George Bush, the 41st president, insisted he was surprised when the eldest of his six children became interested in politics, became governor of Texas, and then went on to the White House.

During the early part of the 2000 campaign for the White House, Bush enjoyed a double-digit lead in the polls over his opponent Vice President Al Gore Jr. But the gap closed as the election approached and though Gore finally won the popular vote by 543,895 votes, victory or loss of the presidency hinged on Florida’s electoral votes. That struggle through recounts and lawsuits worked its way to the Supreme Court. In the end Bush won the electoral count 271 to 266. His new administration was focused on “compassionate conservatism,” which embraced excellence in education, tax relief and volunteerism among faith-based and community organizations.

Bush was challenged in his re-election bid in 2004 by Massachusetts Democratic Senator John Kerry. The election was a good contest, but Bush’s contention that the invasion of Iraq had made the world more secure against terrorism won the national political debate. Bush was re-elected with 51 percent to 48 percent.

On the inaugural stand, George W. Bush set the theme for his second term: “At this second gathering, our duties are defined not by the words I use, but by the history we have seen together. For half a century, America defended our own freedom by standing watch on distant borders. After the shipwreck of communism came years of relative quiet- and then there came a day of fire. There is only one force of history that can break the reign of hatred and resentment, and expose the pretensions of tyrants, and reward the hopes of the decent and tolerant, and that is the force of human freedom – tested but not weary… we are ready for the greatest achievements in the history of freedom.”

During the administration of William Jefferson Clinton, the U.S. enjoyed more peace and economic well being than at any time in its history. He was the first Democratic president since Franklin D. Roosevelt to win a second term. He could point to the lowest unemployment rate in modern times, the lowest inflation in 30 years, the highest home ownership in the country's history, dropping crime rates in many places, and reduced welfare rolls. He proposed the first balanced budget in decades and achieved a budget surplus. As part of a plan to celebrate the millennium in 2000, Clinton called for a great national initiative to end racial discrimination.

After the failure in his second year of a huge program of health care reform, Clinton shifted emphasis, declaring "the era of big government is over." He sought legislation to upgrade education, to protect jobs of parents who must care for sick children, to restrict handgun sales, and to strengthen environmental rules.

President Clinton was born William Jefferson Blythe III on August 19, 1946, in Hope, Arkansas, three months after his father died in a traffic accident. When he was four years old, his mother wed Roger Clinton, of Hot Springs, Arkansas. In high school, he took the family name.

He excelled as a student and as a saxophone player and once considered becoming a professional musician. As a delegate to Boys Nation while in high school, he met President John Kennedy in the White House Rose Garden. The encounter led him to enter a life of public service.

Clinton was graduated from Georgetown University and in 1968 won a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford University. He received a law degree from Yale University in 1973, and entered politics in Arkansas.

He was defeated in his campaign for Congress in Arkansas's Third District in 1974. The next year he married Hillary Rodham, a graduate of Wellesley College and Yale Law School. In 1980, Chelsea, their only child, was born.

Clinton was elected Arkansas Attorney General in 1976, and won the governorship in 1978. After losing a bid for a second term, he regained the office four years later, and served until he defeated incumbent George Bush and third party candidate Ross Perot in the 1992 presidential race.

Clinton and his running mate, Tennessee's Senator Albert Gore Jr., then 44, represented a new generation in American political leadership. For the first time in 12 years both the White House and Congress were held by the same party. But that political edge was brief; the Republicans won both houses of Congress in 1994.

In 1998, as a result of issues surrounding personal indiscretions with a young woman White House intern, Clinton was the second U.S. president to be impeached by the House of Representatives. He was tried in the Senate and found not guilty of the charges brought against him. He apologized to the nation for his actions and continued to have unprecedented popular approval ratings for his job as president.

In the world, he successfully dispatched peace keeping forces to war-torn Bosnia and bombed Iraq when Saddam Hussein stopped United Nations inspections for evidence of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. He became a global proponent for an expanded NATO, more open international trade, and a worldwide campaign against drug trafficking. He drew huge crowds when he traveled through South America, Europe, Russia, Africa, and China, advocating U.S. style freedom.

