

**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

Presidential Places

Richard Nixon: Childhood Home, Museum, and Grave

Presidential Places

George Washington	Birthplace
Andrew Jackson	Home and Grave
Abraham Lincoln	Home, Museum, and Tomb
Herbert Hoover	Childhood Home, Museum, and Grave
Harry Truman	Birthplace, Home, and Museum/Library
Dwight D. Eisenhower	Childhood Home and Museum
Ronald Reagan	Museum and Grave
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George H.W. Bush	Museum/Library
William Clinton	Childhood Home
William Clinton	Museum/Library
George W. Bush	Museum/Library

Reflections on Visits to Presidential Places: Government Graft

Pending:

George Washington	Mount Vernon
Thomas Jefferson	Monticello
James Madison	Montpelier

And others as I travel America

Presidential Places

Hundreds of books, movies, and television programs are available about the homes, libraries, museums, birth, and burial places of America's Presidents. I cannot hope to replicate these works, nor do I wish to. My hope is that the essays in the *Presidential Places* series offer different and humorous perspectives about several of America's revered historical places.

Many of the places we visit in this series are called *libraries*. They are unique places containing historical information about America in general and specifically about an American president during his time in office.

Here is one definition of such a library: "A repository of historical information, where many books are kept."

Here is an alternate and more accurate definition: "A repository of historical information, where many books are kept away from the public."

Here is another definition of a presidential library, "A library, whose contents are forbidden to be examined by people who paid admission to enter the library and examine its contents in the first place. Therefore, Disneyland-like exhibits are created to placate the crowd."

A fourth definition: "Thinly disguised attempt to bolster the public image of a former President."

These definitions are acceptable to those who flock to presidential places. After all, presidential places are crowded places. The visitors must be curious about White House dinner menus, presidential pins, catchy campaign slogans, first-ladies' gowns, and other artifacts of American politics. Because these places vary in how they are named, I use the words *museum* and *library* interchangeably. It appears most of the places have buildings and rooms that serve both as museums and libraries.

In each of these places I visited, I had my fill of political drivel. But of more importance, I witnessed a deep sense of pride the site creators have about these places. And time and again, I beheld the thankfulness and patriotism of American citizens who were aware, while knowing America's faults, that the country offered a better way of life than many other nations. Even with tongue in cheek, I carried away a sense of American citizens' reverence for America and for America's Presidents' contributions to this legacy.

It is my goal in *Presidential Places* to provide you with some lesser-known and humorous aspects of Americana as well as a sense of the pride and patriotism of the sites' creators and visitors.

Unless otherwise noted, the cover page depicting the face of a U.S. President is sourced from Google.

Richard Nixon: Childhood Home, Museum, and Grave¹ Report One

February 7, 2007

Today, your Reporter and team paid a call on Richard Nixon's former and current haunts. We spent a few hours visiting old haunts in Yorba Linda, California---a few miles south of LA---and the Richard Nixon birthplace and childhood home. Next door is the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, and nearby is Nixon's gravesite---his current haunt. I begin this report with observations about the bookstore in the museum.

Previously, I have reported on the homes, museums, birthplaces, and graves of nine former presidents.² At each of these sites is a gift shop/bookstore. In the book section are scores of biographies on the individual president---some have been sources for these reports. With one exception---coffee table books aside---the Nixon museum bookstore had no books on the man. That is an amazing situation, considering how many biographies have been published on Nixon. The exception was his autobiography.

I entered the store to search for T-shirts, baseball hats, and a copy of Richard Reeves' *President Nixon: Alone in the White House*, a tome I had lost during my wanderings around the streets and roads of America. This acclaimed work was not available, nor were any other scholarly writings on Richard Nixon. Books were available on current topics, such as *Flyboys* and *Flags of Our Fathers*. But none on the 37th President of the United States---in a store *devoted* to the 37th President of the United States. Strange.

Reporter, "Hello. Where are all the books on Nixon? Must be hundreds of them on the marketplace. I'd like to purchase the book by Richard Reeves. Is there another section in the museum selling books on Nixon?"

The bookstore clerk mentioned the Nixon library archives as a source for my quest. Taking leave with his diversion, permit this writer to offer another (imagined, but probably accurate) scenario:

- *Bookstore clerk, "Sorry, we don't stock'em."*
- *"Really? Why not?"*
- *"Well, sir...take a guess."*
- *"Bad press?"*³
- *"Good way to put it. Anything else?"*

¹ Unless noted otherwise, quotes are sourced from Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia, and plaques on display at the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum. All Benjamin Franklin's quotes from James C. Humes, *The Wit and Wisdom of Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1995).

² Washington, Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln, Hoover, Truman, Eisenhower, Bush, and Clinton.

³ Since the filing of this report, this site has been turned over to a government funded institution to administer. Recent media releases inform us that the library and museum will exhibit both positive and negative views of Nixon.

Back to the store:

- "Never seen a golf ball with the American flag imprinted on it. (Figure 1)...Seems like a desecration of the flag, especially the way I hit a golf ball."



Figure 1. Balls but no books.

Silence from the clerk.

- "OK, I'll take a golf ball and one of those Nixon baseball caps."
- "The caps are on sale. 60% off."
- "Such a deal! Not many takers on Nixon sports paraphernalia?"
- "The golf balls are popular. For some reason, the caps haven't sold."
- "How about tape recorders? How are they doing?"
- "Thanks for the purchase. The exit is to your right."

With golf ball in hand and cap on head, we headed for the house where Richard Milhous Nixon was born (1913), and where he and his family lived (until 1922). Figure 2 is a photo I snapped of the front of this house. It shares acreage with a 52,000 square-foot museum and archives, a 75 seat amphitheater, a 30 x 20 foot reflecting pool, a First Lady's garden, the Marine One Presidential helicopter, the grave sites (Pat is also interred there), and a bookstore of dubious content.

