

= Ronald Reagan =

Ronald Wilson Reagan ( / ʀ?n?ld ?w?ls?n ?re???n / ; February 6 , 1911 ? June 5 , 2004 ) was an American politician and actor who served as the 40th President of the United States from 1981 to 1989 . Prior to his presidency , he was the 33rd Governor of California from 1967 to 1975 , following a career as a Hollywood actor and union leader .

Raised in a poor family in small towns of northern Illinois , Ronald Reagan graduated from Eureka College in 1932 and worked as a sports announcer on several regional radio stations . After moving to Hollywood in 1937 , he became an actor and starred in a few major productions . Reagan was twice elected as President of the Screen Actors Guild , the labor union for actors , where he worked to root out Communist influence . In the 1950s , he moved into television and was a motivational speaker at General Electric factories . Having been a lifelong Democrat , his views changed . He became a conservative and in 1962 switched to the Republican Party . In 1964 , Reagan 's speech , " A Time for Choosing " , in support of Barry Goldwater 's floundering presidential campaign , earned him national attention as a new conservative spokesman . Building a network of supporters , he was elected Governor of California in 1966 . As governor , Reagan raised taxes , turned a state budget deficit to a surplus , challenged the protesters at the University of California , ordered National Guard troops in during a period of protest movements in 1969 , and was re @-@ elected in 1970 . He twice ran unsuccessfully for the Republican nominations in 1968 and 1976 ; four years later , he easily won the nomination outright , going on to be elected the oldest President , defeating incumbent Jimmy Carter in 1980 .

Entering the presidency in 1981 , Reagan implemented sweeping new political and economic initiatives . His supply @-@ side economic policies , dubbed " Reaganomics " , advocated tax rate reduction to spur economic growth , control of the money supply to curb inflation , economic deregulation , and reduction in government spending . In his first term he survived an assassination attempt , escalated the War on Drugs , and fought public @-@ sector labor . Over his two terms , his economic policies saw a reduction of inflation from 12 @.@ 5 % to 4 @.@ 4 % , and an average annual growth of real GDP of 3 @.@ 4 % ; while Reagan did enact cuts in domestic discretionary spending , increased military spending contributed to increased federal outlays overall , even after adjustment for inflation . During his reelection bid , Reagan campaigned on the notion that it was " Morning in America " , winning a landslide in 1984 with the largest electoral college victory in history . Foreign affairs dominated his second term , including ending of the Cold War , the bombing of Libya , and the Iran ? Contra affair . Publicly describing the Soviet Union as an " evil empire " , he transitioned Cold War policy from détente to rollback , by escalating an arms race with the USSR while engaging in talks with Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev , which culminated in the INF Treaty , shrinking both countries ' nuclear arsenals . During his famous speech at the Brandenburg Gate , President Reagan challenged Gorbachev to " tear down this wall ! " . Five months after the end of his term , the Berlin Wall fell , and on December 26 , 1991 , nearly three years after he left office , the Soviet Union collapsed .

Leaving office in 1989 , Reagan held an approval rating of sixty @-@ eight percent , matching those of Franklin D. Roosevelt , and later Bill Clinton , as the highest ratings for departing presidents in the modern era . While having planned an active post @-@ presidency , in 1994 Reagan disclosed his diagnosis with Alzheimer 's disease earlier that year , appearing publicly for the last time at the funeral of Richard Nixon ; he died ten years later at the age of 93 . An icon among Republicans , he ranks favorably in public and critical opinion of U.S. Presidents , and his tenure constituted a realignment toward conservative policies in the United States .

= = Early life = =

Ronald Wilson Reagan was born in an apartment on the second floor of a commercial building in Tampico , Illinois on February 6 , 1911 , the son of Nelle Clyde ( Wilson ) and John Edward " Jack " Reagan . Reagan 's father was a salesman and a storyteller , the grandson of Irish Catholic immigrants from County Tipperary , while his mother was of half Scots and half English descent (

Reagan 's maternal grandmother was born in Surrey , England ) . Reagan had one older brother , Neil ( 1908 ? 96 ) , who became an advertising executive . As a boy , Reagan 's father nicknamed his son " Dutch , " due to his " fat little Dutchman " -like appearance , and his " Dutchboy " haircut ; the nickname stuck with him throughout his youth . Reagan 's family briefly lived in several towns and cities in Illinois , including Monmouth , Galesburg , and Chicago , in 1919 , they returned to Tampico and lived above the H. C. Pitney Variety Store until finally settling in Dixon . After his election as president , residing in the upstairs White House private quarters , Reagan would quip that he was " living above the store again " .

According to Paul Kengor , author of God and Ronald Reagan , Reagan had a particularly strong faith in the goodness of people , which stemmed from the optimistic faith of his mother , Nelle , and the Disciples of Christ faith , which he was baptized into in 1922 . For the time , Reagan was unusual in his opposition to racial discrimination , and recalled a time in Dixon when the local inn would not allow black people to stay there . Reagan brought them back to his house , where his mother invited them to stay the night and have breakfast the next morning .

After the closure of the Pitney Store in late 1920 , the Reagans moved to Dixon ; the midwestern " small universe " had a lasting impression on Reagan . He attended Dixon High School , where he developed interests in acting , sports , and storytelling . His first job was as a lifeguard at the Rock River in Lowell Park , near Dixon , in 1927 . Over a six @-@ year period , Reagan reportedly performed 77 rescues as a lifeguard . Reagan attended Eureka College , a Disciples @-@ oriented liberal arts school , where he became a member of the Tau Kappa Epsilon fraternity , a cheerleader , and studied economics and sociology . While involved , the Miller Center of Public Affairs described him as an " indifferent student " . He majored in Economics and graduated with a C average . He developed a reputation as a jack of all trades , excelling in campus politics , sports and theater . He was a member of the football team and captain of the swim team . He was elected student body president and led a student revolt against the college president after he tried to cut back the faculty .

= = Entertainment career = =

= = Radio and film = =

After graduating from Eureka in 1932 , Reagan drove himself to Iowa , where he held jobs as an announcer at several stations . He moved to WHO radio in Des Moines as an announcer for Chicago Cubs baseball games . His specialty was creating play @-@ by @-@ play accounts of games using as his source only basic descriptions that the station received by wire as the games were in progress .

While traveling with the Cubs in California , Reagan took a screen test in 1937 that led to a seven @-@ year contract with Warner Brothers studios . He spent the first few years of his Hollywood career in the " B film " unit , where , Reagan joked , the producers " didn 't want them good ; they wanted them Thursday " .

His first screen credit was the starring role in the 1937 movie Love Is on the Air , and by the end of 1939 he had already appeared in 19 films , including Dark Victory with Bette Davis and Humphrey Bogart . Before the film Santa Fe Trail with Errol Flynn in 1940 , he played the role of George " The Gipper " Gipp in the film Knute Rockne , All American ; from it , he acquired the lifelong nickname " the Gipper . " In 1941 exhibitors voted him the fifth most popular star from the younger generation in Hollywood .

Reagan 's favorite acting role was as a double amputee in 1942 's Kings Row , in which he recites the line " Where 's the rest of me ? " ? later used as the title of his 1965 autobiography . Many film critics considered Kings Row to be his best movie , though the film was condemned by New York Times critic Bosley Crowther .

Although Reagan called Kings Row the film that " made me a star " , he was unable to capitalize on his success because he was ordered to active duty with the U.S. Army at San Francisco two months

after its release , and never regained " star " status in motion pictures . In the post @-@ war era , after being separated from almost four years of World War II stateside service with the 1st Motion Picture Unit in December 1945 , Reagan co @-@ starred in such films as , The Voice of the Turtle , John Loves Mary , The Hasty Heart , Bedtime for Bonzo , Cattle Queen of Montana , Tennessee 's Partner , Hellcats of the Navy ( the only film in which he appears with Nancy Reagan ) and the 1964 remake The Killers ( his final film and the only one in which he played a villain ) . Throughout his film career , his mother answered much of his fan mail .

= = = Military service = = =

After completing fourteen home @-@ study Army Extension Courses , Reagan enlisted in the Army Enlisted Reserve and was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Officers Reserve Corps of the cavalry on May 25 , 1937 .

Reagan was ordered to active duty for the first time on April 18 , 1942 . Due to his poor eyesight , he was classified for limited service only , which excluded him from serving overseas . His first assignment was at the San Francisco Port of Embarkation at Fort Mason , California , as a liaison officer of the Port and Transportation Office . Upon the approval of the Army Air Force ( AAF ) , he applied for a transfer from the cavalry to the AAF on May 15 , 1942 , and was assigned to AAF Public Relations and subsequently to the First Motion Picture Unit ( officially , the " 18th Army Air Force Base Unit " ) in Culver City , California . On January 14 , 1943 , he was promoted to first lieutenant and was sent to the Provisional Task Force Show Unit of This Is the Army at Burbank , California . He returned to the First Motion Picture Unit after completing this duty and was promoted to captain on July 22 , 1943 .

In January 1944 , Reagan was ordered to temporary duty in New York City to participate in the opening of the Sixth War Loan Drive . He was reassigned to the First Motion Picture Unit on November 14 , 1944 , where he remained until the end of World War II . He was recommended for promotion to major on February 2 , 1945 , but this recommendation was disapproved on July 17 of that year . While with the First Motion Picture Unit in 1945 , he was indirectly involved in discovering actress Marilyn Monroe . He returned to Fort MacArthur , California , where he was separated from active duty on December 9 , 1945 . By the end of the war , his units had produced some 400 training films for the AAF .

Reagan never left the United States during the war , though he kept a film reel , obtained while in the service , depicting the liberation of Auschwitz , as he believed that someday doubts would arise as to whether the Holocaust had occurred . It has been alleged that he was overheard telling Israeli foreign minister Yitzhak Shamir in 1983 that he had filmed that footage himself and helped liberate Auschwitz , though this purported conversation was disputed by Secretary of State George P. Shultz .

