

= Death and state funeral of Ronald Reagan =

On June 5 , 2004 , Ronald Reagan , the 40th President of the United States , died after having suffered from Alzheimer 's disease for nearly a decade . His seven @-@ day state funeral followed . After Reagan 's death , his body was taken from his Bel Air , Los Angeles home to the Gates , Kingsley and Gates Funeral Home in Santa Monica , California to prepare the body for burial . On June 7 , Reagan 's casket was transported by hearse and displayed at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley , California , then flown to Washington , D.C. on June 9 for a service , public viewing and tributes at the U.S. Capitol .

After lying in state for thirty @-@ four hours in the Capitol rotunda , a state funeral service was conducted at the Washington National Cathedral on June 11 , the day when President George W. Bush declared a national day of mourning . Later that day , after the service , Reagan 's casket was transported back to California for interment at the Reagan Presidential Library . The state funeral was executed by the Military District of Washington (MDW) and was the first since that of Lyndon B. Johnson in 1973 . Richard Nixon , who presided over Johnson 's funeral , declined to have a state funeral in 1994 . Reagan was the first U.S. former president to die in the 21st century .

= = Death = =

On the morning of June 5 , 2004 , there were reports that Reagan 's health had significantly deteriorated , following nine years of Alzheimer 's disease . He died of pneumonia at his home at 13 : 09 PDT , at the age of 93 .

President George W. Bush was in Paris when Reagan died and acknowledged the death in a press conference . President Bush made the following statement on June 5 , 2004 :

American flags at the White House , across the United States , and around the world over official U.S. installations and operating locations , were ordered flown at half @-@ staff for 30 days in a presidential proclamation by President Bush . In the announcement of Reagan 's death , Bush also declared June 11 a National Day of Mourning .

Some of the early international tributes to Reagan included those of Queen Elizabeth II , former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher , former Soviet Union Leader Mikhail Gorbachev , British Prime Minister Tony Blair , former Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney , Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin , and French President Jacques Chirac . Martin advised Governor General Adrienne Clarkson to order all flags across Canada and at all Canadian diplomatic missions in the United States flown to half @-@ staff on the 11th as well , in sympathy with the U.S. ' s National Day of Mourning . In Germany , Chancellor Gerhard Schröder ordered flags flown at half @-@ staff above government buildings on the 11th as well .

People marked Reagan 's death by leaving tributes and condolences at U.S. embassies and consulates overseas , as well as at locales around the country significant to Reagan 's life , including his presidential library , his birthplace in Tampico , Illinois , the funeral home where his body was taken after he died , and the Tau Kappa Epsilon fraternity house in Eureka , Illinois .

After Reagan 's death , campaigning for the ongoing U.S. presidential election was considered disrespectful during a time of mourning , and was suspended . The 2004 Canadian federal election was also to be held ; Martin , Opposition Leader Stephen Harper , the Conservative leader , and NDP Leader Jack Layton suspended their campaigns , citing respect for Reagan .

= = Funeral events = =

= = = Reagan Library = = =

On June 7 , Reagan 's body was removed from the funeral home and driven in a 20 @-@ mile @-@ per @-@ hour motorcade , by hearse , to the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley .

Reagan 's casket , a Marsellus Masterpiece model , was carried by a military honor guard representing all branches of the United States Armed Forces into the lobby of the library to lie in repose . There , a brief family service was conducted by the Reverend Dr. Michael H. Wenning , former pastor of Bel Air Presbyterian Church , where Reagan worshipped . When the prayer service concluded , Nancy Reagan and her family approached the casket , where Mrs. Reagan laid her head on it . After the family left , the doors of the presidential library opened , and the public began filing in at a rate of 2 @ , @ 000 an hour throughout the night . In all , about 108 @ , @ 000 people visited the presidential library to see the casket .