Nixon's Birthplace and Childhood Home

A tour guide took us through the small five-room frame house, which contains many of the original furnishings and belongings of Richard, his parents, and siblings. I was not allowed to take a picture of Nixon's bed, although I admit capturing "where Nixon slept" was not quite as high on my list as "where Lincoln slept." (Recounted in previous reports). Perhaps not surprisingly, I admire Abraham Lincoln more than I admire Richard Nixon. I am not alone, as evidenced by the Nixon Museum bookstore's austere inventory of pro-Nixon writings, in contrast to the Lincoln Museum bookstore's massive inventory of Lincoln books.

Notwithstanding my bias, this report on Nixon and his digs will not be a constant criticism of his terms in office or his character. Truth is, Nixon was successful in several initiatives quite important to America. As we tour the Museum, we will remark on these undertakings, as well as his political and personal warts.



Figure 2. Nixon's birthplace and early childhood home.

In 1911, Nixon's father, Frank Nixon, purchased 12 acres of land in Yorba Linda.⁴ In 1912, using \$800 worth of materials, he built the home. Nixon was born the next year in his parents' bedroom, located on the left side of the house (The partial window, seen in Figure 2, is the bedroom window.). The living room contains the Crown piano on which Nixon learned to play. He also played the violin, organ, clarinet, saxophone, and accordion. The guide pointed out Nixon's violin and clarinet, and a book he read as a child, *Pilgrim's Progress*. During these early times, the guide told us he also read the autobiography of Benjamin Franklin. (Who once said, "A cunning man is overmatched by a cunning and a half.")

In 1922, Frank Nixon decided he could not make a living with his lemon and orange farm, and his part-time work of building fireplaces. The family moved to Whittier, California, where they worked at their gas station/grocery store. Nixon frequently made political hay of his humble, hard-working origins. But what politician doesn't? I can think of no one running for office in America who could succeed with any posture other than humble pie. Nixon, in his famous "Checkers" speech proclaimed:

Our family was one of modest circumstances and most of my early life was spent in a store out in East Whittier. It was a grocery store—one of those family enterprises. The only reason we were able to make it go was because my mother and dad had five boys and we all worked in the store.

Somewhere in the folklore of political humbleness, I am sure a campaigner has claimed walking half-clothed across two state lines to the requisite one-room school, barefooted, in the middle of a January snowstorm, while reading Plato. Benjamin Franklin said it well, "Nothing (is) humbler than ambition when it is about to climb."

Can you imagine George Bush Jr. uttering? *Our family was one of opulent circumstances and most of my early life was spent in a bar out in Midland, Texas.*

⁴ Nancy D. Myers Benbow and Christopher H. Benbow, *Cabins, Cottages, and Mansions: Homes of the Presidents of the United States* (Gettysburg, PA: Thomas Publications, 2005), 62.

Or JFK and his dad's prohibition-derived wealth? *It was an illegal distillery—one of those family enterprises.*

Or FDR and his privileged, wealthy background? *The only reason we were able to make it go was because my mother and dad had five gazillion dollars and we all worked to spend it.*

Nixon was adept at practicing another political ploy: *I'm more American than an American is an American.* He acted-out traits such as honesty, fidelity, forthrightness, love of daughters, and love of dogs. Here is another excerpt from the "Checkers" speech:

One other thing I probably should tell you because if I don't they'll probably be saying this about me too, we did get something—a gift—after the election. A man down in Texas heard Pat on the radio mention the fact that our two youngsters would like to have a dog. And, believe it or not, the day before we left on this campaign trip we got a message from Union Station in Baltimore saying they had a package for us. We went down to get it. You know what it was.

It was a little cocker spaniel dog in a crate that he sent all the way from Texas. Black and white spotted. And our little girl—Trisha, the 6-year-old—named it Checkers. And you know, the kids love the dog and I just want to say this right now, that regardless of what they say about it, we're gonna keep it.

Not to mention other traits: maudlin, mushy, syrupy, mawkish, slushy, and saccharine. I am not singling-out Nixon. Most politicians use these tricks, at one time or another, to get elected. And if politicians fall out of favor because, like their fellow humans, they drink too much of the wrong liquid, or screw too many of the wrong people, they enter into rehab. They later emerge born-again, saved once more, and ready to fleece us yet another time with humble pie platitudes.

Get a job! Our founding fathers never meant for you to stay in office all your adult lives. You would understand your constituents' problems much better if you walked a few miles in their shoes.

Memories of Watergate

While walking through the museum exhibits, the Nixon White House era came back to me. For the first part of his presidency (his full time in office extended from 1969-1974), I was finishing my final tour in the Navy at the Washington Navy Yard, and then working as a software programmer for the Federal Reserve Board. I recalled the night of the Watergate break-in and the following day. The Fed was renting office space in the Watergate complex. My office was one floor below the headquarters for the Democratic National Committee (DNC), the place raided by the Watergate "plumbers."

The morning after the break-in, the Watergate office building was crawling with cops, reporters, and employees trying to get to their jobs inside the building. I walked into the lobby of the

building, wondering what was going on. I was told by a reporter that DNC had been “broken-into.”

Ignoring the matter, I took the elevator to my office, and I turned to a more serious issue of writing code for clearing checks. I was too busy to worry about the goings-on at Watergate. During these times, we ordinary citizens had no idea of the magnitude and consequences of what then appeared to be a trivial burglary.

Only in hindsight are we humans insightful. Nixon won an enormous victory in 1972 over his Democratic opponent, George McGovern (47,169,911 popular votes with 520 electoral votes to McGovern’s 29,170,383 popular votes with 17 electoral votes). Why on earth would this administration think it had to resort to acts such as smear campaigns, illegal wire taps, stolen psychiatrist’s files, and burglaries to stay in office? It had control of Congress and the support of the public. Sure, it was faced with the nasty Vietnam War, but after all, it was the previous Democratic administrations that had created this problem in the first place.

As I delved into these questions, I learned that Nixon was not at all sure he would win the election for his second term. He believed he had to cover-up the Watergate crime in order to assure he would have another four years of rent-free living.

As I grow older, and I hope a bit wiser, I’m more prone to advise myself, “Stop worrying about things beyond your control. Let it ride. In spite of your micromanaging, things will happen anyway. As we say in the computer field, ‘Let the chips fall where they may.’”