= = = SAG president = = =

Reagan was first elected to the Board of Directors of the Screen Actors Guild in 1941 , serving as an alternate . After World War II , he resumed service and became 3rd vice @-@ president in 1946 . The adoption of conflict @-@ of @-@ interest bylaws in 1947 led the SAG president and six board members to resign ; Reagan was nominated in a special election for the position of president and subsequently elected . He was subsequently chosen by the membership to serve seven additional one @-@ year terms , from 1947 to 1952 and in 1959 . Reagan led SAG through eventful years that were marked by labor @-@ management disputes , the Taft ? Hartley Act , House Un @-@ American Activities Committee ( HUAC ) hearings and the Hollywood blacklist era .

= = = = Secret FBI informant in Hollywood = = = =

During the late 1940s , Reagan and his wife provided the FBI with names of actors within the motion picture industry whom they believed to be communist sympathizers , though he expressed

reservations ; he said " Do they expect us to constitute ourselves as a little FBI of our own and determine just who is a Commie and who isn 't ? "

Reagan testified before the House Un @-@ American Activities Committee on the subject as well . A fervent anti @-@ communist , he reaffirmed his commitment to democratic principles , stating , " I never as a citizen want to see our country become urged , by either fear or resentment of this group , that we ever compromise with any of our democratic principles through that fear or resentment . "

= = = Television = = =

Though an early critic of television , Reagan landed fewer film roles in the late 1950s and decided to join the medium . He was hired as the host of General Electric Theater , a series of weekly dramas that became very popular . His contract required him to tour GE plants sixteen weeks out of the year , often demanding of him fourteen speeches per day . He earned approximately \$ 125 @,@ 000 per year ( about \$ 1 @.@ 07 million in 2010 dollars ) in this role . The show ran for ten seasons from 1953 to 1962 and , as a result it increased Reagan 's profile in American households , especially as he had appeared in feature films mostly in supporting role or as a " second lead " .

His final work as a professional actor was as host and performer from 1964 to 1965 on the television series Death Valley Days .

Reagan and Nancy Davis appeared together on television several times , including an episode of General Electric Theater in 1958 called " A Turkey for the President . "

= = Marriages and children = =

In 1938 , Reagan co @-@ starred in the film Brother Rat with actress Jane Wyman ( 1917 ? 2007 ) . They were engaged at the Chicago Theatre , and married on January 26 , 1940 , at the Wee Kirk o ' the Heather church in Glendale , California . Together they had two biological children , Maureen ( 1941 ? 2001 ) and Christine ( who was born in 1947 but only lived one day ) , and adopted a third , Michael ( born 1945 ) . After arguments about Reagan 's political ambitions , Wyman filed for divorce in 1948 , citing a distraction due to her husband 's Screen Actors Guild union duties ; the divorce was finalized in 1949 . He is the only US president to have been divorced . Reagan and Wyman continued to be friends until his death , with Wyman voting for Reagan in both of his runs and , upon his death , saying " America has lost a great president and a great , kind , and gentle man . "

Reagan met actress Nancy Davis ( 1921 ? 2016 ) in 1949 after she contacted him in his capacity as president of the Screen Actors Guild to help her with issues regarding her name appearing on a Communist blacklist in Hollywood . She had been mistaken for another Nancy Davis . She described their meeting by saying , " I don 't know if it was exactly love at first sight , but it was pretty close . " They were engaged at Chasen 's restaurant in Los Angeles and were married on March 4 , 1952 , at the Little Brown Church in the Valley ( North Hollywood , now Studio City ) San Fernando Valley . Actor William Holden served as best man at the ceremony . They had two children : Patti ( born October 21 , 1952 ) and Ron ( born May 20 , 1958 ) .

Observers described the Reagans ' relationship as close , authentic and intimate . During his presidency they were reported to frequently display their affection for one another ; one press secretary said , " They never took each other for granted . They never stopped courting . " He often called her " Mommy " and she called him " Ronnie . " He once wrote to her , " Whatever I treasure and enjoy ... all would be without meaning if I didn 't have you . " When he was in the hospital in 1981 , she slept with one of his shirts to be comforted by his scent . In a letter to U.S. citizens written in 1994 , Reagan wrote " I have recently been told that I am one of the millions of Americans who will be afflicted with Alzheimer 's disease ... I only wish there was some way I could spare Nancy from this painful experience , " and in 1998 , while Reagan was stricken by Alzheimer 's , Nancy told Vanity Fair , " Our relationship is very special . We were very much in love and still are . When I say my life began with Ronnie , well , it 's true . It did . I can 't imagine life without him . " Nancy Reagan died on March 6 , 2016 at the age of 94 .

= = Early political career = =

Reagan began as a Hollywood Democrat ; Franklin D. Roosevelt was his great hero . He moved to the right in the 1950s , became a Republican in 1962 , and emerged as a leading conservative spokesman in the Goldwater campaign of 1964 .

He joined numerous political committees with a left @-@ wing orientation , such as the American Veterans Committee . He fought against Republican @-@ sponsored right @-@ to @-@ work legislation and for Helen Gahagan Douglas in 1950 , when she was defeated for the Senate by Richard Nixon . It was his realization that Communists were a powerful backstage influence in those groups , that led him to rally his friends against them .

Reagan spoke frequently at rallies with a strong ideological dimension ; in December 1945 , he was stopped from leading an anti @-@ nuclear rally in Hollywood by pressure from the Warner Bros. studio . He would later make nuclear weapons a key point of his presidency , specifically his opposition to mutually assured destruction , building on previous efforts to limit the spread of nuclear weapons to a new focus to reduce the numbers and types of them . In the 1948 election , Reagan strongly supported Harry S. Truman , appearing on stage with him during a campaign speech in Los Angeles . However , in the early 1950s , as his relationship with actress Nancy Davis grew , he shifted to the right and endorsed the presidential candidacies of Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1952 and 1956 as well as Richard Nixon in 1960 .

He was hired by General Electric in 1954 to host the General Electric Theater , a weekly TV drama series . Much more important , he crisscrossed the country giving talks to over 200 @, @ 000 GE employees as a motivational speaker . His many speeches ? which he wrote himself ? were non @-@ partisan but carried a conservative , pro @-@ business message ; he was influenced by Lemuel Boulware , a senior GE executive . Boulware , known for his tough stance against unions and his innovative strategies to win over workers , championed the core tenets of modern American conservatism : free markets , anticommunism , lower taxes , and limited government . Eager for a larger stage , but not allowed to enter politics by GE , he quit and formally registered as a Republican . He often said " I didn 't leave the Democratic Party . The party left me . "

When legislation that would become Medicare was introduced in 1961 , Reagan created a recording for the American Medical Association warning that such legislation would mean the end of freedom in America . Reagan said that if his listeners did not write letters to prevent it , " we will awake to find that we have socialism . And if you don 't do this , and if I don 't do it , one of these days , you and I are going to spend our sunset years telling our children , and our children 's children , what it once was like in America when men were free . " He also joined the National Rifle Association and would become a lifetime member .

Reagan gained national attention in his speeches for conservative presidential contender Barry Goldwater in 1964 . Speaking for Goldwater , Reagan stressed his belief in the importance of smaller government . Consolidating themes he had developed in talks for GE , he argued in " A Time for Choosing " ( October 27 , 1964 ) :

The Founding Fathers knew a government can 't control the economy without controlling people . And they knew when a government sets out to do that , it must use force and coercion to achieve its purpose . So we have come to a time for choosing ... You and I are told we must choose between a left or right , but I suggest there is no such thing as a left or right . There is only an up or down . Up to man 's age @-@ old dream ? the maximum of individual freedom consistent with order ? or down to the ant heap of totalitarianism .

This " A Time for Choosing " speech was not enough to turn around the faltering Goldwater campaign , but it was the key event that established Reagan 's national political visibility .

= = Governorship of California : 1967 ? 75 = =

California Republicans were impressed with Reagan 's political views and charisma after his " Time for Choosing " speech , he announced in late 1965 , his campaign for Governor of California in 1966 . He defeated former San Francisco mayor George Christopher in the GOP primary . In Reagan 's

campaign , he emphasized two main themes : " to send the welfare bums back to work , " and , in reference to burgeoning anti @-@ war and anti @-@ establishment student protests at the University of California at Berkeley , " to clean up the mess at Berkeley . " Ronald Reagan accomplished in 1966 what US Senator William F. Knowland in 1958 and former Vice President Richard Nixon in 1962 had tried : he was elected , defeating two @-@ term governor Edmund G. " Pat " Brown , and was sworn in on January 2 , 1967 . In his first term , he froze government hiring and approved tax hikes to balance the budget .

Shortly after the beginning of his term , Reagan tested the presidential waters in 1968 as part of a " Stop Nixon " movement , hoping to cut into Nixon 's Southern support and be a compromise candidate if neither Nixon nor second @-@ place Nelson Rockefeller received enough delegates to win on the first ballot at the Republican convention . However , by the time of the convention Nixon had 692 delegate votes , 25 more than he needed to secure the nomination , followed by Rockefeller with Reagan in third place .

Reagan was involved in high @-@ profile conflicts with the protest movements of the era . On May 15 , 1969 , during the People 's Park protests at UC Berkeley , Reagan sent the California Highway Patrol and other officers to quell the protests , in an incident that became known as " Bloody Thursday , " resulting in the death of student James Rector and the blinding of carpenter Alan Blanchard . Reagan then called out 2 @,@ 200 state National Guard troops to occupy the city of Berkeley for two weeks to crack down on the protesters . A year after " Bloody Thursday , " Reagan responded to questions about campus protest movements saying , " If it takes a bloodbath , let 's get it over with . No more appeasement . " When the Symbionese Liberation Army kidnapped Patty Hearst in Berkeley and demanded the distribution of food to the poor , Reagan joked to a group of political aides about a botulism outbreak contaminating the food . Conversely , in that one afternoon , " Bloody Thursday , " 111 police officers were injured , including one C.H.P. officer who was knifed in the chest . After calling in the National Guard , the Guard remained in Berkeley for 17 days , camping in People 's Park , and demonstrations subsided as the University removed cordoned @-@ off fencing and placed all development plans for People 's Park on hold .