George Bush brought to the White House a dedication to traditional American values and a determination to direct them toward making the United States "a kinder and gentler nation." In his Inaugural Address he pledged in "a moment rich with promise" to use American strength as "a force for good."

Coming from a family with a tradition of public service, George Herbert Walker Bush felt the responsibility to make his contribution both in time of war and in peace. Born in Milton, Massachusetts, on June 12, 1924, he became a student leader at Phillips Academy in Andover. On his 18th birthday he enlisted in the armed forces. The youngest pilot in the Navy when he received his wings, he flew 58 combat missions during World War II. On one mission over the Pacific as a torpedo bomber pilot he was shot down by Japanese antiaircraft fire and was rescued from the water by a U. S. submarine. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for bravery in action.

Bush next turned his energies toward completing his education and raising a family. In January 1945 he married Barbara Pierce. They had six children-- George, Robin (who died as a child), John (known as Jeb), Neil, Marvin, and Dorothy.

At Yale University he excelled both in sports and in his studies; he was captain of the baseball team and a member of Phi Beta Kappa. After graduation Bush embarked on a career in the oil industry of West Texas.

Like his father, Prescott Bush, who was elected a Senator from Connecticut in 1952, George became interested in public service and politics. He served two terms as a Representative to Congress from Texas. Twice he ran unsuccessfully for the Senate. Then he was appointed to a series of high-level positions: Ambassador to the United Nations, Chairman of the Republican National Committee, Chief of the U. S. Liaison Office in the People's Republic of China, and Director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

In 1980 Bush campaigned for the Republican nomination for President. He lost, but was chosen as a running mate by Ronald Reagan. As Vice President, Bush had responsibility in several domestic areas, including Federal deregulation and anti-drug programs, and visited scores of foreign countries. In 1988 Bush won the Republican nomination for President and, with Senator Dan Quayle of Indiana as his running mate, he defeated Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis in the general election.

Bush faced a dramatically changing world, as the Cold War ended after 40 bitter years, the Communist empire broke up, and the Berlin Wall fell. The Soviet Union ceased to exist; and reformist President Mikhail Gorbachev, whom Bush had supported, resigned. While Bush hailed the march of democracy, he insisted on restraint in U. S. policy toward the group of new nations.

In other areas of foreign policy, President Bush sent American troops into Panama to overthrow the corrupt regime of General Manuel Noriega, who was threatening the security of the canal and the Americans living there. Noriega was brought to the United States for trial as a drug trafficker.

Bush's greatest test came when Iraqi President Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, then threatened to move into Saudi Arabia. Vowing to free Kuwait, Bush rallied the United Nations, the U. S. people, and Congress and sent 425,000 American troops. They were joined by 118,000 troops from allied nations. After weeks of air and missile bombardment, the 100-hour land battle dubbed Desert Storm routed Iraq's million-man army.

Despite unprecedented popularity from this military and diplomatic triumph, Bush was unable to withstand discontent at home from a faltering economy, rising violence in inner cities, and continued high deficit spending. In 1992 he lost his bid for reelection to Democrat William Clinton.

At the end of his two terms in office, Ronald Reagan viewed with satisfaction the achievements of his innovative program known as the Reagan Revolution, which aimed to reinvigorate the American people and reduce their reliance upon Government. He felt he had fulfilled his campaign pledge of 1980 to restore "the great, confident roar of American progress and growth and optimism."

On February 6, 1911, Ronald Wilson Reagan was born to Nelle and John Reagan in Tampico, Illinois. He attended high school in nearby Dixon and then worked his way through Eureka College. There, he studied economics and sociology, played on the football team, and acted in school plays. Upon graduation, he became a radio sports announcer. A screen test in 1937 won him a contract in Hollywood. During the next two decades he appeared in 53 films.

From his first marriage to actress Jane Wyman, he had two children, Maureen and Michael. Maureen passed away in 2001. In 1952 he married Nancy Davis, who was also an actress, and they had two children, Patricia Ann and Ronald Prescott.

As president of the Screen Actors Guild, Reagan became embroiled in disputes over the issue of Communism in the film industry; his political views shifted from liberal to conservative. He toured the country as a television host, becoming a spokesman for conservatism. In 1966 he was elected Governor of California by a margin of a million votes; he was re-elected in 1970.