But no. We humans all too often can’t let well-enough alone. And my take on Richard Nixon is that his basic makeup, his demeanor and mental markings---as well as his previous political experiences---led him to Watergate. The displays at his museum, and the writings of such scholars as Richard Reeves, show that Nixon was slowly but surely sowing the seeds for his own demise.

Mark Twain said, “Supposing is good, but finding out is better.”⁵ I’m not so certain about your idea, Mr. Twain. It’s sometimes best to keep on supposing. Finding out can sometimes land a person in trouble. So can *trying* to find out. (For references: See Watergate.) Anon once said, “Actions have consequences.” Sometimes, we do not pause in our daily activities to reflect on what might be the consequences of our actions.

In segment two of this report, we will look at some of the exhibits in the Nixon museum and reflect on Richard Nixon’s early times.

Your on the Street Reporter

⁵ R. Kent Rasmussen, editor, *Mark Twain: His Words, Wit, and Wisdom* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1997), 270, also in Mark Twain, *Following the Equator: A Journey Around the World*, 1st ed., Hartford, CT: American Publishing Co.1897), ch. 51,484.

Richard Nixon: Childhood Home, Museum, and Grave Report Two

February 7, 2007

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. We continue the tour of Richard Nixon's birthplace, museum, and gravesite. During the tour of the museum, we came upon a display describing his first campaign to become president, the election of 1960. After serving as vice president to Eisenhower, Nixon easily won the presidential nomination at the July Republican National Convention in Chicago. As seen in Figure 3, his running mate was Henry Cabot Lodge, a former U.S. Senator from Massachusetts.



Figure 3. Museum displays of the Nixon/Lodge 1960 campaign.

My main recollection of this campaign---necessarily limited because I was immersed in collegiate hedonism at the time---was the televised debates between Nixon and John F. Kennedy. I thought Nixon performed well against the smooth-talking Kennedy. Even though Richard had been a brilliant debater in high school and college, he was no match for clean-cut John. In comparison to Kennedy's bright countenance, Nixon could not conceal his dark whiskers, which gave him a sinister appearance. I recall some of the press clippings and editorials discussed this matter, as if Nixon could control the color of his facial hair. Pretty amazing, especially given that the debates helped Kennedy win the election.

Still, it was a close call. Each candidate garnered more than 34 million votes, and Kennedy had only 112,803 more ballots than Nixon did. But the Electoral College results were 303 for Kennedy and 220 for Nixon. Nixon left national politics, and resurfaced in California, where he lost a nasty, bitter race for governor to Pat Brown. During the campaign, Nixon said his opponent was not concerned about the dangers of Communism. He also complained that California did not enforce its laws strictly enough. He offered this thought to the media at a post-election press conference, "You won't have Nixon to kick around anymore, gentlemen. This is my last press conference."

Intelligence, Intensity, and Tenacity

The museum's slant on the youthful Nixon was that of a lad with a keen intelligence and one of great intensity. He carried these traits into his adult years, and aided by his tremendous tenacity, became a prominent politician. As mentioned, he served as Vice President as well as President of America.

I gathered from listening to the museum staff that the Nixon family members were devout Quakers and young Richard practiced the Quaker creeds. In hindsight, his later behavior seems out of kilter with his religion's tenets. Perhaps Nixon could not overcome his assertive, aggressive nature to toe the line of the Quakers' commitment to pacifism. I doubt any of us can name many successful American politicians---elected officials---who are pacifists.

American politics and political campaigns have long been battles to smear and discredit the opponent. The negative ads of today pale in comparison to some in the 19th century. Yet it seems that Richard Nixon, from his first election, went for the jugular more than most politicians. He, like Karl Rove today, became a master at targeting the strength of his opponent and turning it around to characterize the person's strong point as a weakness.

Nixon also used Communism time and again to accuse his loyal, patriotic opponents they were weak on anti-Communism. From his early days in politics, I think he began to form the idea that dirty politics were really not dirty, that the means to the ends justified the means to get there. I think he let power corrupt his Quaker teachings.

But who am I to cast a stone at only Richard Nixon? The old dictum, recited so many times it seems a cliché, is surely a truism, "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Praise our forefathers for their concern about unbridled political power. Praise England's King George III for his hubristic notion he had the right to exercise unbridled power over the thirteen colonies.

For my pro-Nixon readers who might think this writer is being unfair, I only ask you to study his campaigns in California against Jerry Voorhis (1946 for U.S Representative), and Helen Gahagan Douglas (1950 for U.S. Senator). Later, as president, in a television interview, he claimed, "When the President does it, that means it is not illegal." Whew! Like it or not, I do not think the slight of calling the man "Tricky Dick" was too far field. Anyway, during the post-World War II years, Nixon began to acquire valuable experience in international affairs. For example, he worked on a special committee dealing with the Marshall Plan. Later in his career, this experience served him well.

Replicas of White House Rooms

East Room. Several of the U.S. Presidents' Museums contain replicas of rooms in the White House. Thus far, I have reported on Oval Office models in the museums of Clinton and Truman. The Nixon Museum includes a life-size model of the East Room, also called America's Grand Ballroom. I snapped the photo of this room, shown in Figure 4, and later compared it to the real thing. It is a lovely reproduction of a beautiful, historic room. With the exception of old paintings hanging on the walls of the authentic East Room, I could see little difference between the two. The 18th century classical style, oak floor, plaster ceiling, and the three Bohemian cut-glass chandeliers of the two rooms looked identical.



Figure 4. Replica of East Room.

- We came upon the room as it was being prepared for a party, "What's going on? Lots of activity."
- Person, who was placing dishes on the tables, "A wedding reception tonight."
- "The Nixon family's having a wedding?"
- "The Nixon family can use the room whenever they want. The room is also for rent."

I was reminded of the Clinton years and his renting out the Lincoln room. Say what you will about Richard Nixon, he did manage to maintain a semblance of decorum and dignity on the motel issue.