Early in 1967 , the national debate on abortion was beginning . Democratic California state senator Anthony C. Beilenson introduced the " Therapeutic Abortion Act , " in an effort to reduce the number of " back @-@ room abortions " performed in California . The State Legislature sent the bill to Reagan 's desk where , after many days of indecision , he signed it . About two million abortions would be performed as a result , most because of a provision in the bill allowing abortions for the well @-@ being of the mother . Reagan had been in office for only four months when he signed the bill , and later stated that had he been more experienced as governor , he would not have signed it . After he recognized what he called the " consequences " of the bill , he announced that he was pro @-@ life . He maintained that position later in his political career , writing extensively about abortion .

In 1967 , Reagan signed the Mulford Act , which became California penal code 12031 and 171 ( c ) . The bill repealed a law allowing public carrying of loaded firearms . Named after Republican assemblyman Don Mulford , the bill garnered national attention after the Black Panthers marched bearing arms upon the California State Capitol to protest the bill .

Despite an unsuccessful attempt to recall him in 1968 , Reagan was re @-@ elected in 1970 , defeating " Big Daddy " Jesse M. Unruh . He chose not to seek a third term in the following election cycle . One of Reagan 's greatest frustrations in office concerned capital punishment , which he strongly supported . His efforts to enforce the state 's laws in this area were thwarted when the Supreme Court of California issued its People v. Anderson decision , which invalidated all death sentences issued in California before 1972 , though the decision was later overturned by a constitutional amendment . The only execution during Reagan 's governorship was on April 12 , 1967 , when Aaron Mitchell 's sentence was carried out by the state in San Quentin 's gas chamber .

In 1969 , Reagan , as governor , signed the Family Law Act , an amalgam of two bills which had been written and revised by the California State Legislature for over two years and became the first no @-@ fault divorce legislation in the United States .

Reagan 's terms as governor helped to shape the policies he would pursue in his later political career as president . By campaigning on a platform of sending " the welfare bums back to work , " he spoke out against the idea of the welfare state . He also strongly advocated the Republican ideal of less government regulation of the economy , including that of undue federal taxation .

Reagan did not seek re @-@ election to a third term as governor in 1974 and was succeeded by Democratic California Secretary of State Jerry Brown on January 6 , 1975 .

= = 1976 presidential campaign = =

In 1976 , Reagan challenged incumbent President Gerald Ford in a bid to become the Republican Party 's candidate for president . Reagan soon established himself as the conservative candidate with the support of like @-@ minded organizations such as the American Conservative Union which became key components of his political base , while President Ford was considered a more moderate Republican .

Reagan 's campaign relied on a strategy crafted by campaign manager John Sears of winning a few primaries early to damage the inevitability of Ford 's likely nomination . Reagan won North Carolina , Texas , and California , but the strategy failed , as he ended up losing New Hampshire , Florida , and his native Illinois . The Texas campaign lent renewed hope to Reagan , when he swept all ninety @-@ six delegates chosen in the May 1 primary , with four more awaiting at the state convention . Much of the credit for that victory came from the work of three co @-@ chairmen , including Ernest Angelo , the mayor of Midland , and Ray Barnhart of Houston , whom President Reagan would appoint in 1981 as director of the Federal Highway Administration .

However , as the GOP convention neared , Ford appeared close to victory . Acknowledging his party 's moderate wing , Reagan chose moderate Senator Richard Schweiker of Pennsylvania as his running mate if nominated . Nonetheless , Ford prevailed with 1 @,@ 187 delegates to Reagan 's 1 @,@ 070 . Ford would go on to lose the 1976 Presidential election to the Democrat Jimmy Carter .

Reagan 's concession speech emphasized the dangers of nuclear war and the threat posed by the Soviet Union . Though he lost the nomination , he received 307 write @-@ in votes in New Hampshire , 388 votes as an Independent on Wyoming 's ballot , and a single electoral vote from a faithless elector in the November election from the state of Washington , which Ford had won over Democratic challenger Jimmy Carter .

After the campaign , Reagan remained in the public debate with the Ronald Reagan Radio Commentary series and his political action committee , Citizens for the Republic , which was later revived in Alexandria , Virginia , in 2009 by the Reagan biographer Craig Shirley .

= = 1980 presidential campaign = =

The 1980 presidential campaign between Reagan and incumbent President Jimmy Carter was conducted during domestic concerns and the ongoing Iran hostage crisis . His campaign stressed some of his fundamental principles : lower taxes to stimulate the economy , less government interference in people 's lives , states ' rights , and a strong national defense .

Reagan launched his campaign by declaring " I believe in states ' rights . " After receiving the Republican nomination , Reagan selected one of his primary opponents , George H. W. Bush , to be his running mate . His showing in the October televised debate boosted his campaign . Reagan won the election , carrying 44 states with 489 electoral votes to 49 electoral votes for Carter ( representing six states and Washington , D.C. ) . Reagan received 51 % of the popular vote while Carter took 41 % , and Independent John B. Anderson ( a liberal Republican ) received 7 % . Republicans captured the Senate for the first time since 1952 , and gained 34 House seats , but the Democrats retained a majority .

= = Presidency of the United States : 1981 ? 89 = =

During his presidency , Reagan pursued policies that reflected his personal belief in individual freedom , brought changes domestically , both to the U.S. economy and expanded military , and contributed to the end of the Cold War . Termed the Reagan Revolution , his presidency would reinvigorate American morale , reinvigorate the American economy and reduce American reliance upon government . As president , Reagan kept a diary in which he commented on daily occurrences of his presidency and his views on the issues of the day . The diaries were published in May 2007 in the bestselling book , The Reagan Diaries .

= = = First term = = =

To date , Reagan is the oldest person elected to the office of the presidency ( at 69 ) and the oldest president at the time of inauguration ( at 69 years , 341 days ) . In his first inaugural address on January 20 , 1981 , which Reagan himself wrote , he addressed the country 's economic malaise arguing : " In this present crisis , government is not the solution to our problems ; government is the problem . "

= = = Prayer in schools and a moment of silence = = =

In 1981 , Reagan became the first president to propose a constitutional amendment on school prayer . The school prayer had previously been banned by the Supreme Court in 1962 , and Reagan 's election reflected an opposition to the courts decision . Reagan 's 1981 proposed amendment stated : " Nothing in this Constitution shall be construed to prohibit individual or group prayer in public schools or other public institutions . No person shall be required by the United States or by any state to participate in prayer . " In a message to Congress , Reagan said that his proposed amendment would " restore the simple freedom of our citizens to offer prayer in public schools and institutions . " In a nationally televised speech the following day , Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson lauded Reagan 's speech and said the moment of silence would " ensure that children grow up to be decent and upright . " In 1984 , Reagan again raised the issue , asking Congress " why can 't [ the ] freedom to acknowledge God be enjoyed again by children in every schoolroom across this land ? " In 1985 , Reagan expressed his disappointment that the Supreme Court ruling still bans a moment of silence for public schools , and said he had " an uphill battle . " In 1987 Reagan again renewed his call for Congress to support voluntary prayer in schools and end " the expulsion of God from America 's classrooms . " During his term in office , Reagan campaigned vigorously to restore prayer to the schools , first as a moment of prayer and later as a Moment of Silence .

= = = Assassination attempt = = =

On March 30 , 1981 , only 69 days into the new administration , Reagan , his press secretary James Brady , Washington police officer Thomas Delahanty , and Secret Service agent Tim McCarthy were struck by gunfire from would @-@ be assassin John Hinckley Jr . , outside the Washington Hilton Hotel . Although " close to death " upon arrival at George Washington University Hospital , Reagan was stabilized in the emergency room , then underwent emergency exploratory surgery . He recovered and was released from the hospital on April 11 , becoming the first serving U.S. President to survive being shot in an assassination attempt . The attempt had great influence on Reagan 's popularity ; polls indicated his approval rating to be around 73 % . Reagan believed that God had spared his life so that he might go on to fulfill a greater purpose .

= = = Assistant Secretary of State nomination = = =

In response to conservative criticism that the state department lacked hardliners , Reagan in 1981 nominated Ernest W. Lefever as Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs . Lefever performed poorly at his confirmation hearings and the Senate committee rejected



his nomination by vote of 4 ? 13 ; Lefever withdrew his name .

== Air traffic controllers ' strike ==

In summer 1981 PATCO , the union of federal air traffic controllers went on strike , violating a federal law prohibiting government unions from striking . Declaring the situation an emergency as described in the 1947 Taft ? Hartley Act , Reagan stated that if the air traffic controllers " do not report for work within 48 hours , they have forfeited their jobs and will be terminated . " They did not return and on August 5 , Reagan fired 11 @, @ 345 striking air traffic controllers who had ignored his order , and used supervisors and military controllers to handle the nation 's commercial air traffic until new controllers could be hired and trained . A leading reference work on public administration concluded , " The firing of PATCO employees not only demonstrated a clear resolve by the president to take control of the bureaucracy , but it also sent a clear message to the private sector that unions no longer needed to be feared . "

== " Reaganomics " and the economy ==

During Jimmy Carter 's last year in office ( 1980 ) , inflation averaged 12 @. @ 5 % , compared with 4 @. @ 4 % during Reagan 's last year in office ( 1988 ) . During Reagan 's administration , the unemployment rate declined from 7 @. @ 5 % to 5 @. @ 4 % , with the rate reaching highs of 10 @. @ 8 % in 1982 and 10 @. @ 4 % in 1983 , averaging 7 @. @ 5 % over the eight years , and real GDP growth averaged 3 @. @ 4 % with a high of 8 @. @ 6 % in 1983 , while nominal GDP growth averaged 7 @. @ 4 % , and peaked at 12 @. @ 2 % in 1982 .

