



**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

**Presidential Places
Ronald Reagan: 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
Richard Nixon	Childhood Home, Museum, and Grave
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.

Presidential Places
Ronald Reagan: Museum and Grave
Report One

February 15, 2007

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. Today, your Reporter team visited the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum. The grave of America's 40th President is also here. The site is located in Simi Valley, about 50 miles north of Los Angeles, and reachable from Interstate 405 and CA-118.

If you count the number of people who were President, up to and including Reagan's reign, you will come up with 39---not 40. One could claim that Warren Harding's term was so inconsequential he should not be counted. Conservatives likely make that claim about FDR. Perhaps liberals count-out Nixon. Whatever your political inclinations may be, it is instructive to note that Grover Cleveland was America's 22nd *and* 24th President. Thus, he is counted as having been two Presidents.

This Presidential tabulating arrangement is endorsed by the (taxpayer funded) Presidential Commission for Counting Presidents. The Commission stipulates a President with non-contiguous terms is counted as being two people. There you are.

At the onset of this report, I wish to state (in the present tense, even though Ronnie is deep under): I like Ronald Reagan. I also respect him for his distrust of big government and the resulting intrusion of Uncle Sam into the private lives of citizens. That stated, I continue to be baffled about the curious, exalted position he occupies in the minds of conservatives. One of Reagan's biographers offers, "Conservatives hold him up as an icon to preserve the agenda, to protect the ideology." ¹ His name is often uttered in reverence on FOX news.

Bob Dylan is a sacred cow to those who don't mind listening to some of Bobby's stolen verse. Ronald Reagan is a sacred cow to those who don't mind ignoring some of Ronnie's liberal leanings. Yes, liberal, as in very liberal. We will examine some of them in this report.

Anyway, who could not like Ronald Reagan? You may not have cared for his politics, but I do not know how you could not like him as a person. He had a wonderful sense of humor and before he succumbed to old age, he possessed a keen mind. We tend to dismiss him as a light weight because he came from Hollywood. He did not hail from the academic halls of Ivy League, those hallowed intellectual antechambers that spawned luminaries such as the Yale cheerleader, George W. Bush.

Take a look at Ronnie in Figure 1. When compared to say, Nixon or Carter, what a refreshing person Reagan was. He had a pleasant air about him. Even when he was near death from a gunshot wound, he managed to come up with great one-liners, quoted later in this report.

¹ Richard Reeves, *President Reagan, The Triumph of Imagination* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), xvii.

By the way, can you picture Jimmy Carter wearing that green hat? How about G.W. Bush? I doubt it. They take themselves too seriously. But cutting them some slack, I doubt Abe would have traded his stove-pipe hat for an Irish bowler.



Figure 1. Who could not like this man?

Do No Harm

My first complaint about Ronald's term is the way the 1986 tax reform legislation was passed. (But much in the bill was spearheaded by Democrats.) I was in favor of Reagan's tax cuts, but some of the provisions in the bill were punitive. During the 1970s and 1980s many Americans made investments in holdings called "tax shelters." Even though they made little sense from the standpoint of macro-economics, they were great investments---wonderful for folks practicing micro-economics. They were legal and an accepted part of the IRS code.

At the very least, new laws passed by our government should do no harm to the citizens who operated and conducted their affairs in keeping with previous laws. The 1986 tax bill essentially put these shelters out-of-business. The tax bill gurus (notably Senator Bill Bradley) said those folks who did tax shelters should not be investing in unreasonable schemes to begin with. Yet they were permitted under current law!

The fair approach would have been to grandfather citizens' current investments in these shelters, but allow no more. In this manner, law-abiding citizens, who simply took advantage of existing laws, would not be penalized for their decisions. For these tax shelters, grandfathering did not happen. Perhaps a lesson from this situation is that we citizens should not count on Uncle Sam, State Sam, County Sam, or City Sam to provide a reliable, predictable set of laws by which we might plan our lives

What would Ronnie say about my opinion on this matter? I think he would agree. But that's the nature of the political process. Governmental whims of the day reflect the influence of Political Action Groups (PACS) and other lobbyists. Still, we citizens can't wait for our Congress person

to send a bit of pork barrel our way. We like those kinds of laws. The local four-lane bridge to nowhere brings money to our district. *Better a bridge to nowhere nearby, than a bridge to nowhere far away.*

In our next report, we visit Air Force One, the famous airplane that served seven U.S. Presidents. Along with Ronnie, it rests at his museum site.