= = = Departure to Washington = = =

On June 9 , Reagan 's casket was removed from the presidential library and driven in a motorcade to NAS Point Mugu in Oxnard , California ; it was the same airfield Reagan flew into and out of during his presidency when visiting his California ranch . SAM 28000 , one of the two Boeing 747 @ - @ 200s , which usually serves the president as Air Force One , arrived to transport the casket to Washington . Thousands of people gathered to witness the plane 's departure . Just before she boarded the VC @ - @ 25A Presidential Aircraft , Nancy Reagan waved to the crowd with her military escort at her side . The plane lifted off at about 9 : 40 AM PST .

= = = Events in Washington = = =

In Washington , D.C. , members of Congress , and much of the public , paid tribute to Reagan immediately after his death and throughout his funeral .

= = = Funeral procession = = =

Events in the capital began when Reagan 's casket arrived at Andrews Air Force Base , Maryland . It was removed from the plane , driven by hearse in a procession through the Maryland and Virginia suburbs and the nation 's capital , across the Memorial Bridge , and onto Constitution Avenue .

Just before the plane arrived at Andrews , the Capitol was evacuated for a brief period , for a plane carrying Kentucky Governor Ernie Fletcher was off course and created a scare by entering restricted airspace ; the incident was attributed to radio problems on board the plane and did not affect funeral events .

Near the Ellipse , and within sight of the White House , the hearse halted and Reagan 's body was transferred to a horse @ - @ drawn caisson for the procession down Constitution Avenue to Capitol Hill . Nancy Reagan stepped out of her limousine to witness the body 's transfer ; she was met with a warm greeting , including applause . The cortege began the 45 @ - @ minute journey just after 6 : 00 PM EST , with the Reagan family following in limousines . Military units escorted the caisson as it made its way to the sounds of muffled drums . Behind the caisson was a riderless horse named Sergeant York , carrying Reagan 's riding boots reversed in the stirrups . The caisson paused at 4th Street and Constitution Avenue , where 21 Air Force F @ - @ 15 's from Seymour Johnson Air Force Base , North Carolina , flew over in missing man formation .

= = = Capitol Hill = = =

The caisson stopped when it arrived at Capitol Hill ; military units removed it , and " Hail to the Chief " was played amidst a 21 @ - @ gun salute . The casket was carried up the west front steps of the Capitol , mainly because Reagan was first inaugurated there and he wanted to face west , toward California . Two teams of military pallbearers carried the casket up the steps of the Capitol to " The Battle Hymn of the Republic " .

When the casket reached the top of the steps , Nancy Reagan and her military escort met it . As the casket passed them , Mrs. Reagan momentarily pulled away from her escort , reached out , and touched the casket . They followed it inside to the rotunda .

The casket was placed under the rotunda , where it lay in state on Abraham Lincoln 's catafalque . An evening memorial service then took place , with dignitaries primarily composed of Congressional members , members of the United States Supreme Court , and the diplomatic corps ; the Reverend Daniel Coughlin , Chaplain of the House of Representatives , gave the invocation . Eulogies were then delivered by Senate President pro tempore Ted Stevens , House Speaker Dennis Hastert , and Vice President Dick Cheney .

After the eulogies , the three speakers each laid a wreath at the casket , and the Senate Chaplain , the Reverend Barry Black , gave the benediction . Cheney escorted Mrs. Reagan to the casket , where she said her goodbyes . The dignitaries in the room paid their respects during the next half @-@ hour . In a rare instance , the doors of the Capitol were then opened to the public , who stood in lines stretching many blocks to view the casket .

= = = = Public viewing = = = =

The general public stood in long lines waiting for a turn to pay their respects to the president . People passed by the casket at a rate of about 5 @,@ 000 per hour (83 @.@ 3 per minute resp . 1 @.@ 4 per second) and the wait time for some exceeded seven hours . In all , 104 @,@ 684 paid their respects when Reagan lay in state . The Washington Metro subway set a then daily record in ridership of 850 @,@ 636 as a result .

After returning to Washington following the G8 summit , President George W. Bush and First Lady Laura Bush visited the rotunda to pay their respects . Many world leaders did the same , including interim Iraqi President Ghazi al @-@ Yawer , former Polish president Lech Wa??sa , Gorbachev , and Thatcher , Reagan 's good friend and associate .