Ronald Reagan won the Republican Presidential nomination in 1980 and chose as his running mate former Texas Congressman and United Nations Ambassador George Bush. Voters troubled by inflation and by the year-long confinement of Americans in Iran swept the Republican ticket into office. Reagan won 489 electoral votes to 49 for President Jimmy Carter.

On January 20, 1981, Reagan took office. Only 69 days later he was shot by a would-be assassin, but quickly recovered and returned to duty. His grace and wit during the dangerous incident caused his popularity to soar.

Dealing skillfully with Congress, Reagan obtained legislation to stimulate economic growth, curb inflation, increase employment, and strengthen national defense. He embarked upon a course of cutting taxes and Government expenditures, refusing to deviate from it when the strengthening of defense forces led to a large deficit.

A renewal of national self-confidence by 1984 helped Reagan and Bush win a second term with an unprecedented number of electoral votes. Their victory turned away Democratic challengers Walter F. Mondale and Geraldine Ferraro.

In 1986 Reagan obtained an overhaul of the income tax code, which eliminated many deductions and exempted millions of people with low incomes. At the end of his administration, the Nation was enjoying its longest recorded period of peacetime prosperity without recession or depression.

In foreign policy, Reagan sought to achieve "peace through strength." During his two terms he increased defense spending 35 percent, but sought to improve relations with the Soviet Union. In dramatic meetings with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, he negotiated a treaty that would eliminate intermediate-range nuclear missiles. Reagan declared war against international terrorism, sending American bombers against Libya after evidence came out that Libya was involved in an attack on American soldiers in a West Berlin nightclub.

By ordering naval escorts in the Persian Gulf, he maintained the free flow of oil during the Iran-Iraq war. In keeping with the Reagan Doctrine, he gave support to anti-Communist insurgencies in Central America, Asia, and Africa.

Overall, the Reagan years saw a restoration of prosperity, and the goal of peace through strength seemed to be within grasp.

Jimmy Carter aspired to make Government "competent and compassionate," responsive to the American people and their expectations. His achievements were notable, but in an era of rising energy costs, mounting inflation, and continuing tensions, it was impossible for his administration to meet these high expectations.

Carter, who has rarely used his full name--James Earl Carter, Jr.--was born October 1, 1924, in Plains, Georgia. Peanut farming, talk of politics, and devotion to the Baptist faith were mainstays of his upbringing. Upon graduation in 1946 from the Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, Carter married Rosalynn Smith. The Carters have three sons, John William (Jack), James Earl III (Chip), Donnel Jeffrey (Jeff), and a daughter, Amy Lynn.

After seven years' service as a naval officer, Carter returned to Plains. In 1962 he entered state politics, and eight years later he was elected Governor of Georgia. Among the new young southern governors, he attracted attention by emphasizing ecology, efficiency in government, and the removal of racial barriers.

Carter announced his candidacy for President in December 1974 and began a two-year campaign that gradually gained momentum. At the Democratic Convention, he was nominated on the first ballot. He chose Senator Walter F. Mondale of Minnesota as his running mate. Carter campaigned hard against President Gerald R. Ford, debating with him three times. Carter won by 297 electoral votes to 241 for Ford.

Carter worked hard to combat the continuing economic woes of inflation and unemployment. By the end of his administration, he could claim an increase of nearly eight million jobs and a decrease in the budget deficit, measured in percentage of the gross national product. Unfortunately, inflation and interest rates were at near record highs, and efforts to reduce them caused a short recession.

Carter could point to a number of achievements in domestic affairs. He dealt with the energy shortage by establishing a national energy policy and by decontrolling domestic petroleum prices to stimulate production. He prompted Government efficiency through civil service reform and proceeded with deregulation of the trucking and airline industries. He sought to improve the environment. His expansion of the national park system included protection of 103 million acres of Alaskan lands. To increase human and social services, he created the Department of Education, bolstered the Social Security system, and appointed record numbers of women, blacks, and Hispanics to Government jobs.

In foreign affairs, Carter set his own style. His championing of human rights was coldly received by the Soviet Union and some other nations. In the Middle East, through the Camp David agreement of 1978, he helped bring amity between Egypt and Israel. He succeeded in obtaining ratification of the Panama Canal treaties. Building upon the work of predecessors, he established full diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China and completed negotiation of the SALT II nuclear limitation treaty with the Soviet Union.