Reagan implemented policies based on supply @-@ side economics , advocating a laissez @-@ faire philosophy and free @-@ market fiscal policy , seeking to stimulate the economy with large , across @-@ the @-@ board tax cuts . He also supported returning the United States to some sort of gold standard , and successfully urged Congress to establish the U.S. Gold Commission to study how one could be implemented . Citing the economic theories of Arthur Laffer , Reagan promoted the proposed tax cuts as potentially stimulating the economy enough to expand the tax base , offsetting the revenue loss due to reduced rates of taxation , a theory that entered political discussion as the Laffer curve . Reaganomics was the subject of debate with supporters pointing to improvements in certain key economic indicators as evidence of success , and critics pointing to large increases in federal budget deficits and the national debt . His policy of " peace through strength " resulted in a record peacetime defense buildup including a 40 % real increase in defense spending between 1981 and 1985 .

During Reagan 's presidency , federal income tax rates were lowered significantly with the signing of the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981 , which lowered the top marginal tax bracket from 70 % to 50 % and the lowest bracket from 14 % to 11 % . Other tax increases passed by Congress and signed by Reagan ensured however that tax revenues over his two terms were 18 @. @ 2 % of GDP as compared to 18 @. @ 1 % over the 40 @-@ year period 1970 ? 2010 . Then , in 1982 the Job Training Partnership Act of 1982 was signed into law , initiating one of the United States ' first public ? private partnerships and a major part of the president 's job creation program . Reagan 's Assistant Secretary of Labor and Chief of Staff , Al Angrisani , was a primary architect of the bill .

Conversely , Congress passed and Reagan signed into law tax increases of some nature in every year from 1981 to 1987 to continue funding such government programs as Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act of 1982 ( TEFRA ) , Social Security , and the Deficit Reduction Act of 1984 ( DEFRA ) . Despite the fact that TEFRA was the " largest peacetime tax increase in American history , " gross domestic product ( GDP ) growth recovered strongly after the early 1980s recession ended in 1982 , and grew during his eight years in office at an annual rate of 7 @. @ 9 % per year , with a high of 12 @. @ 2 % growth in 1981 . Unemployment peaked at 10 @. @ 8 % monthly rate in December 1982 ? higher than any time since the Great Depression ? then dropped during the rest of Reagan 's presidency . Sixteen million new jobs were created , while inflation significantly decreased . The Tax Reform Act of 1986 , another bipartisan effort championed by Reagan ,

simplified the tax code by reducing the number of tax brackets to four and slashing a number of tax breaks . The top rate was dropped to 28 % , but capital gains taxes were increased on those with the highest incomes from 20 % to 28 % . The increase of the lowest tax bracket from 11 % to 15 % was more than offset by expansion of the personal exemption , standard deduction , and earned income tax credit . The net result was the removal of six million poor Americans from the income tax roll and a reduction of income tax liability at all income levels .

The net effect of all Reagan @-@ era tax bills was a 1 % decrease in government revenues when compared to Treasury Department revenue estimates from the Administration 's first post @-@ enactment January budgets . However , federal income tax receipts increased from 1980 to 1989 , rising from \$ 308 @.@ 7 billion to \$ 549 billion or an average annual rate of 8 @.@ 2 % ( 2 @.@ 5 % attributed to higher Social Security receipts ) , and federal outlays grew at an annual rate of 7 @.@ 1 % .

Reagan 's policies proposed that economic growth would occur when marginal tax rates were low enough to spur investment , which would then lead to higher employment and wages . Critics labeled this " trickle @-@ down economics " ? the belief that tax policies that benefit the wealthy will create a " trickle @-@ down " effect to the poor . Questions arose whether Reagan 's policies benefited the wealthy more than those living in poverty , and many poor and minority citizens viewed Reagan as indifferent to their struggles . These views were exacerbated by the fact that Reagan 's economic regimen included freezing the minimum wage at \$ 3 @.@ 35 an hour , slashing federal assistance to local governments by 60 % , cutting the budget for public housing and Section 8 rent subsidies in half , and eliminating the antipoverty Community Development Block Grant program . The widening gap between the rich and poor had already begun during the 1970s before Reagan 's economic policies took effect . Along with Reagan 's 1981 cut in the top regular tax rate on unearned income , he reduced the maximum capital gains rate to only 20 % . Reagan later set tax rates on capital gains at the same level as the rates on ordinary income like salaries and wages , with both topping out at 28 % . Reagan is viewed as an antitax hero despite raising taxes eleven times over the course of his presidency , all in the name of fiscal responsibility . According to Paul Krugman , " Over all , the 1982 tax increase undid about a third of the 1981 cut ; as a share of GDP , the increase was substantially larger than Mr. Clinton 's 1993 tax increase . " According to historian and domestic policy adviser Bruce Bartlett , Reagan 's tax increases over the course of his presidency took back half of the 1981 tax cut .

Further following his opposition to government intervention , Reagan cut the budgets of non @-@ military programs including Medicaid , food stamps , federal education programs and the EPA . While he protected entitlement programs , such as Social Security and Medicare , his administration attempted to purge many people with disabilities from the Social Security disability rolls .

The administration 's stance toward the Savings and Loan industry contributed to the savings and loan crisis . It is also suggested , by a minority of Reaganomics critics , that the policies partially influenced the stock market crash of 1987 , but there is no consensus regarding a single source for the crash . In order to cover newly spawned federal budget deficits , the United States borrowed heavily both domestically and abroad , raising the national debt from \$ 997 billion to \$ 2 @.@ 85 trillion . Reagan described the new debt as the " greatest disappointment " of his presidency .

He reappointed Paul Volcker as Chairman of the Federal Reserve , and in 1987 he appointed monetarist Alan Greenspan to succeed him . Reagan ended the price controls on domestic oil which had contributed to energy crises in the early 1970s . The price of oil subsequently dropped , and the 1980s did not see the fuel shortages that the 1970s had . Reagan also fulfilled a 1980 campaign promise to repeal the windfall profit tax in 1988 , which had previously increased dependence on foreign oil . Some economists , such as Nobel Prize winners Milton Friedman and Robert Mundell , argue that Reagan 's tax policies invigorated America 's economy and contributed to the economic boom of the 1990s . Other economists , such as Nobel Prize winner Robert Solow , argue that Reagan 's deficits were a major reason his successor , George H.W. Bush , reneged on a campaign promise and resorted to raising taxes .

During Reagan 's presidency , a program was initiated within the U.S. Intelligence Community to ensure America 's economic strength . The program , Project Socrates , developed and

demonstrated the means required for the United States to generate and lead the next evolutionary leap in technology acquisition and utilization for a competitive advantage ? automated innovation . To ensure that the United States acquired the maximum benefit from automated innovation , Reagan , during his second term , had an executive order drafted to create a new federal agency to implement the Project Socrates results on a nationwide basis . However , Reagan 's term came to end before the executive order could be coordinated and signed , and the incoming Bush administration , labeling Project Socrates as " industrial policy , " had it terminated .

= = = Escalation of the Cold War = = =

Reagan escalated the Cold War , accelerating a reversal from the policy of détente which began in 1979 after the Soviet war in Afghanistan . Reagan ordered a massive buildup of the United States Armed Forces and implemented new policies towards the Soviet Union : reviving the B @-@ 1 Lancer program that had been canceled by the Carter administration , and producing the MX missile . In response to Soviet deployment of the SS @-@ 20 , Reagan oversaw NATO 's deployment of the Pershing missile in West Germany .

In 1984 , journalist Nicholas Lemann interviewed Reagan Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and summarized the strategy of the Reagan administration to roll back the Soviet Union :

Their society is economically weak , and it lacks the wealth , education , and technology to enter the information age . They have thrown everything into military production , and their society is starting to show terrible stress as a result . They can 't sustain military production the way we can . Eventually it will break them , and then there will be just one superpower in a safe world ? if , only if , we can keep spending .

Lemann notes that when he wrote that in 1984 , he thought the Reaganites were living in a fantasy world . But in 2016 , he says , that passage represents " a fairly uncontroversial description of what Reagan actually did . "

Together with the United Kingdom 's prime minister Margaret Thatcher , Reagan denounced the Soviet Union in ideological terms . In a famous address on June 8 , 1982 , to the British Parliament in the Royal Gallery of the Palace of Westminster , Reagan said , " the forward march of freedom and democracy will leave Marxism ? Leninism on the ash heap of history . " On March 3 , 1983 , he predicted that communism would collapse , stating , " Communism is another sad , bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages even now are being written . " In a speech to the National Association of Evangelicals on March 8 , 1983 , Reagan called the Soviet Union " an evil empire . "

After Soviet fighters downed Korean Air Lines Flight 007 near Moneron Island on September 1 , 1983 , carrying 269 people , including Georgia congressman Larry McDonald , Reagan labeled the act a " massacre " and declared that the Soviets had turned " against the world and the moral precepts which guide human relations among people everywhere . " The Reagan administration responded to the incident by suspending all Soviet passenger air service to the United States , and dropped several agreements being negotiated with the Soviets , wounding them financially . As result of the shootdown , and the cause of KAL 007 's going astray thought to be inadequacies related to its navigational system , Reagan announced on September 16 , 1983 , that the Global Positioning System would be made available for civilian use , free of charge , once completed in order to avert similar navigational errors in future .

Under a policy that came to be known as the Reagan Doctrine , Reagan and his administration also provided overt and covert aid to anti @-@ communist resistance movements in an effort to " rollback " Soviet @-@ backed communist governments in Africa , Asia , and Latin America . Reagan deployed the CIA 's Special Activities Division to Afghanistan and Pakistan . They were instrumental in training , equipping and leading Mujaheddin forces against the Soviet Army . President Reagan 's Covert Action program has been given credit for assisting in ending the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan , though some of the United States funded armaments introduced then would later pose a threat to U.S. troops in the 2000s ( decade ) war in Afghanistan . However , in a break from the Carter policy of arming Taiwan under the Taiwan Relations Act , Reagan also agreed with the communist government in China to reduce the sale of arms to Taiwan .