Your on the Street Reporter

Presidential Places
Ronald Reagan: Museum and Grave
Report Two

February 15, 2007

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter, at President Reagan's Museum, Library, and Grave. We devote this report to Air Force One (SAM 27000), the famous airplane that transported seven U.S. Presidents to and from historic sites and events.

In keeping with your Reporter's awesome influence on world leaders (For example, see the report about my advising the Indian Ambassador to the United States on the status of Cashmere, "An Evening with the Ambassador"), I've provided two snapshots, shown in Figure 2. Ronnie and Uyless are waving from the front door of Air Force One.

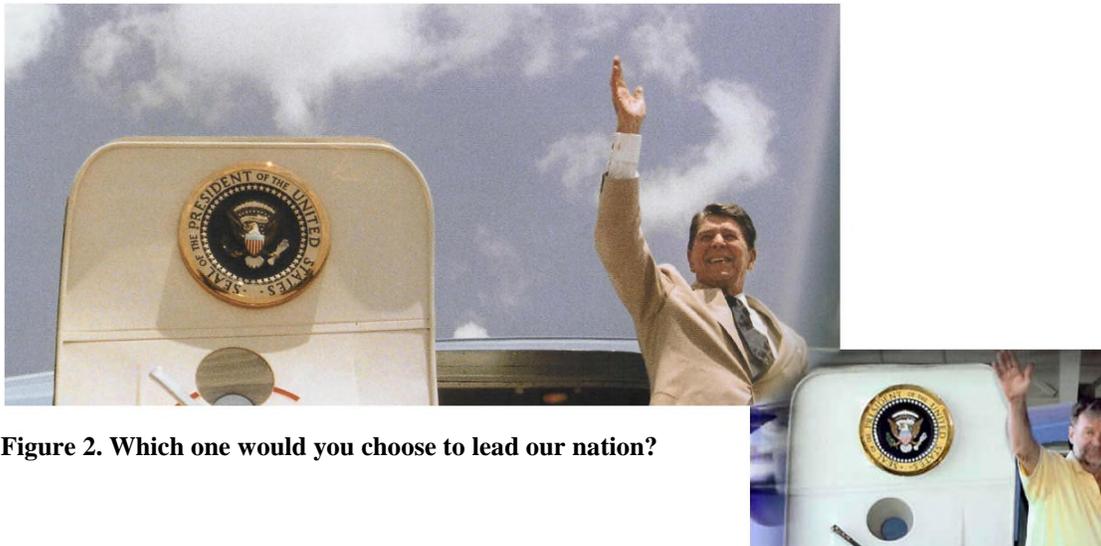


Figure 2. Which one would you choose to lead our nation?

A few observations about these photos. Ronald is waving to the adoring masses, known for giving Ronnie high marks.² Uyless is waving to a commercial photographer, known for charging Uyless high dollars. Even more, notice Reagan's countenance. The smile. The non-worried look. The, "It's America, so it must be great!" Notice Reporter's countenance. The semi-smile. The semi-worried look. The, "What are they going to charge me for this picture?"

On facial expressions alone, I would choose Ronnie over Uyless. But I was never a U.S. President, so let's use another example. Jimmy Carter never understood the power and importance of what I call *Projecting Positives*. His speech to the American people about the United States being in a deep funk was a public relations disaster. He never recovered from it. Presidents do not become Presidents by *Projecting Negatives*. If they are in office, they do not stay in office by *Projecting Negatives*. Joe and Josephine Citizen want happy endings. Not to

² Von Hardesty, Curator, Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, *Air Force One* (Chanhassen, MN: NorthWord Press, nd), 126.

mention happy beginnings and happy in-betweens. Don't bother us with bad news. We pay you politicians enormous amounts of money to make everything right in the world. Ok, if not in the world, at least in one part of the world...our district.