For this evening, two people would be engaged in a bit of fantasy and a piece of history by holding their wedding reception in a simulated East Room, an impressive replica of a part of Americana. We can picture a young couple toasting to their future in a setting replete with past remembrances:^{6 & 7} Dolly Madison removing Gilbert Stuart's portrait of George Washington from an East Room wall shortly before the British attacked the White House; Thomas Jefferson partitioning the space for the use of his secretary, Meriweather Lewis; James Madison's use of the room for his Cabinet meetings; its occupation by Union troops during Lincoln's terms in office; the reception for Grant just before he was made the leader of the Union army; the site of seven presidents who have lain in state; countless parties and receptions, many shared with us through television. Even though an imitation, it recalls to its visitors a rich legacy of our country.

A Historic Office. On the other side of the museum is another replica of a White House room, seen in Figure 5. The museum brochures call this room the "Lincoln Sitting Room." It was a favorite spot for President Nixon. A plaque in front of this facsimile read as follows:

In the White House, next to the Lincoln bedroom, which used to be President Lincoln's office, is the Lincoln Sitting Room. Located at the southeast corner of the

⁶ This writer toured the White House during his earlier years in Washington, DC. I made it to the State Floor and the Ground Floor, but never had enough money or status to visit the second floor and rent-out Lincoln's bedroom.

⁷ Events listed sourced from, *The White House, a Historic Guide*, The White House Historical Association, Washington, D.C., 2002, 36-37.

executive mansion's second floor, the room was little used until the middle of the 19th century. English novelist Charles Dickens, writing about a visit to the White House during the Tyler administration (1841-1845), reported with surprise that the room was actually used as the President's office, although unimpressive in both size and furnishings. The room later doubled as a bedroom and office for President Polk's (1845-1849) nephew and private secretary, and in the 1860's was shared by President Lincoln's two young secretaries, John Nicolay and John Hay.



Figure 5. A favored spot through many administrations.

President Nixon used this room as his private office. His wife gave him an armchair in 1962 while they were living in California. Sitting in his chair in this room, Nixon worked on speeches and plotted the overthrow of the Democratic Party. The Nixon family often assembled in this room. In 1969, Edward Cox proposed to Tricia Nixon in the Lincoln Sitting Room.

Lincoln did not Sleep Here!

During my visit to this place, I made a surprising discovery, perhaps not surprising to you, but a revelation to me. As I viewed the replica of the Lincoln Sitting Room, it occurred to me it wasn't his sitting room at all. Doris Kearns Goodwin's *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, explained that during Lincoln's stay at the White House, this room (noted with **a** in Figure 6) was used for personal secretary John Nicolay's office (and not personal secretary John Jay, who had an office on the other side of the second floor). Next door was Lincoln's office, shown as **b** in Figure 6.⁸

⁸ Layout sourced from Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 322.

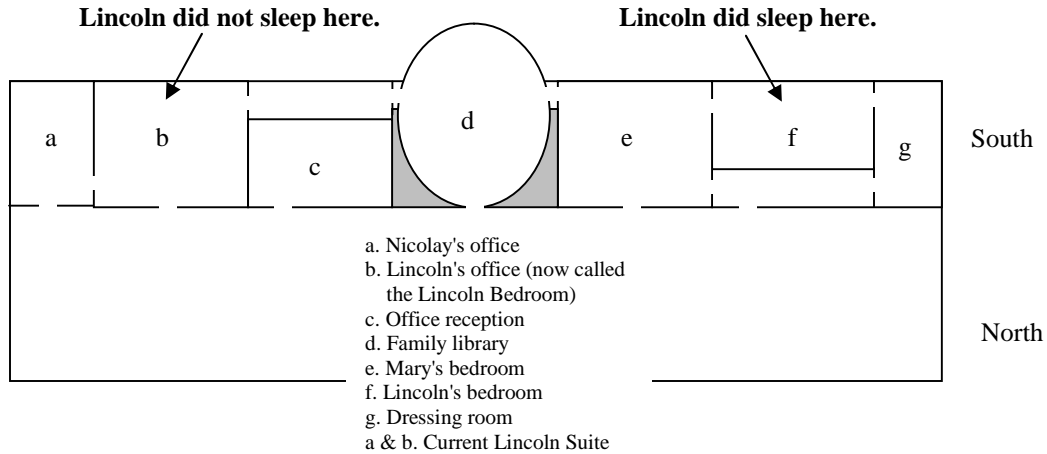


Figure 6. South side of Lincoln's White House second floor.

President Truman decided to install bedroom furniture in Lincoln's former office (again, **b** in Figure 6). The famous Rosewood bed in this room was most likely never used by Lincoln.⁹ As the notations in Figure 6 show, Lincoln never slept in what is now called Lincoln's bedroom. His bedroom was down the hall toward the west side of the second floor.

If I were one of Bill Clinton's political donors, one who anted up big bucks to sleep in Lincoln's bedroom and the bed where Lincoln supposedly slept, I'd ask for a refund. And your Reporter now feels not quite so stupid for pursuing "the place where Lincoln slept" at the nearby Willard Hotel. I venture to say many Lincoln fans think the Lincoln Bedroom is actually Lincoln's bedroom. Nope, it was his office. You're welcome. Just doing my job.

When we visit President Reagan's presidential museum later this week, we will discover every room in the White House was Ronald's bedroom. He was the consummate master of the nap.

Your on the Street Reporter

⁹ *The White House, an Historic Guide*, 71.