In March 1983 , Reagan introduced the Strategic Defense Initiative , a defense project that would have used ground- and space @-@ based systems to protect the United States from attack by strategic nuclear ballistic missiles . Reagan believed that this defense shield could make nuclear war impossible . There was much disbelief surrounding the program 's scientific feasibility , leading opponents to dub SDI " Star Wars " and argue that its technological objective was unattainable . The Soviets became concerned about the possible effects SDI would have ; leader Yuri Andropov said it would put " the entire world in jeopardy . " For those reasons , David Gergen , former aide to President Reagan , believes that in retrospect , SDI hastened the end of the Cold War .

Critics labeled Reagan 's foreign policies as aggressive , imperialistic , and chided them as " warmongering , " though they were supported by leading American conservatives who argued that they were necessary to protect U.S. security interests . The Reagan administration also backed anti @-@ communist leaders accused of severe human rights violations , such as Efraín Ríos Montt of Guatemala and Hissène Habré of Chad .

= = = = Lebanese Civil War ( 1983 ) = = = =

With the approval of Congress , Reagan in 1983 sent forces to Lebanon to reduce the threat of the Lebanese Civil War . The American peacekeeping forces in Beirut , a part of a multinational force during the Lebanese Civil War , were attacked on October 23 , 1983 . The Beirut barracks bombing killed 241 American servicemen and wounded more than 60 others by a suicide truck bomber . Reagan sent in the USS New Jersey battleship to shell Syrian positions in Lebanon . He then withdrew all the Marines from Lebanon .

= = = = Operation Urgent Fury ( Grenada : 1983 ) = = = =

On October 25 , 1983 , Reagan ordered U.S. forces to invade Grenada , code named Operation Urgent Fury , where a 1979 coup d'état had established an independent non @-@ aligned Marxist ? Leninist government . A formal appeal from the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States ( OECS ) led to the intervention of U.S. forces ; President Reagan also cited an allegedly regional threat posed by a Soviet @-@ Cuban military build @-@ up in the Caribbean and concern for the safety of several hundred American medical students at St. George 's University as adequate reasons to invade . Operation Urgent Fury was the first major military operation conducted by U.S. forces since the Vietnam War , several days of fighting commenced , resulting in a U.S. victory , with 19 American fatalities and 116 wounded American soldiers . In mid @-@ December , after a new government was appointed by the Governor @-@ General , U.S. forces withdrew .

= = = = 1984 presidential campaign = = = =

Reagan accepted the Republican nomination in Dallas , Texas . He proclaimed that it was " morning again in America , " regarding the recovering economy and the dominating performance by the U.S. athletes at the 1984 Summer Olympics , among other things . He became the first American president to open an Olympic Games held in the United States .

Reagan 's opponent in the 1984 presidential election was former Vice President Walter Mondale . With questions about Reagan 's age , and a weak performance in the first presidential debate , his ability to perform the duties of president for another term was questioned . His apparent confused and forgetful behavior was evident to his supporters ; they had previously known him clever and witty . Rumors began to circulate that he had Alzheimer 's disease . Reagan rebounded in the second debate , and confronted questions about his age , quipping , " I will not make age an issue of this campaign . I am not going to exploit , for political purposes , my opponent 's youth and inexperience , " which generated applause and laughter , even from Mondale himself .

That November , Reagan was re @-@ elected , winning 49 of 50 states . The president 's overwhelming victory saw Mondale carry only his home state of Minnesota ( by 3 @,@ 800 votes ) and the District of Columbia . Reagan won a record 525 electoral votes , the most of any candidate

in United States history , and received 59 % of the popular vote to Mondale 's 41 % .

= = = Second term = = =

Reagan was sworn in as president for the second time on January 20 , 1985 , in a private ceremony at the White House . Because January 20 fell on a Sunday , a public celebration was not held but took place in the Capitol rotunda the following day . January 21 was one of the coldest days on record in Washington , D.C. ; due to poor weather , inaugural celebrations were held inside the Capitol . In the coming weeks he shook up his staff somewhat , moving White House Chief of Staff James Baker to Secretary of the Treasury and naming Treasury Secretary Donald Regan , a former Merrill Lynch officer , Chief of Staff .

In 1985 , Reagan visited a German military cemetery in Bitburg to lay a wreath with West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl . It was determined that the cemetery held the graves of forty @-@ nine members of the Waffen @-@ SS . Reagan issued a statement that called the Nazi soldiers buried in that cemetery as themselves " victims , " a designation which ignited a stir over whether Reagan had equated the SS men to victims of the Holocaust ; Pat Buchanan , Reagan 's Director of Communications , argued that the president did not equate the SS members with the actual Holocaust . Now strongly urged to cancel the visit , the president responded that it would be wrong to back down on a promise he had made to Chancellor Kohl . He ultimately attended the ceremony where two military generals laid a wreath .

The disintegration of the Space Shuttle Challenger on January 28 , 1986 , proved a pivotal moment in Reagan 's presidency . All seven astronauts aboard were killed . On the night of the disaster , Reagan delivered a speech , written by Peggy Noonan , in which he said :

The future doesn 't belong to the fainthearted ; it belongs to the brave ... We will never forget them , nor the last time we saw them , this morning , as they prepared for their journey and waved goodbye and ' slipped the surly bonds of Earth ' to ' touch the face of God.'

In 1988 , near the end of the Iran ? Iraq War , the U.S. Navy guided missile cruiser USS Vincennes accidentally shot down Iran Air Flight 655 killing 290 civilian passengers . The incident further worsened already tense Iran ? United States relations .

= = = War on Drugs = = =

Reagan announced a War on Drugs in 1982 , in response to concerns about the increasing crack epidemic . Though Nixon had previously declared a war on drugs , Reagan advocated more militant policies .

He said that " drugs were menacing our society " and promised to fight for drug @-@ free schools and workplaces , expanded drug treatment , stronger law enforcement and drug interdiction efforts , and greater public awareness .

In 1986 , Reagan signed a drug enforcement bill that budgeted \$ 1 @.@ 7 billion to fund the War on Drugs and specified a mandatory minimum penalty for drug offenses . The bill was criticized for promoting significant racial disparities in the prison population and critics also charged that the policies did little to reduce the availability of drugs on the street , while resulting in a great financial burden for America . Defenders of the effort point to success in reducing rates of adolescent drug use . First Lady Nancy Reagan made the War on Drugs her main priority by founding the " Just Say No " drug awareness campaign , which aimed to discourage children and teenagers from engaging in recreational drug use by offering various ways of saying " no . " Nancy Reagan traveled to 65 cities in 33 states , raising awareness about the dangers of drugs including alcohol .

= = = Response to AIDS Epidemic = = =

The Reagan administration largely ignored the AIDS crisis , which began to unfold in the United States in 1981 , the same year Reagan took office . AIDS research was chronically underfunded during Reagan 's administration , and requests for more funding by doctors at the Centers for

Disease Control ( CDC ) were routinely denied . By the end of the first 12 months of the epidemic , when more than 1 @, @ 000 people had died of AIDS in the US , the CDC had spent less than \$ 1 million on AIDS research . In contrast , funding had been made amply available to the CDC in their efforts to stop Legionnaires ' disease after an outbreak in 1976 ; the CDC had spent \$ 9 million in fighting Legionnaires ' disease , though the outbreak had caused fewer than 50 deaths .

By the time President Reagan had given his first speech on the epidemic , some six years into his presidency , 36 @, @ 058 Americans had been diagnosed with AIDS and 20 @, @ 849 had died of it . By the end of 1989 , the year Reagan left office , 115 @, @ 786 people had been diagnosed with AIDS in the United States , and more than 70 @, @ 000 of them had died of it . It has been suggested that far fewer would have died , both then and in the decades that followed , if the Reagan Administration had applied the same determination in combatting AIDS as Gerald Ford 's Administration had applied to fighting Legionnaires ' disease .

= = = Libya bombing = = =

Relations between Libya and the United States under President Reagan were continually contentious , beginning with the Gulf of Sidra incident in 1981 ; by 1982 , Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi was considered by the CIA to be , along with USSR leader Leonid Brezhnev and Cuban leader Fidel Castro , part of a group known as the " unholy trinity " and was also labeled as " our international public enemy number one " by a CIA official . These tensions were later revived in early April 1986 , when a bomb exploded in a Berlin discothèque , resulting in the injury of 63 American military personnel and death of one serviceman . Stating that there was " irrefutable proof " that Libya had directed the " terrorist bombing , " Reagan authorized the use of force against the country . In the late evening of April 15 , 1986 , the United States launched a series of air strikes on ground targets in Libya .

The UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher allowed the U.S. Air Force to use Britain 's air bases to launch the attack , on the justification that the UK was supporting America 's right to self @-@ defense under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter . The attack was designed to halt Gaddafi 's " ability to export terrorism , " offering him " incentives and reasons to alter his criminal behavior . " The president addressed the nation from the Oval Office after the attacks had commenced , stating , " When our citizens are attacked or abused anywhere in the world on the direct orders of hostile regimes , we will respond so long as I 'm in this office . " The attack was condemned by many countries . By a vote of 79 in favor to 28 against with 33 abstentions , the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 41 / 38 which " condemns the military attack perpetrated against the Socialist People 's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya on April 15 , 1986 , which constitutes a violation of the Charter of the United Nations and of international law . "

= = = Immigration = = =

Reagan signed the Immigration Reform and Control Act in 1986 . The act made it illegal to knowingly hire or recruit illegal immigrants , required employers to attest to their employees ' immigration status , and granted amnesty to approximately three million illegal immigrants who entered the United States before January 1 , 1982 , and had lived in the country continuously . Critics argue that the employer sanctions were without teeth and failed to stem illegal immigration . Upon signing the act at a ceremony held beside the newly refurbished Statue of Liberty , Reagan said , " The legalization provisions in this act will go far to improve the lives of a class of individuals who now must hide in the shadows , without access to many of the benefits of a free and open society . Very soon many of these men and women will be able to step into the sunlight and , ultimately , if they choose , they may become Americans . " Reagan also said , " The employer sanctions program is the keystone and major element . It will remove the incentive for illegal immigration by eliminating the job opportunities which draw illegal aliens here . "

= = = Iran ? Contra affair = = =

In 1986 , the Iran ? Contra affair became a problem for the administration stemming from the use of proceeds from covert arms sales to Iran during the Iran ? Iraq War to fund the Contra rebels fighting against the government in Nicaragua , which had been specifically outlawed by an act of Congress . The affair became a political scandal in the United States during the 1980s . The International Court of Justice , whose jurisdiction to decide the case was disputed by the United States , ruled that the United States had violated international law and breached treaties in Nicaragua in various ways ( see Nicaragua v. United States ) .