While Reagan 's casket lay in state , Nancy Reagan and her family took up temporary residence in Blair House , the official residence of guests of the President of the United States . There , she was greeted by additional dignitaries and public figures . During a visit from Thatcher , the former Prime Minister wrote in the Blair House condolence book , " To Ronnie , Well done , thou good and faithful servant . "

= = = State funeral service = = =

After thirty @-@ four hours of lying in state , the doors of the Capitol were closed to the public and Nancy Reagan was escorted in , where she had a moment alone with the casket . A military honor guard entered and carried it down the west steps of the Capitol to a 21 @-@ gun salute where Mrs. Reagan , holding her hand over her heart , met it . After it was placed in a hearse , the motorcade departed on the five mile @-@ trip to the Washington National Cathedral , where the state funeral service was to be held ; crowds lined the route of the cortege as the hearse made its way .

= = = Dignitaries = = =

About 4 @,@ 000 people gathered at the cathedral for the service , including President and Mrs. Bush , former presidents George H. W. and Barbara Bush , Gerald and Betty Ford , Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter , and Bill and Hillary Clinton . Members of Congress and past and present governors were also present .

Foreign dignitaries attended as well , coming from 165 nations . The dignitaries included 36 past and present heads of state and government , and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan . Leading the dignitaries were Gorbachev , Thatcher , Mulroney , and Prince Charles (representing Queen Elizabeth II) . Other world leaders included UK Prime Minister Tony Blair and his wife Cherie , German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder , former Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone , Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi , Jordan 's King Abdullah , as well as interim presidents Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan and Ghazi al @-@ Yawer of Iraq , and Irish President Mary McAleese . Blair , Schröder , Berlusconi , Karzai , King Abdullah , and al @-@ Yawer had been at the G8 summit in Sea Island , Georgia , and later decided to extend their stay in the U.S. to attend the

funeral . Schröder said about attending the funeral : " It is appropriate that the German chancellor says , ' Thank you , ' and that is what I 'm doing . ' " For Karzai , the funeral was part of his week @-@ long visit to the U.S. and it was the beginning of his visit to Washington . He scrapped a visit to the West Coast to visit the Afghan community there to attend the funeral . World leaders who attended the summit , but decided not to extend their stay in the U.S. to attend the funeral , paid tribute at the summit , including Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin , French President Jacques Chirac , Russian President Vladimir Putin , Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern , also president of the European Union , and Japanese Prime Minister Junichir? Koizumi . McAleese 's presence had special significance , as she paid tribute to Reagan 's Irish roots , recalling his visit to Ireland in 1984 . In addition , Taiwan 's President of the Control Yuan Frederick Chien and Representative Chen Chien @-@ jen attended the funeral .

The funeral for Reagan was the largest in the United States since that of John F. Kennedy in 1963 . President Kennedy 's daughter , Caroline , and her husband , Edwin Schlossberg , both attended .

= = = = Cathedral events = = = =

The motorcade arrived at the Cathedral and Reagan 's casket was removed . The bearers carrying it paused on the Cathedral steps , and an opening prayer was given by Bishop John Bryson Chane , Dean of the Washington National Cathedral . The casket was then carried down the aisle ; the Reagan family followed and Mrs. Reagan was escorted to her seat by President Bush . Rabbi Harold Kushner and Supreme Court Associate Justice Sandra Day O 'Connor (the first female Supreme Court justice , whom Reagan appointed) , then each gave a reading , which preceded the eulogies . The choir then sang hymns ? " Faire is the Heaven " ; " Bring Us , O Lord " ; " And I saw a New Heaven " ? before Thatcher delivered the first eulogy . In view of her failing mental faculties following several small strokes , the message had been pre @-@ recorded several months earlier and was broadcast throughout the Cathedral on plasma television screens . During the speech , Thatcher said , " We have lost a great president , a great American and a great man , and I have lost a dear friend . "