There were serious setbacks, however. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan caused the suspension of plans for ratification of the SALT II pact. The seizure as hostages of the U. S. embassy staff in Iran dominated the news during the last 14 months of the administration. The consequences of Iran's holding Americans captive, together with continuing inflation at home, contributed to Carter's defeat in 1980. Even then, he continued the difficult negotiations over the hostages. Iran finally released the 52 Americans the same day Carter left office.

At 2:30 on the morning of August 3, 1923, while visiting in Vermont, Calvin Coolidge received word that he was President. By the light of a kerosene lamp, his father, who was a notary public, administered the oath of office as Coolidge placed his hand on the family Bible.

Coolidge was "distinguished for character more than for heroic achievement," wrote a Democratic admirer, Alfred E. Smith. "His great task was to restore the dignity and prestige of the Presidency when it had reached the lowest ebb in our history ... in a time of extravagance and waste...."

Born in Plymouth, Vermont, on July 4, 1872, Coolidge was the son of a village storekeeper. He was graduated from Amherst College with honors, and entered law and politics in Northampton, Massachusetts. Slowly, methodically, he went up the political ladder from councilman in Northampton to Governor of Massachusetts, as a Republican. En route he became thoroughly conservative.

As President, Coolidge demonstrated his determination to preserve the old moral and economic precepts amid the material prosperity which many Americans were enjoying. He refused to use Federal economic power to check the growing boom or to ameliorate the depressed condition of agriculture and certain industries. His first message to Congress in December 1923 called for isolation in foreign policy, and for tax cuts, economy, and limited aid to farmers.

He rapidly became popular. In 1924, as the beneficiary of what was becoming known as "Coolidge prosperity," he polled more than 54 percent of the popular vote.

In his Inaugural he asserted that the country had achieved "a state of contentment seldom before seen," and pledged himself to maintain the status quo. In subsequent years he twice vetoed farm relief bills, and killed a plan to produce cheap Federal electric power on the Tennessee River.

The political genius of President Coolidge, Walter Lippmann pointed out in 1926, was his talent for effectively doing nothing: "This active inactivity suits the mood and certain of the needs of the country admirably. It suits all the business interests which want to be let alone.... And it suits all those who have become convinced that government in this country has become dangerously complicated and top-heavy...."

Coolidge was both the most negative and remote of Presidents, and the most accessible. He once explained to Bernard Baruch why he often sat silently through interviews: "Well, Baruch, many times I say only 'yes' or 'no' to people. Even that is too much. It winds them up for twenty minutes more."

But no President was kinder in permitting himself to be photographed in Indian war bonnets or cowboy dress, and in greeting a variety of delegations to the White House.

Both his dry Yankee wit and his frugality with words became legendary. His wife, Grace Goodhue Coolidge, recounted that a young woman sitting next to Coolidge at a dinner party confided to him she had bet she could get at least three words of conversation from him. Without looking at her he quietly retorted, "You lose." And in 1928, while vacationing in the Black Hills of South Dakota, he issued the most famous of his laconic statements, "I do not choose to run for President in 1928."

By the time the disaster of the Great Depression hit the country, Coolidge was in retirement. Before his death in January 1933, he confided to an old friend, ". . . I feel I no longer fit in with these times."

When Gerald R. Ford took the oath of office on August 9, 1974, he declared, "I assume the Presidency under extraordinary circumstances.... This is an hour of history that troubles our minds and hurts our hearts."

It was indeed an unprecedented time. He had been the first Vice President chosen under the terms of the Twenty-fifth Amendment and, in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal, was succeeding the first President ever to resign.

Ford was confronted with almost insuperable tasks. There were the challenges of mastering inflation, reviving a depressed economy, solving chronic energy shortages, and trying to ensure world peace.

The President acted to curb the trend toward Government intervention and spending as a means of solving the problems of American society and the economy. In the long run, he believed, this shift would bring a better life for all Americans.