President Reagan professed that he was unaware of the plot 's existence . He opened his own investigation and appointed two Republicans and one Democrat ( John Tower , Brent Scowcroft and Edmund Muskie , known as the " Tower Commission " ) to investigate the scandal . The commission could not find direct evidence that Reagan had prior knowledge of the program , but criticized him heavily for his disengagement from managing his staff , making the diversion of funds possible . A separate report by Congress concluded that " If the president did not know what his national security advisers were doing , he should have . " Reagan 's popularity declined from 67 % to 46 % in less than a week , the greatest and quickest decline ever for a president . The scandal resulted in fourteen indictments within Reagan 's staff , and eleven convictions .

Many Central Americans criticize Reagan for his support of the Contras , calling him an anti @-@ communist zealot , blinded to human rights abuses , while others say he " saved Central America . " Daniel Ortega , Sandinistan and president of Nicaragua , said that he hoped God would forgive Reagan for his " dirty war against Nicaragua . "

= = = = End of the Cold War = = = =

Until the early 1980s , the United States had relied on the qualitative superiority of its weapons to essentially frighten the Soviets , but the gap had been narrowed . Although the Soviet Union did not accelerate military spending after President Reagan 's military buildup , their large military expenses , in combination with collectivized agriculture and inefficient planned manufacturing , were a heavy burden for the Soviet economy . At the same time , Saudi Arabia increased oil production , which resulted in a drop of oil prices in 1985 to one @-@ third of the previous level ; oil was the main source of Soviet export revenues . These factors contributed to a stagnant Soviet economy during Gorbachev 's tenure .

Reagan recognized the change in the direction of the Soviet leadership with Mikhail Gorbachev , and shifted to diplomacy , with a view to encourage the Soviet leader to pursue substantial arms agreements . Reagan 's personal mission was to achieve " a world free of nuclear weapons , " which he regarded as " totally irrational , totally inhumane , good for nothing but killing , possibly destructive of life on earth and civilization . " He was able to start discussions on nuclear disarmament with General Secretary Gorbachev . Gorbachev and Reagan held four summit conferences between 1985 and 1988 : the first in Geneva , Switzerland , the second in Reykjavík , Iceland , the third in Washington , D.C. , and the fourth in Moscow . Reagan believed that if he could persuade the Soviets to allow for more democracy and free speech , this would lead to reform and the end of Communism .

Speaking at the Berlin Wall on June 12 , 1987 , Reagan challenged Gorbachev to go further , saying " General Secretary Gorbachev , if you seek peace , if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe , if you seek liberalization , come here to this gate ! Mr. Gorbachev , open this gate ! Mr. Gorbachev , tear down this wall ! "

Before Gorbachev 's visit to Washington , D.C. , for the third summit in 1987 , the Soviet leader announced his intention to pursue significant arms agreements . The timing of the announcement led Western diplomats to contend that Gorbachev was offering major concessions to the United States on the levels of conventional forces , nuclear weapons , and policy in Eastern Europe . He and Reagan signed the Intermediate @-@ Range Nuclear Forces Treaty ( INF ) at the White House , which eliminated an entire class of nuclear weapons . The two leaders laid the framework for the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty , or START I ; Reagan insisted that the name of the treaty be

changed from Strategic Arms Limitation Talks to Strategic Arms Reduction Talks .

When Reagan visited Moscow for the fourth summit in 1988 , he was viewed as a celebrity by the Soviets . A journalist asked the president if he still considered the Soviet Union the evil empire . " No , " he replied , " I was talking about another time , another era . " At Gorbachev 's request , Reagan gave a speech on free markets at the Moscow State University . In his autobiography , *An American Life* , Reagan expressed his optimism about the new direction that they charted and his warm feelings for Gorbachev . In November 1989 , ten months after Reagan left office , the Berlin Wall was opened , the Cold War was unofficially declared over at the Malta Summit on December 3 , 1989 , and two years later , the Soviet Union collapsed .

= = = Health = = =

Early in his presidency , Reagan started wearing a custom , technologically advanced hearing aid , first in his right ear and later in his left as well . His decision to go public in 1983 regarding his wearing the small , audio @-@ amplifying device boosted their sales .

On July 13 , 1985 , Reagan underwent surgery at Bethesda Naval Hospital to remove cancerous polyps from his colon . He relinquished presidential power to the Vice President for eight hours in a similar procedure as outlined in the 25th Amendment , which he specifically avoided invoking . The surgery lasted just under three hours and was successful . Reagan resumed the powers of the presidency later that day . In August of that year , he underwent an operation to remove skin cancer cells from his nose . In October , additional skin cancer cells were detected on his nose and removed .

In January 1987 , Reagan underwent surgery for an enlarged prostate which caused further worries about his health . No cancerous growths were found , however , and he was not sedated during the operation . In July of that year , aged 76 , he underwent a third skin cancer operation on his nose .

On January 7 , 1989 , Reagan underwent surgery at Walter Reed Army Medical Center to repair a Dupuytren 's contracture of the ring finger of his left hand . The surgery lasted for more than three hours and was performed under regional anesthesia . This procedure was done just thirteen days before he left office . For this reason he had a hand and finger bandage the day of his farewell speech and the day of the Inauguration of George H. W. Bush .

= = = Judiciary = = =

During his 1980 campaign , Reagan pledged that , if given the opportunity , he would appoint the first female Supreme Court Justice . That opportunity came in his first year in office when he nominated Sandra Day O 'Connor to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of Justice Potter Stewart . In his second term , Reagan elevated William Rehnquist to succeed Warren E. Burger as Chief Justice , and named Antonin Scalia to fill the vacant seat . Reagan nominated conservative jurist Robert Bork to the high court in 1987 . Senator Ted Kennedy , a Democrat of Massachusetts , strongly condemned Bork , and great controversy ensued . Bork 's nomination was rejected 58 ? 42 . Reagan then nominated Douglas Ginsburg , but Ginsburg withdrew his name from consideration after coming under fire for his cannabis use . Anthony Kennedy was eventually confirmed in his place . Along with his three Supreme Court appointments , Reagan appointed 83 judges to the United States Courts of Appeals , and 290 judges to the United States district courts .

Reagan also nominated Vaughn Walker , who would later be revealed to be the earliest known gay federal judge , to the United States District Court for the Central District of California . However , the nomination stalled in the Senate , and Walker was not confirmed until he was renominated by Reagan 's successor , George H. W. Bush .

Early in his tenure , Reagan appointed Clarence M. Pendleton , Jr . , of San Diego as the first African American to chair the United States Commission on Civil Rights . Pendleton tried to steer the commission into a conservative direction in line with Reagan 's views on social and civil rights policy during his time as tenure from 1981 until his sudden death in 1988 . Pendleton soon aroused the ire of many civil rights advocates and feminists when he ridiculed the comparable worth proposal as



being " Looney Tunes . "

In 1984 , Reagan commuted the 18 @-@ year sentence of former Louisiana Commissioner of Agriculture and Forestry Gil Dozier , a Democrat from Baton Rouge , to the time served for violations of both the Hobbs and the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations acts . On September 23 , 1980 , the United States District Court for the Middle District of Louisiana convicted Dozier of extortion and racketeering when he pushed companies doing business with his department to make campaign contributions on his behalf . Reagan determined that the 18 @-@ year sentence was excessive compared to what other political figures in similar circumstances had been receiving .

= = Post @-@ presidency = =

After leaving office in 1989 , the Reagans purchased a home in Bel Air , Los Angeles , in addition to the Reagan Ranch in Santa Barbara . They regularly attended Bel Air Presbyterian Church and occasionally made appearances on behalf of the Republican Party ; Reagan delivered a well @-@ received speech at the 1992 Republican National Convention . Previously on November 4 , 1991 , the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library was dedicated and opened to the public . At the dedication ceremonies , five presidents were in attendance , as well as six first ladies , marking the first time that five presidents were gathered in the same location . Reagan continued publicly to speak in favor of a line @-@ item veto ; the Brady Bill ; a constitutional amendment requiring a balanced budget ; and the repeal of the 22nd Amendment , which prohibits anyone from serving more than two terms as president . In 1992 Reagan established the Ronald Reagan Freedom Award with the newly formed Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation . His final public speech was on February 3 , 1994 , during a tribute to him in Washington , D.C. , and his last major public appearance was at the funeral of Richard Nixon on April 27 , 1994 .

= = = Alzheimer 's disease = = =

= = = = Announcement and reaction : 1994 = = = =

In August 1994 , at the age of 83 , Reagan was diagnosed with Alzheimer 's disease , an incurable neurological disorder which destroys brain cells and ultimately causes death . In November , he informed the nation through a handwritten letter , writing in part :

I have recently been told that I am one of the millions of Americans who will be afflicted with Alzheimer 's Disease ... At the moment I feel just fine . I intend to live the remainder of the years God gives me on this earth doing the things I have always done ... I now begin the journey that will lead me into the sunset of my life . I know that for America there will always be a bright dawn ahead . Thank you , my friends . May God always bless you .