Ronald Reagan was by nature, an optimist. Time and again, he told the American people all was well. He told us we need only believe in the American dream to succeed; that we need only believe in ourselves to make things better.

As his administration ran up the largest federal deficit in history,³ he told us there was no problem with his annual budgets. (Partially, because he was genuinely confused, and partially because his budget guru, David Stockman, was not forthright about this matter in the early part of Reagan's first term.)

Nonetheless, Ron was a dyed-in-the-wool conservative in one regard. He believed a person should be allowed to keep his or her earnings and not be forced to give those earnings to anyone else:⁴

The rich get richer, and Reagan told them they deserved it. The poor got poorer and he told them it was their own fault. It was his policy. In its 1982 annual report to the President, the Council of Economic Advisers stated that cash transfers to the poor interfere with the workings of the private marketplace and weaken the national economy, concluding, "Transfers reduce the incentive of recipients to work and taxes imposed on the rest of society to finance those transfers also cause losses in efficiency."

Birth of Presidential Air Travel

The first President to take to the air was Theodore Roosevelt. In 1910, just seven years after the Wright Brothers made their historic flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, he rode in an airplane. Actually, Teddy---having left office in 1909---was a former President, but historians cite him as the first airborne President. Figure 3 shows Roosevelt sitting in the co-pilot seat of the plane. This seat also served first class and coach passengers. Next to him is the pilot, Arch Hoxsey. Arch is explaining to Teddy:

- "That's the idea Mr. President. Hold on to the wing strut wire. It'll do until someone invents seat belts. Eh, smile sir, you're on Candid Camera...although Candid Camera hasn't been invented either."
- Teddy, "Did you have to seat me next to the engine? It obstructs my view. And it's hot as hell."
- Arch, "Best seat on the plane sir! Just be careful not to drop your right hand from the wing pole. Could lose an arm if your coat gets caught up in the fan belt. Eh, smile sir."
- Teddy, "My legs are cramped."
- Arch, "Sorry. Just be careful not to drop your legs from the foot support. The plane bounces around a lot when we're taxiing. Could lose a foot if your shoe gets caught up in the support wires."
- Teddy, "I need a drink."

³ At that time, Bush Jr. has managed to redefine deficit spending.

⁴ Richard Reeves, *President Reagan, The Triumph of Imagination* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), xvii.

- Arch, "Stewardesses haven't been invented yet. Here's a flask."
- Teddy, "I need to use the toilet."
- Arch, "Thing of the future. Here's a Coke bottle."



Figure 3. Frankly, I'd rather be someplace else.⁵

During the flight, and true to Theodore Roosevelt's spirit, he laughed and waved his hat to the crowd below. Being a famous passenger, his ride gave a big boost to this new technology.

It was not until Franklin Roosevelt's time in office that a sitting President would fly. In January 1943, FDR flew across the Atlantic Ocean in a Pan American seaplane (the *Dixie Clipper*) to attend the Casablanca Conference and meet with Winston Churchill.⁶ It was at this conference where Winston persuaded FDR to commit American forces to an invasion of Italy.

We've Come a Long Way

The dangerous stick, paper, and plywood contraption in Figure 3 was the first Air Force One. No one called a presidential plane by this name until the mid-1950s. During President Dwight Eisenhower's flight in *Columbine II* from Washington, DC to Florida the call sign of this plane (Air Force 610) became mixed-up with Eastern Airlines flight 610. To avoid confusion, the pilot of Ike's plane selected a new call sign, Air Force One.

The FAA controllers were not happy with a mere pilot infringing on their turf and making-up call signs. But after all, Ike was their boss. He could even fire them...as Ronald Reagan demonstrated some years later. Anyway, the press and public learned about this story; thereafter, any plane carrying the U.S. President was (and is) called Air Force One.

⁵ Von Hardesty, *Air Force One*, 30.

⁶ Von Hardesty, *Air Force One*, 38.

The plane used by Ronald Reagan (SAM 27000) is located at his museum. It is housed inside a huge room, as seen in Figure 4, the site of my photo in Figure 2. The tour guide informed us Reagan made 211 trips on this plane. Perhaps his most memorable flight was the trip in 1987 to Berlin where he issued the challenge to Russian Premier Mikhail Gorbachev to "...tear down this wall."