Ford's reputation for integrity and openness had made him popular during his 25 years in Congress. From 1965 to 1973, he was House Minority Leader. Born in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1913, he grew up in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He starred on the University of Michigan football team, then went to Yale, where he served as assistant coach while earning his law degree. During World War II he attained the rank of lieutenant commander in the Navy. After the war he returned to Grand Rapids, where he began the practice of law, and entered Republican politics. A few weeks before his election to Congress in 1948, he married Elizabeth Bloomer. They have four children: Michael, John, Steven, and Susan.

As President, Ford tried to calm earlier controversies by granting former President Nixon a full pardon. His nominee for Vice President, former Governor Nelson Rockefeller of New York, was the second person to fill that office by appointment. Gradually, Ford selected a cabinet of his own.

Ford established his policies during his first year in office, despite opposition from a heavily Democratic Congress. His first goal was to curb inflation. Then, when recession became the Nation's most serious domestic problem, he shifted to measures aimed at stimulating the economy. But, still fearing inflation, Ford vetoed a number of non-military appropriations bills that would have further increased the already heavy budgetary deficit. During his first 14 months as President he vetoed 39 measures. His vetoes were usually sustained.

Ford continued as he had in his Congressional days to view himself as "a moderate in domestic affairs, a conservative in fiscal affairs, and a dyed-in-the-wool internationalist in foreign affairs." A major goal was to help business operate more freely by reducing taxes upon it and easing the controls exercised by regulatory agencies. "We...declared our independence 200 years ago, and we are not about to lose it now to paper shufflers and computers," he said.

In foreign affairs Ford acted vigorously to maintain U. S. power and prestige after the collapse of Cambodia and South Viet Nam. Preventing a new war in the Middle East remained a major objective; by providing aid to both Israel and Egypt, the Ford Administration helped persuade the two countries to accept an interim truce agreement. Detente with the Soviet Union continued. President Ford and Soviet leader Leonid I. Brezhnev set new limitations upon nuclear weapons.

President Ford won the Republican nomination for the Presidency in 1976, but lost the election to his Democratic opponent, former Governor Jimmy Carter of Georgia.

On Inauguration Day, President Carter began his speech: "For myself and for our Nation, I want to thank my predecessor for all he has done to heal our land." A grateful people concurred.

Before his nomination, Warren G. Harding declared, "America's present need is not heroics, but healing; not nostrums, but normalcy; not revolution, but restoration; not agitation, but adjustment; not surgery, but serenity; not the dramatic, but the dispassionate; not experiment, but equipoise; not submergence in internationality, but sustainment in triumphant nationality...."

A Democratic leader, William Gibbs McAdoo, called Harding's speeches "an army of pompous phrases moving across the landscape in search of an idea." Their very murkiness was effective, since Harding's pronouncements remained unclear on the League of Nations, in contrast to the impassioned crusade of the Democratic candidates, Governor James M. Cox of Ohio and Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Thirty-one distinguished Republicans had signed a manifesto assuring voters that a vote for Harding was a vote for the League. But Harding interpreted his election as a mandate to stay out of the League of Nations.

Harding, born near Marion, Ohio, in 1865, became the publisher of a newspaper. He married a divorcee, Mrs. Florence Kling De Wolfe. He was a trustee of the Trinity Baptist Church, a director of almost every important business, and a leader in fraternal organizations and charitable enterprises.

He organized the Citizen's Cornet Band, available for both Republican and Democratic rallies; "I played every instrument but the slide trombone and the E-flat cornet," he once remarked.

Harding's undeviating Republicanism and vibrant speaking voice, plus his willingness to let the machine bosses set policies, led him far in Ohio politics. He served in the state Senate and as Lieutenant Governor, and unsuccessfully ran for Governor. He delivered the nominating address for President Taft at the 1912 Republican Convention. In 1914 he was elected to the Senate, which he found "a very pleasant place."

An Ohio admirer, Harry Daugherty, began to promote Harding for the 1920 Republican nomination because, he later explained, "He looked like a President."

Thus a group of Senators, taking control of the 1920 Republican Convention when the principal candidates deadlocked, turned to Harding. He won the Presidential election by an unprecedented landslide of 60 percent of the popular vote.

Republicans in Congress easily got the President's signature on their bills. They eliminated wartime controls and slashed taxes, established a Federal budget system, restored the high protective tariff, and imposed tight limitations upon immigration.