After his diagnosis , letters of support from well @-@ wishers poured into his California home .

But there was also speculation over how long Reagan had demonstrated symptoms of mental degeneration . Former CBS White House correspondent Lesley Stahl recounted that , in her final meeting with the president in 1986 , Reagan did not seem to know who Stahl was , and that she came close to reporting that Reagan was senile , but at the end of the meeting , Reagan had regained his alertness . However , Dr. Lawrence K. Altman , a physician employed as a reporter for the New York Times , noted that " the line between mere forgetfulness and the beginning of Alzheimer 's can be fuzzy , " and all four of Reagan 's White House doctors said that they saw no evidence of Alzheimer 's while he was president . Dr. John E. Hutton , Reagan 's primary physician from 1984 to 1989 , said the president " absolutely " did not " show any signs of dementia or Alzheimer 's . " His former Chief of Staff James Baker considered " ludicrous " the idea that Reagan slept during cabinet meetings . Other staff members , former aides , and friends said they saw no indication of Alzheimer 's while he was president . Reagan did experience occasional memory lapses , though , especially with names . Reagan 's doctors say that he only began exhibiting overt symptoms of the illness in late 1992 or 1993 , several years after he had left office . For example ,

Reagan repeated a toast to Margaret Thatcher , with identical words and gestures , at his 82nd @-@ birthday party on Feb. 6 , 1993 .

Complicating the picture , Reagan suffered an episode of head trauma in July 1989 , five years before his diagnosis . After being thrown from a horse in Mexico , a subdural hematoma was found and surgically treated later in the year . Nancy Reagan , citing what doctors told her , asserts that her husband 's 1989 fall hastened the onset of Alzheimer 's disease , although acute brain injury has not been conclusively proven to accelerate Alzheimer 's or dementia . Reagan 's one @-@ time physician Daniel Ruge has said it is possible , but not certain , that the horse accident affected the course of Reagan 's memory .

= = = Progression : 1994 ? 2004 = = =

As the years went on , the disease slowly destroyed Reagan 's mental capacity . He was only able to recognize a few people , including his wife , Nancy . He remained active , however ; he took walks through parks near his home and on beaches , played golf regularly , and until 1999 he often went to his office in nearby Century City .

Reagan suffered a fall at his Bel Air home on January 13 , 2001 , resulting in a broken hip . The fracture was repaired the following day and the 89 @-@ year @-@ old Reagan returned home later that week , although he faced difficult physical therapy at home . On February 6 , 2001 , Reagan reached the age of 90 , becoming the third former president to do so ( the other two being John Adams and Herbert Hoover , with Gerald Ford , George H. W. Bush and Jimmy Carter later reaching 90 ) . Reagan 's public appearances became much less frequent with the progression of the disease , and as a result , his family decided that he would live in quiet semi @-@ isolation with his wife Nancy . Nancy Reagan told CNN 's Larry King in 2001 that very few visitors were allowed to see her husband because she felt that " Ronnie would want people to remember him as he was . " After her husband 's diagnosis and death , Nancy Reagan became a stem @-@ cell research advocate , urging Congress and President George W. Bush to support federal funding for embryonic stem @-@ cell research , something Bush opposed . In 2009 , she praised President Barack Obama for lifting restrictions on such research . Mrs. Reagan has said that she believes that it could lead to a cure for Alzheimer 's .

= = Death = =

Reagan died of pneumonia , complicated by Alzheimer 's disease , at his home in Bel Air , California , on the afternoon of June 5 , 2004 . A short time after his death , Nancy Reagan released a statement saying , " My family and I would like the world to know that President Ronald Reagan has died after 10 years of Alzheimer 's disease at 93 years of age . We appreciate everyone 's prayers . " President George W. Bush declared June 11 a National Day of Mourning , and international tributes came in from around the world . Reagan 's body was taken to the Kingsley and Gates Funeral Home in Santa Monica , California later in the day , where well @-@ wishers paid tribute by laying flowers and American flags in the grass . On June 7 , his body was removed and taken to the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library , where a brief family funeral was held conducted by Pastor Michael Wenning . His body lay in repose in the Library lobby until June 9 ; over 100 @,@ 000 people viewed the coffin .

On June 9 , Reagan 's body was flown to Washington , D.C. where he became the tenth United States president to lie in state ; in thirty @-@ four hours , 104 @,@ 684 people filed past the coffin .

On June 11 , a state funeral was conducted in the Washington National Cathedral , and presided over by President George W. Bush . Eulogies were given by former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher , former Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney , and both former President George H. W. Bush and President George W. Bush . Also in attendance were Mikhail Gorbachev , and many world leaders , including British Prime Minister Tony Blair , Prince Charles , representing his mother Queen Elizabeth II , German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder , Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi , and interim presidents Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan , and Ghazi al @-@ Yawer of Iraq .

After the funeral , the Reagan entourage was flown back to the Ronald W. Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley , California , where another service was held , and President Reagan was interred . At the time of his death , Reagan was the longest @-@ lived president in U.S. history , having lived 93 years and 120 days ( 2 years , 8 months , and 23 days longer than John Adams , whose record he surpassed ) . He is now the second longest @-@ lived president , just 45 days fewer than Gerald Ford . He was the first United States president to die in the 21st century , and his was the first state funeral in the United States since that of President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1973 .

His burial site is inscribed with the words he delivered at the opening of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library : " I know in my heart that man is good , that what is right will always eventually triumph and that there is purpose and worth to each and every life . "

= = Legacy = =

Since Reagan left office in 1989 , substantial debate has occurred among scholars , historians , and the general public surrounding his legacy . Supporters have pointed to a more efficient and prosperous economy as a result of Reagan 's economic policies , foreign policy triumphs including a peaceful end to the Cold War , and a restoration of American pride and morale . Proponents also argue Reagan restored faith in the American Dream with his unabated and passionate love for the United States , after a decline in American confidence and self @-@ respect under Jimmy Carter 's perceived weak leadership , particularly during the Iranian hostage crisis , as well as his gloomy , dreary outlook for the future of the United States during the 1980 election . Critics contend that Reagan 's economic policies resulted in rising budget deficits , a wider gap in wealth , and an increase in homelessness and that the Iran ? Contra affair lowered American credibility .

Opinions of Reagan 's legacy among the country 's leading policy makers and journalists differ as well . Edwin Feulner , president of The Heritage Foundation , said that Reagan " helped create a safer , freer world " and said of his economic policies : " He took an America suffering from ' malaise ' ... and made its citizens believe again in their destiny . " However , Mark Weisbrot , co @-@ Director of the Center for Economic and Policy Research , contended that Reagan 's " economic policies were mostly a failure " while Howard Kurtz of The Washington Post opined that Reagan was " a far more controversial figure in his time than the largely gushing obits on television would suggest . "

Despite the continuing debate surrounding his legacy , many conservative and liberal scholars agree that Reagan has been the most influential president since Franklin D. Roosevelt , leaving his imprint on American politics , diplomacy , culture , and economics through his effective communication , dedicated patriotism and pragmatic compromising . Since he left office , historians have reached a consensus , as summarized by British historian M. J. Heale , who finds that scholars now concur that Reagan rehabilitated conservatism , turned the nation to the right , practiced a considerably pragmatic conservatism that balanced ideology and the constraints of politics , revived faith in the presidency and in American exceptionalism , and contributed to victory in the Cold War .

= = Cold War = =

The Cold War was a major political , economic and military endeavor for over four decades , but the confrontation between the two superpowers had decreased dramatically by the end of Reagan 's presidency . The significance of Reagan 's role in ending the Cold War has spurred contentious and opinionated debate . That Reagan played a role in contributing to the downfall of the Soviet Union is agreed , but the extent of this role is continuously debated , with many believing that Reagan 's defense policies , economic policies , military policies and hard line rhetoric against the Soviet Union and Communism , as well as summits with General Secretary Gorbachev played a significant part in ending the Cold War .

He was first among post ? World War II presidents to put into practice the concept that the Soviet Union could be defeated rather than simply negotiated with , a post @-@ Détente strategy , a conviction that was vindicated by Gennadi Gerasimov , the Foreign Ministry spokesman under

Gorbachev , who said that the Strategic Defense Initiative was " very successful blackmail . ... The Soviet economy couldn 't endure such competition . " Reagan 's aggressive rhetoric toward the USSR had mixed effects ; Jeffery W. Knopf observes that being labeled " evil " probably made no difference to the Soviets but gave encouragement to the East @-@ European citizens opposed to communism .

General Secretary Gorbachev said of his former rival 's Cold War role : " [ He was ] a man who was instrumental in bringing about the end of the Cold War , " and deemed him " a great president . " Gorbachev does not acknowledge a win or loss in the war , but rather a peaceful end ; he said he was not intimidated by Reagan 's harsh rhetoric . Margaret Thatcher , former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom , said of Reagan , " he warned that the Soviet Union had an insatiable drive for military power ... but he also sensed it was being eaten away by systemic failures impossible to reform . " She later said , " Ronald Reagan had a higher claim than any other leader to have won the Cold War for liberty and he did it without a shot being fired . " Said Brian Mulroney , former Prime Minister of Canada : " He enters history as a strong and dramatic player [ in the Cold War ] . " Former President Lech Wa??sa of Poland acknowledged , " Reagan was one of the world leaders who made a major contribution to communism 's collapse . " That Reagan had little or no effect in ending the Cold War is argued with equal weight ; that Communism 's internal weakness had become apparent , and the Soviet Union would have collapsed in the end regardless of who was in power . President Harry S. Truman 's policy of containment is also regarded as a force behind the fall of the U.S.S.R. , and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan undermined the Soviet system itself .

= = = Domestic and political legacy = = =

Ronald Reagan reshaped the Republican party , led the modern conservative movement , and altered the political dynamic of the United States . More men voted Republican under Reagan , and Reagan tapped into religious voters . The so @-@ called " Reagan Democrats " were a result of his presidency .