Figure 4. SAM 27000, Air Force One.

A museum guide told us this story about Reagan and Air Force One: During one of the landings at Andrews Air Force Base (the home of the Presidential air fleet), his aides were explaining the growing complaints from the American public about air traffic delays. Reagan listened to them for a while, then responded, "What's the problem? Air Force One is never late!" Good one Ronnie.

This story reminded me of another great one-liner from Reagan. During a press conference in 1981, Sam Donaldson of ABC asked Reagan if he were concerned about the drop of stock market prices. The President replied, "No, I don't own any stocks!"⁷ It took panache to make those comments. Here's another:

CBS installed a telescope on a peak near the Reagan ranch in California, hoping to catch a glimpse of the President. After learning the scope was up-and-working, Ronnie told Nancy he was going to step off the porch and drop to the ground, grabbing his chest.⁸ That ploy *would* have affected the stock market. Anyway, it is told that Mrs. Reagan was not amused, but Nancy never had the sense of humor of her husband.

I've got that much Power?

On August 12, 1982, Reagan talked with reporters about the Israeli bombing and shelling of Muslim neighborhoods in Beirut. On August 11, a fourteen-hour bombardment had the Israelis send-off 220 bombing sorties and 44,000 artillery shots into parts of the city occupied by mostly civilians. (So what? See WW II.) Anyway, President Reagan, in urgent messages, had been asked by King Fahd of Saudi Arabia to stop the assault. On the afternoon of August 12, Reagan spoke with the Israeli leaders. His diary reads:⁹

⁷ Richard Reeves, *President Reagan, The Triumph of Imagination*, 93.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 124.

I told Begin it had to stop (the assault) or our entire future relationship was endangered. I used the word 'Holocaust' deliberately...Twenty minutes later, he called me to tell me he'd ordered an end to the barrage and pleaded for our continued friendship.

After the call, Reagan told (one of his aides), "I didn't know I had that kind of power."¹⁰

This story is reminiscent of the time Ted Williams broke .400, toward the end of the 1941 baseball season. After the last game, in which he pushed his batting average to .406, he remarked to his locker mates that...yes, maybe he was an okay hitter. Some people live their lives unaware of their prowess---or at least they don't trump-up their exploits, such as Reagan and Williams. Others trump-up themselves. The Donald comes to mind.

Speaking of the Berlin Wall, in the next report, we'll examine the displays about the Wall in Reagan's museum. In a later report, we'll also revisit the attempted assassination on Ronald and rediscover this man's grit.

Your on the Street Reporter

¹⁰ Richard Reeves, *President Reagan, The Triumph of Imagination*, 124.

**Presidential Places
Ronald Reagan: Museum and Grave
Report Three**

February 15, 2007

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. I'm visiting Ronald Reagan's Presidential Museum, Library, and Grave, located in Simi Valley, California. The entrance to this museum is shown in Figure 5. There he is, cheerful as always. A smile for the ages. This report will take us to sections of the museum displaying artifacts and memorabilia of Ron's dealing with Communism, the USSR, and the Berlin Wall.



Figure 5. Entrance to the museum.

The Wall

On the other side of this entrance, across the foyer and at the rear of the building, rests a section of the Berlin Wall. I snapped a photo of this relic, seen in Figure 6. This side was the West Berlin face of the wall. It conveys gaiety, flowers, rose-colored petals, hope, and optimism. The East side of the wall, which faced the Communist part of the city is unadorned. Look at the top of the wall in the Figure. It resembles the wall the East Germans saw from their side of the Cold War. No paintings. No flowers. Gray stone. Bleakness. A telling symbol of the differences between the Western World and the Soviet Bloc.



Figure 6. A piece from the past.

In 1990, this section was given to President Reagan by the Berlin Wall Commemorative Group to acknowledge and honor Reagan's crusade to thwart and defeat Communism. It was an appropriate gift. But it should be noted that, contrary to the claims of Reagan's sycophants, Ronnie did not single-handedly cause the demise of the Soviet Union. To make this claim is absurd and insulting to every President from Harry Truman to G. H. Bush.