By 1923 the postwar depression seemed to be giving way to a new surge of prosperity, and newspapers hailed Harding as a wise statesman carrying out his campaign promise--"Less government in business and more business in government."

Behind the facade, not all of Harding's Administration was so impressive. Word began to reach the President that some of his friends were using their official positions for their own enrichment. Alarmed, he complained, "My...friends...they're the ones that keep me walking the floors nights!"

Looking wan and depressed, Harding journeyed westward in the summer of 1923, taking with him his upright Secretary of Commerce, Herbert Hoover. "If you knew of a great scandal in our administration," he asked Hoover, "would you for the good of the country and the party expose it publicly or would you bury it?" Hoover urged publishing it, but Harding feared the political repercussions.

He did not live to find out how the public would react to the scandals of his administration. In August of 1923, he died in San Francisco of a heart attack.

Reconciliation was the first goal set by President Richard M. Nixon. The Nation was painfully divided, with turbulence in the cities and war overseas. During his Presidency, Nixon succeeded in ending American fighting in Viet Nam and improving relations with the U.S.S.R. and China. But the Watergate scandal brought fresh divisions to the country and ultimately led to his resignation.

His election in 1968 had climaxed a career unusual on two counts: his early success and his comeback after being defeated for President in 1960 and for Governor of California in 1962.

Born in California in 1913, Nixon had a brilliant record at Whittier College and Duke University Law School before beginning the practice of law. In 1940, he married Patricia Ryan; they had two daughters, Patricia (Tricia) and Julie. During World War II, Nixon served as a Navy lieutenant commander in the Pacific.

On leaving the service, he was elected to Congress from his California district. In 1950, he won a Senate seat. Two years later, General Eisenhower selected Nixon, age 39, to be his running mate.

As Vice President, Nixon took on major duties in the Eisenhower Administration. Nominated for President by acclamation in 1960, he lost by a narrow margin to John F. Kennedy. In 1968, he again won his party's nomination, and went on to defeat Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey and third-party candidate George C. Wallace.

His accomplishments while in office included revenue sharing, the end of the draft, new anticrime laws, and a broad environmental program. As he had promised, he appointed Justices of conservative philosophy to the Supreme Court. One of the most dramatic events of his first term occurred in 1969, when American astronauts made the first moon landing.

Some of his most acclaimed achievements came in his quest for world stability. During visits in 1972 to Beijing and Moscow, he reduced tensions with China and the U.S.S.R. His summit meetings with Russian leader Leonid I. Brezhnev produced a treaty to limit strategic nuclear weapons. In January 1973, he announced an accord with North Viet Nam to end American involvement in Indochina. In 1974, his Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, negotiated disengagement agreements between Israel and

its opponents, Egypt and Syria.

In his 1972 bid for office, Nixon defeated Democratic candidate George McGovern by one of the widest margins on record.

Within a few months, his administration was embattled over the so-called "Watergate" scandal, stemming from a break-in at the offices of the Democratic National Committee during the 1972 campaign. The break-in was traced to officials of the Committee to Re-elect the President. A number of administration officials resigned; some were later convicted of offenses connected with efforts to cover up the affair. Nixon denied any personal involvement, but the courts forced him to

yield tape recordings which indicated that he had, in fact, tried to divert the investigation.

As a result of unrelated scandals in Maryland, Vice President Spiro T. Agnew resigned in 1973. Nixon nominated, and Congress approved, House Minority Leader Gerald R. Ford as Vice President.

Faced with what seemed almost certain impeachment, Nixon announced on August 8, 1974, that he would resign the next day to begin "that process of healing which is so desperately needed in America."

In his last years, Nixon gained praise as an elder statesman. By the time of his death on April 22, 1994, he had written numerous books on his experiences in public life and on foreign policy.

"A Great Society" for the American people and their fellow men elsewhere was the vision of Lyndon B. Johnson. In his first years of office he obtained passage of one of the most extensive legislative programs in the Nation's history. Maintaining collective security, he carried on the rapidly growing struggle to restrain Communist encroachment in Viet Nam.

Johnson was born on August 27, 1908, in central Texas, not far from Johnson City, which his family had helped settle. He felt the pinch of rural poverty as he grew up, working his way through Southwest Texas State Teachers College (now known as Texas State University-San Marcos); he learned compassion for the poverty of others when he taught students of Mexican descent.