Following Thatcher 's eulogy , Mulroney delivered his , ending with : " In the presence of his beloved and indispensable Nancy , his children , his family , his friends and all of the American people that he so deeply revered , I say au revoir today to a gifted leader and historic president and a gracious human being . "

Former President George H. W. Bush then spoke , his voice breaking at one point when describing Reagan ; Bush had been Reagan 's Vice President from 1981 to 1989 . His son , President George W. Bush , was the last to give a eulogy , saying in part , " Ronald Reagan belongs to the ages now , but we preferred it when he belonged to us ... In his last years he saw through a glass darkly . Now he sees his Savior face to face . And we look for that fine day when we will see him again , all weariness gone , clear of mind , strong and sure and smiling again , and the sorrow of this parting gone forever . "

The choir then sang " The Battle Hymn of the Republic " and Theodore Edgar McCarrick , Cardinal Archbishop of Washington , delivered a Bible reading from the Gospel of Matthew . The celebrant , former Missouri Senator the Reverend John Danforth , delivered the homily and Irish tenor Ronan Tynan sang songs such as " Ave Maria " and " Amazing Grace " at the request of Nancy Reagan . The Reverend Ted Eastman , former Bishop of Maryland , delivered the benediction , flanked by Reverend Danforth and Reverend Chane .

= = = Interment at the Reagan Library = = =

= = = = Return to California = = = =

After the service , the casket was removed from the cathedral and driven to Andrews Air Force Base for the return to California , passing crowds along its route . The family and close friends

boarded the VC 25 @-@ A Presidential Aircraft , and as she had done previously , Nancy Reagan waved farewell to the crowds just before boarding the plane .

About five hours after the aircraft departed Andrews , it touched down at Naval Base Ventura County , Point Mugu , California . The public , including sailors from the USS Ronald Reagan , was there to witness the plane 's arrival . Reagan 's body was driven in a large motorcade on one final trip though the streets of southern California .

= = = Burial service and interment = = =

The service drew 700 invited guests , including former Reagan administration officials such as George P. Shultz , and noted dignitaries ; Margaret Thatcher , who traveled on the plane from Washington , sat next to California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and his wife , Maria Shriver ; former California Governor Pete Wilson was in attendance , as well as former Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan . Hollywood actors and other celebrities also attended , including Mr. Reagan 's first wife , actress Jane Wyman , Kirk Douglas , Charlton Heston , Mickey Rooney , Dolores Hope (widow of Bob Hope) , Merv Griffin , Tommy Lasorda , Wayne Gretzky , Scott Baio , Bo Derek , Tom Selleck , Pat Sajak , Wayne Newton , and the Sinatra family . The three surviving Reagan children , Michael , Patti , and Ron , gave final eulogies at the interment ceremony .

Eulogies finished , and the service over , the Air Force Band of the Golden West played four " ruffles and flourishes " , and the U.S. Army Chorus sang " The Star @-@ Spangled Banner " . Bagpiper Eric Rigler played " Amazing Grace " as the casket was moved to its grave site and placed on a plinth . There , burial rites were given , followed by a last 21 @-@ gun salute ; members of the armed services fired three volleys and a bugler played " Taps " . At that time , four Navy F / A @-@ 18 fighter jets flew over in missing man formation , and the flag that flew over the Capitol during President Reagan 's 1981 inauguration was folded by the honor guard and was presented to Nancy Reagan by Captain James Symonds , the commanding officer of the USS Ronald Reagan .

After Nancy Reagan accepted the flag , she approached the casket and spent several minutes patting and stroking it . She laid her head down on the casket , before breaking down and crying ; The Washington Post described Mrs. Reagan as having been " stoic through nearly a week of somber rituals " but she " surrendered to her grief after being handed the flag that had covered her husband 's coffin . " While she cried , she kissed the casket and said " I love you " . Her children surrounded her , and attempted to console her . Mrs. Reagan then walked away with her military escort , clutching the folded flag . The military band began to play the Victorian hymn " My Faith Looks Up to Thee " as the Reagan children said their goodbyes . Funeral attendees had an opportunity to file past the coffin .