After leaving office , Reagan became an iconic influence within the Republican party . His policies and beliefs have been frequently invoked by Republican presidential candidates since 1989 . The 2008 Republican presidential candidates were no exception , for they aimed to liken themselves to him during the primary debates , even imitating his campaign strategies . Republican nominee John McCain frequently said that he came to office as " a foot soldier in the Reagan Revolution . " Reagan 's most famous statement regarding the role of smaller government was that " Government is not a solution to our problem , government is the problem . "

Reagan has become an iconic figure in the Republican Party , with praise for his accomplishments part of the standard GOP rhetoric a quarter century after his retirement . Washington Post reporter Carlos Lozada notes how in the 2016 presidential race the main Republican contenders have adopted " standard GOP Gipper worship , " including even Donald Trump , who previously had been skeptical .

The period of American history most dominated by Ronald Reagan and his policies concerning taxes , welfare , defense , the federal judiciary and the Cold War is known today as the Reagan Era , and emphasizes that the conservative " Reagan Revolution , " led by Reagan , had a permanent impact on the United States in domestic and foreign policy . The Clinton presidency ( 1993 ? 2001 ) is often treated as an extension of the Reagan Era , as is the Bush presidency ( 2001 ? 09 ) . Historian Eric Foner noted that the Obama candidacy in 2008 " aroused a great deal of wishful thinking among those yearning for a change after nearly thirty years of Reaganism . "

Campaigning for the Democratic nomination in 2008 , Barack Obama , an American liberal , interpreted how Reagan changed the nation 's trajectory :

I think Ronald Reagan changed the trajectory of America in a way that Richard Nixon did not and in a way that Bill Clinton did not . He put us on a fundamentally different path because the country was ready for it . I think they felt like with all the excesses of the 1960s and 1970s and government had grown and grown but there wasn 't much sense of accountability in terms of how it was operating . I think that people ... he just tapped into what people were already feeling , which was we want clarity

, we want optimism , we want a return to that sense of dynamism and entrepreneurship that had been missing .

= = = Cultural and political image = = =

According to columnist Chuck Raasch , " Reagan transformed the American presidency in ways that only a few have been able to . " He redefined the political agenda of the times , advocating lower taxes , a conservative economic philosophy , and a stronger military . His role in the Cold War further enhanced his image as a different kind of leader . Reagan 's " avuncular style , optimism , and plain @-@ folks demeanor " also helped him turn " government @-@ bashing into an art form . "

As a sitting president , Reagan did not have the highest approval ratings , but his popularity has increased since 1989 . Gallup polls in 2001 and 2007 ranked him number one or number two when correspondents were asked for the greatest president in history . Reagan ranked third of post ? World War II presidents in a 2007 Rasmussen Reports poll , fifth in an ABC 2000 poll , ninth in another 2007 Rasmussen poll , and eighth in a late 2008 poll by United Kingdom newspaper The Times . In a Siena College survey of over 200 historians , however , Reagan ranked sixteenth out of 42 . While the debate about Reagan 's legacy is ongoing , the 2009 Annual C @-@ SPAN Survey of Presidential Leaders ranked Reagan the 10th greatest president . The survey of leading historians rated Reagan number 11 in 2000 .

In 2011 , the Institute for the Study of the Americas released the first ever UK academic survey to rate U.S. presidents . This poll of UK specialists in U.S. history and politics placed Reagan as the 8th greatest U.S. president .

Reagan 's ability to connect with Americans earned him the laudatory moniker " The Great Communicator . " Of it , Reagan said , " I won the nickname the great communicator . But I never thought it was my style that made a difference ? it was the content . I wasn 't a great communicator , but I communicated great things . " His age and soft @-@ spoken speech gave him a warm grandfatherly image .

Reagan also earned the nickname " the Teflon President , " in that public perceptions of him were not tarnished by the controversies that arose during his administration . According to Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder , who coined the phrase , and reporter Howard Kurtz , the epithet referred to Reagan 's ability to " do almost anything wrong and not get blamed for it . "

Public reaction to Reagan was always mixed ; the oldest president was supported by young voters , and began an alliance that shifted many of them to the Republican party . Reagan did not fare well with minority groups , especially African @-@ Americans . This was largely due to his opposition to affirmative action policies . However , his support of Israel throughout his presidency earned him support from many Jews . He emphasized family values in his campaigns and during his presidency , although he was the first president to have been divorced . The combination of Reagan 's speaking style , unabashed patriotism , negotiation skills , as well as his savvy use of the media , played an important role in defining the 1980s and his future legacy .

Reagan was known to joke frequently during his lifetime , displayed humor throughout his presidency , and was famous for his storytelling . His numerous jokes and one @-@ liners have been labeled " classic quips " and " legendary . " Among the most notable of his jokes was one regarding the Cold War . As a microphone test in preparation for his weekly radio address in August 1984 , Reagan made the following joke : " My fellow Americans , I 'm pleased to tell you today that I 've signed legislation that will outlaw Russia forever . We begin bombing in five minutes . " Former aide David Gergen commented , " It was that humor ... that I think endeared people to Reagan . "

= = = Honors = = =

Reagan received a number of awards in his pre- and post @-@ presidential years . After his election as president , Reagan received a lifetime gold membership in the Screen Actors Guild , was inducted into the National Speakers Association Speaker Hall of Fame and received the United

States Military Academy 's Sylvanus Thayer Award .

In 1981 , Ronald Reagan was inducted as a Laureate of The Lincoln Academy of Illinois and awarded the Order of Lincoln ( the state 's highest honor ) by the Governor of Illinois in the area of Government .

In 1989 , Reagan was made an Honorary Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath , one of the highest British orders ( this entitled him to the use of the post @-@ nominal letters " GCB " but , as a foreign national , not to be known as " Sir Ronald Reagan " ) ; only two American presidents have received this honor , Reagan and George H.W. Bush . Reagan was also named an honorary Fellow of Keble College , Oxford . Japan awarded him the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Chrysanthemum in 1989 ; he was the second American president to receive the order and the first to have it given to him for personal reasons ( Dwight D. Eisenhower received it as a commemoration of U.S.-Japanese relations ) .

On January 18 , 1993 , Reagan 's former Vice @-@ President and sitting President George H. W. Bush awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom ( awarded with distinction ) , the highest honor that the United States can bestow . Reagan was also awarded the Republican Senatorial Medal of Freedom , the highest honor bestowed by Republican members of the Senate .

On Reagan 's 87th birthday , in 1998 , Washington National Airport was renamed Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport by a bill signed into law by President Bill Clinton . That year , the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center was dedicated in Washington , D.C. He was among 18 included in Gallup 's List of Widely Admired People of the 20th century , from a poll conducted in the U.S. in 1999 ; two years later , USS Ronald Reagan was christened by Nancy Reagan and the United States Navy . It is one of few Navy ships christened in honor of a living person and the first aircraft carrier to be named in honor of a living former president .

In 1998 the U.S. Navy Memorial Foundation awarded Reagan its Naval Heritage award for his support of the U S Navy and military in both his film career and while he served as president .

Congress authorized the creation of the Ronald Reagan Boyhood Home National Historic Site in Dixon , Illinois in 2002 , pending federal purchase of the property . On May 16 of that year , Nancy Reagan accepted the Congressional Gold Medal , the highest civilian honor bestowed by Congress , on behalf of the president and herself .

After Reagan 's death , the United States Postal Service issued a President Ronald Reagan commemorative postage stamp in 2005 . Later in the year , CNN , along with the editors of Time magazine , named him the " most fascinating person " of the network 's first 25 years ; Time listed Reagan one of the 100 Most Important People of the 20th century as well . The Discovery Channel asked its viewers to vote for The Greatest American in June 2005 ; Reagan placed in first place , ahead of Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr .

In 2006 , Reagan was inducted into the California Hall of Fame , located at The California Museum for History , Women , and the Arts . Every year since 2002 , California Governors Gray Davis and Arnold Schwarzenegger have proclaimed February 6 " Ronald Reagan Day " in the state of California in honor of their most famous predecessor . In 2010 , Schwarzenegger signed Senate Bill 944 , authored by Senator George Runner , to make every February 6 Ronald Reagan Day in California .

In 2007 , Polish President Lech Kaczyński posthumously conferred on Reagan the highest Polish distinction , the Order of the White Eagle , saying that Reagan had inspired the Polish people to work for change and helped to unseat the repressive communist regime ; Kaczyński said it " would not have been possible if it was not for the tough @-@ mindedness , determination , and feeling of mission of President Ronald Reagan . " Reagan backed the nation of Poland throughout his presidency , supporting the anti @-@ communist Solidarity movement , along with Pope John Paul II ; the Ronald Reagan Park , a public facility in Gdańsk , was named in his honor .

On June 3 , 2009 , Nancy Reagan unveiled a statue of her late husband in the United States Capitol rotunda . The statue represents the state of California in the National Statuary Hall Collection . After Reagan 's death , both major American political parties agreed to erect a statue of Reagan in the place of that of Thomas Starr King . The day before , President Obama signed the Ronald Reagan Centennial Commission Act into law , establishing a commission to plan activities to mark

the upcoming centenary of Reagan 's birth .

Independence Day 2011 saw the unveiling of another statue to Reagan ? this time in the British capital of London , outside the American Embassy , Grosvenor Square . The unveiling was supposed to be attended by Reagan 's wife , Nancy , but she did not attend ; former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice took her place and read a statement on her behalf ; further to the former First Lady 's absence President Reagan 's friend , and the sole British Prime Minister during Reagan 's presidency , Baroness Thatcher , was also unable to attend due to frail health .

= = = Historiography = = =

Johns , Andrew L. , ed . A Companion to Ronald Reagan ( Wiley @-@ Blackwell , 2015 ) . xiv , 682 pp . ; topical essays by scholars emphasizing historiography contents ? free at many libraries