Richard Nixon: Childhood Home, Museum, and Grave Report Three

February 7, 2007

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter, still reporting on Richard Nixon's birthplace, museum, and final resting place. Continuing the tour of the museum, we came across a large room containing statues of former world leaders. They were selected for display by Nixon because he had dealings with them while he was a U.S. Senator, the Vice President, and President. And who, as he said, "Made a difference." The museum was formally dedicated in July 19, 1990. Among the notable attendees were Ronald Reagan, George Bush, and Gerald Ford. On this occasion, these men and Nixon gathered in this room for a group photograph, as seen in Figure 7. Not all the statues are visible in the picture, but those that can be seen are likely known to you.¹⁰

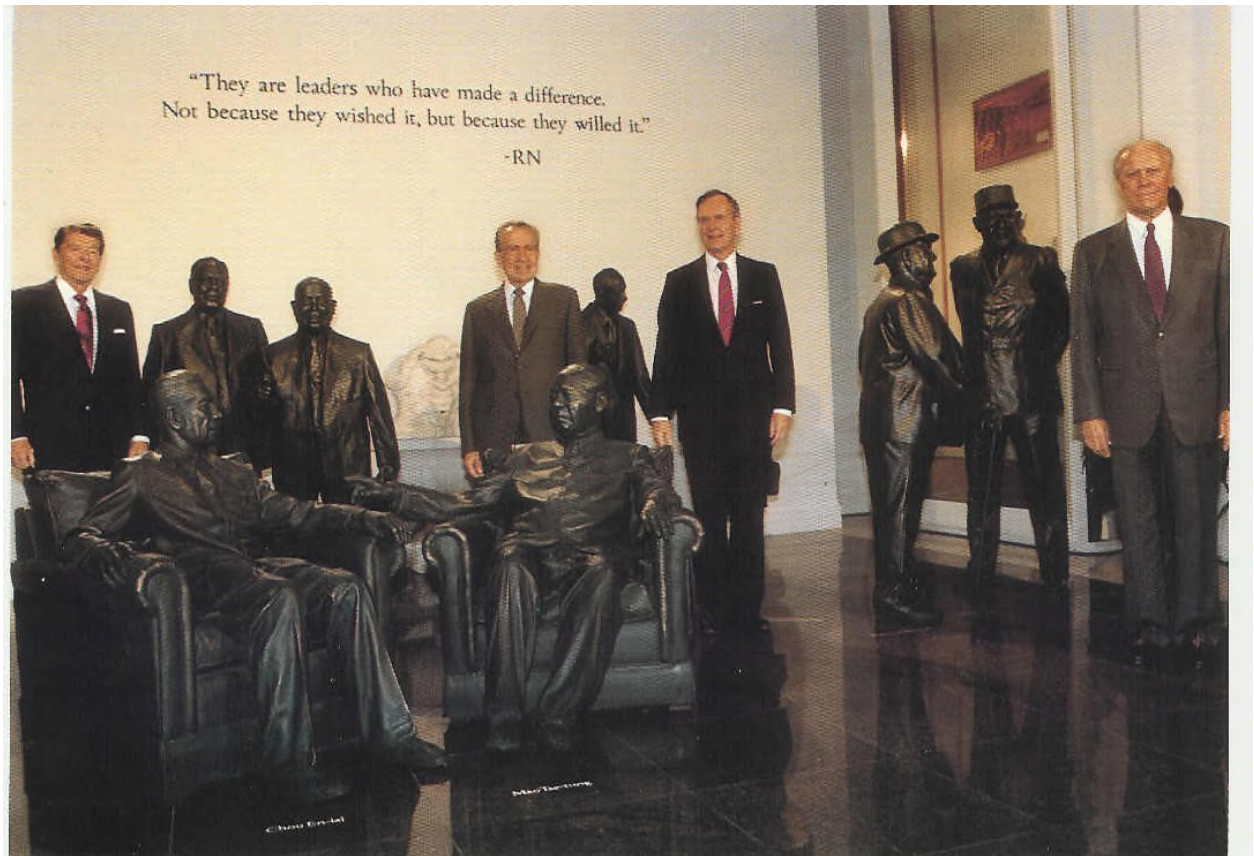


Figure 7. Statues and statuesque men.

¹⁰ From right to left: Chou En-lai (sitting), Mao Tse-tung (sitting), Leonid Brezhnev (next to Reagan), Nikita Khrushchev, Anwar Sadat (between Nixon and Bush), Golda Mire (not visible), Winston Churchill, Charles de Gaulle (next to Ford), Konrad Adenauer (not visible), and Shigeru Yoshida (not visible). Source: The Richard Nixon Library & Birthplace Library, Library photo.

"Opening-Up" China and Selling USSR Wheat

From the ending of WWII to Nixon's days, a Communist country was shunned and opposed by the United States. Communism, as practiced by the USSR and its emerging (but temporary) ally China, did not take to America's model of democracy, capitalism and Christianity.

During 1949 and 1950, the Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek was defeated by the Chinese insurgent Mao Tse-tung. Chiang's defeated forces took over Formosa (now Taiwan) and proclaimed this tiny island to be the legal "China." Because of the Western world's ongoing conflicts with Communism, Taiwan had to be defended as a beacon of democracy, capitalism, and Buddhism. Thus, until Nixon came along, mainland China and the United States had, to put it mildly, strained relations. The situation was not helped by the Korean "Police Action," which resulted in deadly, prolonged military battles on the Korean peninsula between China and America.

To his credit, Nixon believed the United States could continue to confront Communism and at the same time, improve its relations with both China and the Soviet Union. For many years, he spoke and wrote that it was dangerous to continue to exclude "China" from the family of nations.¹¹ Anon's idea of "Never fail to communicate with your enemy, but never fail to communicate from a position of strength," was surely never far from Nixon's mind as he traveled to Beijing in February 1972 and to Moscow in May of the same year.

(One only can wish the current Bush administration would read a bit of history. Too much to wish for. Can we imagine George Jr. lowering himself to travel to the camp of the enemy?¹² And it is political poison even to suggest talking with Iran's leaders, at least publically.)

Just consider: A premier Red Baiter, a man who rode the coat tails of anti-Communism to national prominence and power, flew halfway around the world as a goodwill ambassador to a country he routinely castigated as evil. Traveling to the camp of his hated enemy, he walked and rode around Beijing---he even smiled--- as he beheld hundreds of flags of Red China and pictures of Mao, Engels, Marx, and Lenin.

The place was exactly an Orange County venue. But he held fast. The Communistic milieu did not bother him because, while Nixon was a border ideologue, he was mainly a pragmatic realist. In today's parlance, he was not a neoconservative. He was not imbued with the idea that the mission of America was to transform the world into its own image. This misguided philosophy continues to haunt America.