The casket was lowered into the vault and closed approximately before 3 : 00 AM PDT the next day . The exterior of the horseshoe shaped monument is inscribed with a quote Ronald Reagan delivered in 1991 :

= = Music = =

Music played during the week @-@ long events included four ruffles and flourishes , " Hail to the Chief " , " My Country , ' Tis of Thee " , " The Battle Hymn of the Republic " , " Amazing Grace " , " Eternal Father , Strong to Save " (also known as " The Navy Hymn ") , " God of Our Fathers " , " Mansions of the Lord " , " God Bless America " , " America the Beautiful " , " Going Home " , and " On a Hymnsong of Philip Bliss " by David Holsinger .

= = Security measures = =

The state funeral marked the first time that Washington had hosted a major event since the September 11 attacks . As a result , the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) designated the state funeral a National Special Security Event (NSSE) . Special precautions were taken because many of the events were open to the public and there were multiple protectees . As means of

assisting the motorcade , many streets were temporarily blocked off by law enforcement .

Attorney General John Ashcroft told a Senate hearing before the funeral : " It is a sad commentary when the observation of a memorial service for a former president of the United States must be labeled a National Special Security Event . Such is the fact of modern life in Washington and such is the nature of the war against al Qaeda . " MPDC Chief Charles H. Ramsey agreed saying , " In a post 9 / 11 world , we have to be very concerned ... and aware of the potential that something could happen , not that we 've received any information at all . "

However , DHS was handling another NSSE at the same time : the G 8 Summit in Sea Island , Georgia .

During the services , the news media made note that the security measures also made evident that the era of terrorism that the world was experiencing had its roots during the Reagan years . The worst act of terrorism against the United States prior to 9 / 11 , the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie , Scotland , which killed 189 Americans , happened during the Reagan years .

= = Public and media comments = =

The majority of those commemorating Reagan were supporters of his , although not all held the 40th president in high regard . In one noted example , Paul Mays , a retired engineer who never thought much of Reagan 's politics , witnessed the motorcade leave the tarmac at Andrews Air Force Base ; he commented " This is history " . Frank Dubois , an American University professor , also was there for the motorcade , though of the laudatory praise he remarked , " [Reagan] hurt the environment ; there was double digit inflation . I just don 't get it . "

The majority of media coverage of the event was deferential . Most major news organizations broadcast the various events live multiple times ; during the week , the cable channel C-SPAN broadcast uninterrupted coverage of the funeral ceremonies . A few complained , however , that the television coverage was excessive and preempted coverage of other events . CBS News anchor Dan Rather was quoted as saying : " Even though everybody is respectful and wants to pay homage to the president , life does go on . There is other news , like the reality of Iraq . It got very short shrift this weekend . " Throughout the week , media experts reported that the national mourning , televised nearly non stop on many television networks , provided Americans welcome respite from unhappy reports that American troops were being killed in Iraq and Afghanistan , giving them a sense of good news they had been desperate for since the September 11 attacks .

Reagan 's obituaries also included a few criticisms . Richard Goldstein of The Village Voice criticized the funeral for its careful orchestration , writing , " Because the networks had so long to plan for this production ... this was the most precisely mounted news event in modern times . Each gesture was minutely choreographed , every tear strategically placed . "

Additionally , some media outlets were criticized for lionizing Reagan without paying equal attention to more controversial decisions made during his administration . Thomas Kunkel , dean of the University of Maryland , College Park 's journalism college , wrote in A magazine that the coverage " would have you believe that Reagan was a cross between Abe Lincoln and Mother Teresa , with an overlay of Mister Rogers . " Howard Kurtz , The Washington Post 's media columnist , said Reagan was " a far more controversial figure in his time than the largely gushing obits on television would suggest . " The Nation ran a series of articles about the many controversies of his presidency .

= = Gallery = =