In 1937 he campaigned successfully for the House of Representatives on a New Deal platform, effectively aided by his wife, the former Claudia "Lady Bird" Taylor, whom he had married in 1934.

During World War II he served briefly in the Navy as a lieutenant commander, winning a Silver Star in the South Pacific. After six terms in the House, Johnson was elected to the Senate in 1948. In 1953, he became the youngest Minority Leader in Senate history, and the following year, when the Democrats won control, Majority Leader. With rare skill he obtained passage of a number of key Eisenhower measures.

In the 1960 campaign, Johnson, as John F. Kennedy's running mate, was elected Vice President. On November 22, 1963, when Kennedy was assassinated, Johnson was sworn in as President.

First he obtained enactment of the measures President Kennedy had been urging at the time of his death--a new civil rights bill and a tax cut. Next he urged the Nation "to build a great society, a place where the meaning of man's life matches the marvels of man's labor." In 1964, Johnson won the Presidency with 61 percent of the vote and had the widest popular margin in American history--more than 15,000,000 votes.

The Great Society program became Johnson's agenda for Congress in January 1965: aid to education, attack on disease, Medicare, urban renewal, beautification, conservation, development of depressed regions, a wide-scale fight against poverty, control and prevention of crime and delinquency, removal of obstacles to the right to vote. Congress, at times augmenting or amending, rapidly enacted Johnson's recommendations. Millions of elderly people found succor through the 1965

Medicare amendment to the Social Security Act.

Under Johnson, the country made spectacular explorations of space in a program he had championed since its start. When three astronauts successfully orbited the moon in December 1968, Johnson congratulated them: "You've taken ... all of us, all over the world, into a new era. . . . "

Nevertheless, two overriding crises had been gaining momentum since 1965. Despite the beginning of new antipoverty and anti-discrimination programs, unrest and rioting in black ghettos troubled the Nation. President Johnson steadily exerted his influence against segregation and on behalf of law and order, but there was no early solution.

The other crisis arose from Viet Nam. Despite Johnson's efforts to end Communist aggression and achieve a settlement, fighting continued. Controversy over the war had become acute by the end of March 1968, when he limited the bombing of North Viet Nam in order to initiate negotiations. At the same time, he startled the world by withdrawing as a candidate for re-election so that he might devote his full efforts, unimpeded by politics, to the quest for peace.

When he left office, peace talks were under way; he did not live to see them successful, but died suddenly of a heart attack at his Texas ranch on January 22, 1973.

On November 22, 1963, when he was hardly past his first thousand days in office, John Fitzgerald Kennedy was killed by an assassin's bullets as his motorcade wound through Dallas, Texas. Kennedy was the youngest man elected President; he was the youngest to die.

Of Irish descent, he was born in Brookline, Massachusetts, on May 29, 1917. Graduating from Harvard in 1940, he entered the Navy. In 1943, when his PT boat was rammed and sunk by a Japanese destroyer, Kennedy, despite grave injuries, led the survivors through perilous waters to safety.

Back from the war, he became a Democratic Congressman from the Boston area, advancing in 1953 to the Senate. He married Jacqueline Bouvier on September 12, 1953. In 1955, while recuperating from a back operation, he wrote Profiles in Courage, which won the Pulitzer Prize in history.

In 1956 Kennedy almost gained the Democratic nomination for Vice President, and four years later was a first-ballot nominee for President. Millions watched his television debates with the Republican candidate, Richard M. Nixon. Winning by a narrow margin in the popular vote, Kennedy became the first Roman Catholic President.

His Inaugural Address offered the memorable injunction: "Ask not what your country can do for you--ask what you can do for your country." As President, he set out to redeem his campaign pledge to get America moving again. His economic programs launched the country on its longest sustained expansion since World War II; before his death, he laid plans for a massive assault on persisting pockets of privation and poverty.

Responding to ever more urgent demands, he took vigorous action in the cause of equal rights, calling for new civil rights legislation. His vision of America extended to the quality of the national culture and the central role of the arts in a vital society.

He wished America to resume its old mission as the first nation dedicated to the revolution of human rights. With the Alliance for Progress and the Peace Corps, he brought American idealism to the aid of developing nations. But the hard reality of the Communist challenge remained.