Under Nixon's guiding hand, the United States signed trade and "understanding" agreements with both countries. Our premier enemies! In today's political situation, it's akin to signing trade and "understanding" agreements with Iran, North Korea, or Syria.

¹¹ As quoted from a *Washington Post* article found at nixonlibrary.org, "In a 1967 article in *Foreign Affairs* magazine, Nixon presciently observed that "Taking the long view, we simply cannot afford to leave China forever outside the family of nations, there to nurture its fantasies, cherish its hates and threaten its neighbors."

¹² I watched a newscast last night (March 2, 2007) stating the United States wishes to participate in a meeting about the Middle East problems, in which Syria and Iran also might attend. Finally, our current administration is seeing the light (on this specific matter anyway).

For China and the United States, the result was the Shanghai Communiqué, a short document stating America and China were 180 degrees apart from each other regarding their political and social philosophies, but would give it a go to lessen tensions in order to exchange China's rice and cheap clothing for America's Coca Cola and expensive cigarettes. For USSR and the US, the countries signed agreements to limit deployment of antiballistic missiles and to allow the Soviet Union to buy huge amounts of wheat.

Figure 8 is a photo I took of two statues in the museum celebrating the historic meeting between Nixon and Zhou Enlai (Chou En-lai), second in command to Mao. During his time in China, Nixon had meetings, lunches, and dinners with the Chinese. He drank to the Communists' health, as the People's Liberation Army played "Turkey in the Straw."



Figure 8. Nixon meets Zhou Enlai (Chou En-lai).

At a dinner in the Great Hall of the People, Nixon associated George Washington's trials at Valley Forge with Mao's Long March. Yep, Nixon likened America's revolutionary hero to that of a Communist. Given Dick's past rants about Reds, his acknowledgment and acceptance of Red China was an extraordinary turn-about. And one of great importance to both countries.

Nixon went further. During his meetings with Mao and Chou, he succeeded in persuading them to denunciate the USSR and Soviet Communist Party Chairman Leonid I. Brezhnev's policy of intervening in the internal affairs of other Communist nations. The task was not difficult because the Chinese suspected (rightly so) that the Soviet Union had designs on parts of China territory contiguous to the USSR.

As a result of this seminal event---Nixon's "opening-up China"--- the United States and China went on to forge closer ties. The ill feelings of the Chinese toward the Western exploitation of Mandarin China faded. America's ill feelings of China's participation in the Korean War became more muted.

The result we see today is the massive movement of American jobs to China, a huge China advantage in the balance of trade between the two countries, and China's gradual overtaking of the United States as the most powerful economic power in the world. Just joking...somewhat. The point is that today America and China are competing with each other economically, not militarily.

We should acknowledge that Nixon and realpolitik Secretary of State Henry Kissinger reduced the chances that America and China would go to war. Furthermore, the emerging relationship with China put the Soviet Union into a situation in which it gave much ground during the 1972 nuclear arms negotiations and resulting treaty.

Oh yes, about Taiwan. Let's close this segment with the thought that the Chinese are patient people. It took a while to reclaim Hong Kong. But it happened. It is only a matter of time before Taiwan becomes another Chinese province---eh, the same province it was before defeated Chiang Kai-shek took his army to the island and proclaimed it a nation---with Chiang as its leader.

Cold War weirdness: Chiang's loss to Mao, and sailing-off to take over Taiwan is as bizarre (and illegitimate) as, say, Al Gore losing a battle to George Bush for America's presidency, then taking-off for Hawaii and proclaiming it a nation---with Gore as its leader. It makes no difference if an act is bizarre or illegitimate. In the end, it is who has the power that ultimately determine who has legitimacy.

In the next segment, we take a look at the Nixon Center, a remnant of the Berlin Wall, the Presidential helicopter, and the graves of Richard and Pat. A brief report is filed on the White House tapes. We also view artifacts left over from a meeting between Elvis Presley and RN.

Your on the Street Reporter

Richard Nixon: Childhood Home, Museum, and Grave Report Four

February 7, 2007

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter, still reporting on Richard Nixon's birthplace, museum, and final resting place. Prior to my visit to Dick's haunts, I was preceded by a visit from U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Antonin Scalia on February 2. Perhaps Justice Scalia was paying homage, as he was nominated by Nixon to be an assistant attorney general, which launched Scalia's high-level government career.

The Nixon Center

The Nixon Center is part of the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum organization. The Center is located in Washington, DC. If you're in the area, check it out, as it often features speeches and forums with world leaders as participants. As examples:¹³

On Friday, February 16, 2007, His Excellency Samir Shakir Mahmood Sumaida'ie, the Ambassador of Iraq to the United States, spoke at The Nixon Center.

On Tuesday, February 13, 2007, The Nixon Center hosted a luncheon discussion with Ahmed Said Fituri, Secretary for America's Affairs of Libya's foreign ministry, and Libyan Ambassador to the United States Ali Aujali.

Also from the Web page of nixonlibrary.org:

President Richard Nixon announced the creation of The Nixon Center on January 20, 1994, the 25th anniversary of his first inauguration and just three months before his death in April of that year. While genuinely non-partisan, as reflected in the composition of its Board of Directors and Advisory Council, the Center has a philosophy of an enlightened pursuit of national interest. The specific goal of the Center is to explore ways of enhancing American security and prosperity while taking into account the legitimate perspectives of other nations. With the end of the Cold War, the U.S. found itself without a clear-cut foreign policy direction. The Center's objective is to develop guiding principles for the United States' global engagement in a dramatically new international environment, principles, which would combine hardheaded pragmatism and fundamental American values.

Hmm. Non-partisan. Enlightened pursuit of national interest. Enhancing American security and prosperity, while taking into account the legitimate perspectives of other nations. Hard-headed pragmatism and fundamental American values. Compare these dyed-in-the-wool Republican Party traits to the ideologue-driven, missionary-oriented, neoconservative doctrine of the present

¹³ Nixon Forum, nixonlibrary.org.

administration. We can see just how far our country has strayed from its practical roots. Bush is trying to repair the damage he did during his first term. Let us all hope he has success.

The Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain

The Nixon and Reagan museums display large pieces of the Berlin Wall (as mentioned, we visit Reagan's haunts in a subsequent report). I took this photo (Figure 9) during our tour. The western, free world side of the wall---facing West Berlin---is decorated with graffiti. The other side of the wall---the Iron Curtain side---is bereft of any art work. Just grey, drab concrete. Emblematic of the dreary, featureless landscape of Communist East Berlin, and a sterile tribute to the fruitless ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin.



Figure 9. A fragment of the past.

Elvis and Dick

The last exhibit of the museum---just before entering the rear entrance of the quasi-bookstore/gift shop---was a set of displays that chronicled the 1970 meeting between Elvis Presley and Richard Nixon. Perhaps an even more incongruous encounter than the Nixon-Mao get-together. The meeting came about because Elvis went to the White House---unannounced---to present Nixon with a note he had written on American Airlines stationery during his flight to Washington, DC (and on display in the museum). But even The King could not just walk-in on The Prez. Segue to the past.¹⁴

- "Howdy. I'm Elvis Presley. I'd like to see the President."
- Guard at the northwest gate of the White House, "Huh! ...Well, you look like Elvis. Any identification?"
- "Look at this hip grind!" ...*Grinding hips*...
- "You are Elvis! Still, I have to talk to"

¹⁴ The events recounted here are true. Like Mark Twain, I take license with the actual dialogue in this scene.

- "Please give the President my letter," as Elvis hands his famous, world-altering missive to the guard.

Segue to the present: I read the note. Given the differences of these men, the thoughts of Elvis were peculiar, yet endearing. Basically, Elvis told Richard he wanted to help his country. The first sentences, "Dear Mr. President, First, I would like to introduce myself. I am Elvis Presley and admire you and have great respect for your office."

Elvis went on to explain he was a clean-living person. He said he opposed the use of drugs. He mentioned he would like to be a law enforcement officer....Perhaps to "enforce" himself from ingesting the pills that killed him.

Their meeting did take place. From what I gleaned from the display (see Figure 10), it was amicable. Elvis gave Richard a commemorative WWII Colt 45, as well as photos of his wife and daughter. Dick gave Elvis a set of presidential cufflinks. Cufflinks? On Elvis' shirts? Oh well, it's the thought that counts.

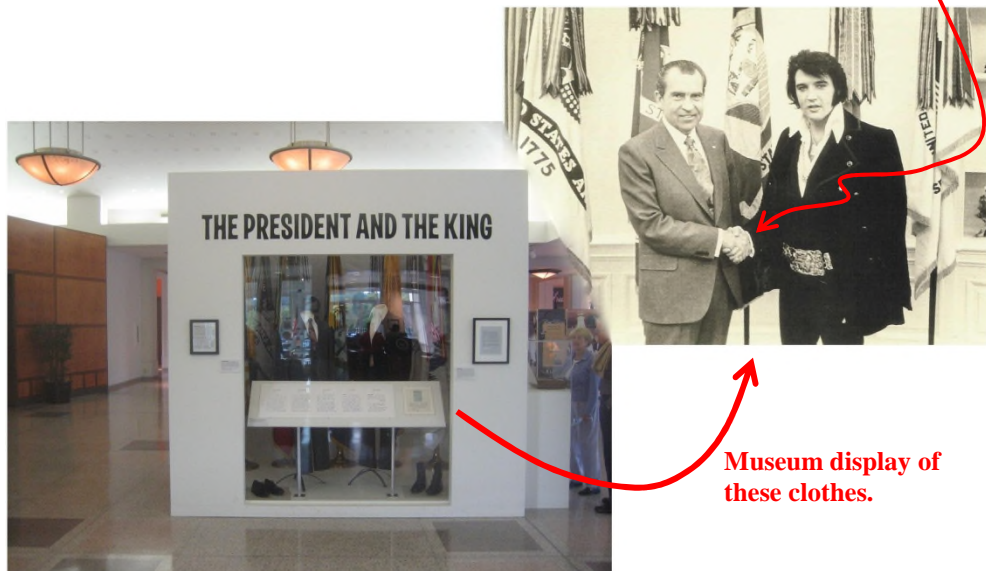


Figure 10. The meeting of the King and the Prez.

The people on the right side of the display case are viewing the pistol, the cuff links, and another gift Nixon gave to Elvis a few days later: An honorary Bureau of Narcotics Special Assistant badge.

We are told Elvis died from fun-filled ingestions of pork and pills. Irony in action. Maybe tragic is a better word. But for certain, Elvis and Richard strayed from their roots. For whatever reason, Elvis, the drug teetotaler, succumbed to prescription drugs. For whatever reason, Richard, the Quaker puritan, succumbed to political mire.

Last Visits

We walked to the museum exit, which took us through the gift shop again, and proceeded to the gravesites of the President and his wife. Our final stop was at the helicopter Nixon used to fly him back and forth to Camp David and Andrews Air Force Base. (Figure 11.)



Figure 11. Marine One.

The guide and museum literature informed us Dwight D. Eisenhower was the first president to fly by helicopter. Since that time, White House helos have been used time and again to ferry Presidents and others to places of importance. The early aircrafts were called Army One or Marine One, depending on which branch of the service was in charge of the craft. In 1976, the Marines took over the operation of the President's helo fleet.

The helo in Figure 11 is named the "Sea King." It was a member of the presidential helicopter fleet from 1961-1976, and transported Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, and Ford to and from their destinations with destiny. As one example, Sea King was flown by a military plane to President Nixon's historic 1976 visit to Egypt, during which the President presented Anwar Sadat with an identical helo.

We walked through the "Oval Office in the Sky," viewing the same carpet, upholstery, and chairs President Nixon, his family, and staff used during some of the 180 missions (flights) taken by Sea King. The President's chair, in the front of the cabin on the left facing front, is exactly as he left it...."Hey you, get outta that chair!"

