Wall of Presidents

As we travel through life, we simultaneously co-exist with many luminaries of our time. Not least of which are the presidents we come to know. With a somewhat jaundiced eye, I present recollections of the presidents during my lifetime.

One of my first memories is of a picture of the dark side of the moon, taken by our great arch-rival, the Soviets. Fortunately, Dwight David Eisenhower was president and he would keep us safe. He was a grandfatherly sort and since one of my grandfathers died before I could remember him, I liked Ike in a grandson sort of way.

John F. Kennedy was a whole different story. He had his hands full and then came the Berlin Wall. He did his best to address the problem and even journeyed to Berlin where he gave his famous, “Ich bin ein Berliner” speech. JFK didn’t know it, but “ein Berliner” was colloquial for a type of jelly donut in Berlin. Having declared in fact that he was a jelly donut, I developed a love for jelly donuts.

Lyndon Baines Johnson was cut from different cloth. Possibly our most profane president up to that point, when he had somebody under his control he would famously say, “I have his pecker in my pocket.” LBJ inspired me in my own experiments with profanity and I have to say that, with diligent practice, I’ve become quite good at that art.

Richard Nixon was an interesting character. He cozied up to one of the greatest mass murders of all time, Chairman Mao, and even paid a visit to the Great Wall. While Nixon inspired confidence by declaring “I am not a crook,” he was certainly paranoid. During his term, I was inspired to experiment with popular herbal products. This led to my own experience with paranoia. It is not a state I can recommend.

Gerald Ford was our accidental president. As if to confirm his status, he would periodically stumble. As I continued my experiments with herbal products, I periodically stumbled, too. Again, not a state I can recommend.

Jimmy Carter was probably our least profane president. As he famously confessed in his Playboy interview, he had gone so far as to have “lusted in my heart.” Being a young man in my twenties, I took his lead and often found myself in that same torporific condition.

Ronald Reagan was officially our first actor president. He had the same love of walls that JFK did, as evidenced in his oft-quoted line, “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down that wall!” Ever prescient, I attempted my assault on a different wall during his presidency. In 1987 I submitted my first application to SMS, fancying myself a technical writer. I got a nice letter back explaining that I was not of interest to them. Imagine how things could have been if I had teamed up with Alex on his voyage on those seas.

George H. W. Bush became an advocate for the hearing impaired, as he urged citizens to “read my lips.” Unfortunately, he paired that statement with a promise not to raise taxes. When he subsequently raised them, I paid them. During his term, I did successfully climb over the wall at SMS, this time convincing them that I could render valuable services.

William Jefferson Clinton rode to victory, promising that he, too, could provide valuable services. Unfortunately, he often provided personal services that he believed to be valuable but that others felt were immoral or criminal. During his term, there were no interns in my area so I took the safer route of actually marrying a colleague.

George W. Bush was a premature president. From his famous “Mission Accomplished” banner to “Good job, Browney,” he seemed to think things were finished when they weren’t. During his time as president, I periodically visited Florida, under the guise of being a Phillies fan and attended Spring Training games. My actual goal was to understand Florida Man better and to try and figure out how the Swamper State figures in our national elections. I am still working on that one.

Barak Hussain Obama was a confusing fellow. He appeared to have no birth certificate and his parental line was of suspicious origin. In addition, he had conducted experiments with herbal products as a youth. For that reason, I wholeheartedly endorsed him.

And this brings us to Donald Trump. Like Nixon he admires walls. As a scion of the building industry, he wants to build one. He is no jelly donut. And though he is not a politician by trade, he handles facts and figures like one. He has inspired me to reinvent myself, take free money from my former employer, and Make Steve Fairbrother Great Again!

From these observations, I hope you can see that most of our presidents have their foibles. If, like me, you can take these things and learn from them you are more liable to enjoy your time with each of these characters. The office is a great one but to expect great things from each may be stretching things. They each try their best but like all of us are sometimes overmatched by what the world offers. Remember to focus on those entertaining aspects of each and whether you admire or dislike walls, remember that you are in good company.