Shortly after his inauguration, Kennedy permitted a band of Cuban exiles, already armed and trained, to invade their homeland. The attempt to overthrow the regime of Fidel Castro was a failure. Soon thereafter, the Soviet Union renewed its campaign against West Berlin. Kennedy replied by reinforcing the Berlin garrison and increasing the Nation's military strength, including new efforts in outer space. Confronted by this reaction, Moscow, after the erection of the Berlin Wall, relaxed its

pressure in central Europe.

Instead, the Russians now sought to install nuclear missiles in Cuba. When this was discovered by air reconnaissance in October 1962, Kennedy imposed a quarantine on all offensive weapons bound for Cuba. While the world trembled on the brink of nuclear war, the Russians backed down and agreed to take the missiles away. The American response to the Cuban crisis evidently persuaded Moscow of the futility of nuclear blackmail.

Kennedy now contended that both sides had a vital interest in stopping the spread of nuclear weapons and slowing the arms race--a contention which led to the test ban treaty of 1963. The months after the Cuban crisis showed significant progress toward his goal of "a world of law and free choice, banishing the world of war and coercion." His administration thus saw the beginning of new hope for both the equal rights of Americans and the peace of the world.

Bringing to the Presidency his prestige as commanding general of the victorious forces in Europe during World War II, Dwight D. Eisenhower obtained a truce in Korea and worked incessantly during his two terms to ease the tensions of the Cold War. He pursued the moderate policies of "Modern Republicanism," pointing out as he left office, "America is today the strongest, most influential, and most productive nation in the world."

Born in Texas in 1890, brought up in Abilene, Kansas, Eisenhower was the third of seven sons. He excelled in sports in high school, and received an appointment to West Point. Stationed in Texas as a second lieutenant, he met Mamie Geneva Doud, whom he married in 1916.

In his early Army career, he excelled in staff assignments, serving under Generals John J. Pershing, Douglas MacArthur, and Walter Krueger. After Pearl Harbor, General George C. Marshall called him to Washington for a war plans assignment. He commanded the Allied Forces landing in North Africa in November 1942; on D-Day, 1944, he was Supreme Commander of the troops invading France.

After the war, he became President of Columbia University, then took leave to assume supreme command over the new NATO forces being assembled in 1951. Republican emissaries to his headquarters near Paris persuaded him to run for President in 1952.

"I like Ike" was an irresistible slogan; Eisenhower won a sweeping victory.

Negotiating from military strength, he tried to reduce the strains of the Cold War. In 1953, the signing of a truce brought an armed peace along the border of South Korea. The death of Stalin the same year caused shifts in relations with Russia.

New Russian leaders consented to a peace treaty neutralizing Austria. Meanwhile, both Russia and the United States had developed hydrogen bombs. With the threat of such destructive force hanging over the world, Eisenhower, with the leaders of the British, French, and Russian governments, met at Geneva in July 1955.

The President proposed that the United States and Russia exchange blueprints of each other's military establishments and "provide within our countries facilities for aerial photography to the other country." The Russians greeted the proposal with silence, but were so cordial throughout the meetings that tensions relaxed.

Suddenly, in September 1955, Eisenhower suffered a heart attack in Denver, Colorado. After seven weeks he left the hospital, and in February 1956 doctors reported his recovery. In November he was elected for his second term.

In domestic policy the President pursued a middle course, continuing most of the New Deal and Fair Deal programs, emphasizing a balanced budget. As desegregation of schools began, he sent troops into Little Rock, Arkansas, to assure compliance with the orders of a Federal court; he also ordered the complete desegregation of the Armed Forces. "There must be no second class citizens in this country," he wrote.

Eisenhower concentrated on maintaining world peace. He watched with pleasure the development of his "atoms for peace" program--the loan of American uranium to "have not" nations for peaceful purposes.

Before he left office in January 1961, for his farm in Gettysburg, he urged the necessity of maintaining an adequate military strength, but cautioned that vast, long-continued military expenditures could breed potential dangers to our way of life. He concluded with a prayer for peace "in the goodness of time." Both themes remained timely and urgent when he died, after a long illness, on March 28, 1969.