I'm joking. The treasured chair was protected by a sheet of plexiglass, as seen in Figure 12. Also shown in this figure is Reporterette and dog Milli who spent their time checking-out the rear of the cabin, which displayed the Viceroy cigarettes Pat enjoyed smoking while traveling around with Dick. Dog Milli is reposing in the bag on Holly's left side. She....that is, the dog...lobbied for better accommodations, but the museum rules forbade unleashed or untethered animals on the aircraft. No problem, as Milli is a seasoned traveler and accustomed to cramped quarters.



Nixon's unaltered seat.

Figure 12. Inside Sky King.

Figure 13 is a picture of Nixon's final farewell as he boarded Marine One to take him to Andrews Air Force Base for his flight to California and private citizenship. He had just resigned the Presidency. I've also included two comments he made about the subject of quitting.

In his goodbye address at the White House, he said, "This country needs good farmers, good businessmen, and good plumbers."¹⁵ Perhaps he did not recognize the irony of his metaphor.



Earlier in his career: "A man is not finished when he is defeated. He is finished when he quits."

In his resignation speech:
"I have never been a quitter. To leave office before my term is completed is abhorrent to every instinct in my body.
:
But as President, I must put the interests of America first."

Figure 13. Nixon waves goodbye.

In Retrospect

Have I beaten-down a dead man, one who cannot defend himself? That has not been my intention, but try as I do, Richard Nixon remains in my eyes a deeply flawed politician and person. For years, I kept an open mind about the man...until I listened to the White House tapes. What I heard seemed surreal. How could an articulate, intelligent person---in public---reveal himself to be a profane and venal person---in private? And a crook to boot.

¹⁵ Indeed, it came from his lips, as referenced in the *New York Times* and Microsoft Encarta.

Dr. Phil says Oprah is a consistent person---she behaves the same---in her private and public lives. Not so for RN. As part of my research for this report, I replayed some of the White House tapes. Here are a few excerpts from meetings Nixon had with H.R. Haldeman (his chief of staff) in the Oval Office on June 23, 1972. I've entered the dialogue in red type to ease your reading. These conversations are called, "The Smoking Gun" because they were deemed sufficient to substantiate Nixon's illegal obstruction of justice:¹⁶

- Nixon did not know about the crime, its financial foundations, or that his former Attorney General was a crook:

Nixon, "Would it (the burglar(s)) be somebody here?"

:

Nixon, "...did Mitchell know about this thing to any much of a degree?"

Haldeman, "I think so. I don't think he knew the details, but I think he knew."

Nixon, "Well, who is the asshole that did [unintelligible]? Is it Liddy? Is that the fellow? He must be a little nuts."

It is an understatement to say Nixon's staff---his chosen team---let him down. These men should have been shielding their President from harm. Even more, they should never have put him at risk by committing crimes. So what happened? Nixon's many past campaigns filled with dirty tricks slowly but surely morphed into the acceptance of more serious acts. I call this malady The Threshold Lowering Syndrome: Without censure from peers or with their reinforcement, the committing of a base act results in the committing of a baser act.

- Motive for the cover up:

Nixon, "...God damn it, we gotta win our election." (upcoming 1972 election against George McGovern.)

- Nixon agrees with Haldeman to obstruct an FBI investigation of the burglary and associated illegal funds to finance it: Haldeman suggests ways to keep the FBI off the investigation,

"That the way to end all of this is, for us to have Walters (CIA Deputy Director) call Pat Gray (FBI Director) and just say, 'Stay the hell out of this. This is uh, this business here we don't want you going any further on it.'"

-Nixon asks if Pat Gray will cooperate, and Haldeman responds,

"Pat doesn't want to. He doesn't know how to. And he doesn't have, he doesn't have any basis for doing it...He'll call Mark Felt (FBI Deputy Associate Director) in...and Mark Felt wants to cooperate because he's..."

Nixon, "Yeah."

Haldeman, "Ambitious."

Nixon, "Yeah."

¹⁶ John Prados, editor, *The White House Tapes: Eavesdropping on the President* (New York: The New Press,2003). This work also contains accompanying text.

Nixon goes on to approve Haldeman's recommendations on trying to use Felt to keep the FBI off the track by camouflaging the break-in as a sanctioned CIA operation. Mark Felt was Deep Throat!

In another twist of irony, Nixon had complained earlier in his career that the government (California in this instance) did not enforce its laws strictly enough. Yet he deliberately broke laws to cover up the Watergate crime. The Watergate crime was bad enough. But it was also symptomatic of just how politically and ethically sick this Administration had become. Later, on June 23, Nixon told Haldeman, "**Play it tough. That's the way they play it and that's the way we're gonna play it.**"

I'm not alone in this criticism. Even Nixon recognized and admitted as such. After leaving the office of the Presidency, he said, "**I let down my friends, I let down my country. I let down our system of government.**" In hindsight, we should give Nixon much credit for this statement.

Later, in a television interview, he also said, "**I brought myself down. I gave them a sword and they stuck it in and they twisted it with relish. And I guess if I'd been in their position I'd have done the same thing.**"

Maybe not Mr. President. Maybe your problem was attributing your beliefs to that of others. Could be that the American public---even your opposition to some extent---wanted you to succeed. After all, if our President succeeds, so does our Republic.

In an upcoming report, we take a 180° turn in regard to the personality of our subject. We relive some of the times of another president when we visit Ronald Reagan's Presidential Museum. We also visit some events dealing with illegal cover-ups that occurred during Ronnie's watch...at Ronnie's direction. Sorry Reaganophiles, turn-about is fair play.

Your on the Street Reporter

Richard Nixon: Childhood Home, Museum, and Grave Addendum

February 7, 2007

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. A few moments ago, I sent Nixon reports 3 and 4 to you. Since that time, two people have asked if I would include a picture of Nixon's gravesite. One request was because I did not include a photo of Nixon's grave and he was curious. The other request came because the requester did not like Nixon.

Anyway, my mistake. After all, the word "Grave" is in the title of this report. So, here it is. Figure 13 is a snapshot I took of the final resting places of Richard and Pat.



Figure 13. The grave sites of Richard and Pat Nixon.