Ronnie certainly hammered a few nails into Communism's coffin. And he did it with élan. *Air Force One* took him to several meetings with Gorbachev, where Reagan and his aides initiated actions leading to Cold War thaws, extraordinary arms agreements, and the dismantling of the USSR.

Conservatives Assailed their Conservative Hero

We pause from our museum tour to make an observation about the conservatives in America who, during Reagan's terms in office, assailed him. Then, after he left office, held him as their role model. Why the assailments? Because some of Ron's acts as President were not conservative. They were...gasp!...liberal.

Example One: Soviets' shooting down KAL 007.¹¹ After the Korean Airlines airplane was shot down by the Soviets, George Will (a current sage of our times), had this to say about Reagan's refusal to retaliate with military force, "The administration is pathetic...and it's time for him to act." But Reagan was not the warhorse his admirers thought him to be. During a National Security Council meeting, he told his advisors, "We've got to protect against overreaction. Vengeance isn't the name of the game."

To the dismay of many---except agri-business---he did not suspend America's grain sales to the USSR. To the delight of the hotel owners in Geneva, he refused to break-off ongoing arms

¹¹ Richard Reeves, *President Reagan, The Triumph of Imagination* , 169. Two quotes in paragraph.

control negotiations. And imagine this: *The New York Times* had something nice to say about Reagan's behavior. If Ron had taken the advice of George Will, the Cold War could have become a Hot War. But he did not. And in the end, look who won?

Example Two: Reduction in Arms. One of the most significant accomplishments of Reagan's career was the arms reduction agreements between the United States and the USSR. Yep, Ronnie went face-to-face with the Evil Empire. He talked to the enemy! (G.W., are you listening?)¹² The resulting agreements put conservatives into a tailspin:¹³

George Will: "December 8, (1987) *will be remembered as the day the Cold War was lost.*"
(Ahem, once again, who won the Cold War, George?)

William F. Buckley said he could not understand how Reagan could put Europe at risk.

The Conservative Caucus said Reagan, "...was nothing more than a useful idiot for Soviet propaganda."

And so on. Nowadays, these folks tout Ronald Reagan as their conservative hero. George Will and William F. Buckley are still at it, spouting-off with aplomb, as if they were not capable of error. Granted, we all make mistakes. But all too often the George Wills and William F. Buckleys of the world don't have to answer for their gaffes. Their previous mistakes are covered-up by their pearls of wisdom in their next column. The same goes for the liberal zealots.

Entering East Germany

During one of my lecture tours in Europe, Reporterette and I took a train from Frankfurt to visit friends who were stationed in West Berlin. As you may recall, during the Cold War, Berlin was surrounded by East Germany, a satellite of the USSR. The United States, Britain, and French occupied parts of West Germany, as well as sections of West Berlin. The Soviets occupied the remaining part of Berlin, called East Berlin.

As our train entered East Germany, it made a stop at the border. Just before the stop, an announcement informed us we might be searched by East German security personnel. We were advised not to take pictures. We were advised to keep our cameras out of sight and to remain in our seats at all time. We were cautioned not to talk to one another during this stop. Nor should we engage in repartee with the East German soldiers.

- I said to Holly, "Should we keep our heads down, eyes to the floor? You know, if you look at them, maybe they'll go crazy and attack."
- "Don't joke. It's not funny."
- "I've read about the East German border guards. I'm only half-joking."

¹² And as a later revision (June 7, 2015), President Obama's effete mentality led him away from entering into a similar dialogue with Vladimir Putin. The result (during a time when Russia wished to become closer to the West) has been a disaster.

¹³ Richard Reeves, 446.

The train was stopped for only a few moments. During this time, the doors opened and East German soldiers came in. They were fully armed, remained silent, and frowned a lot. Their ambience was infectious.

We showed our passports to the guards. They looked them over and handed them back---without speaking a word. No hello. No thank you. No, "Welcome to our Cozy Communist Borough, a land of milk and honey. In reality, not much milk, and almost no honey. And stop smiling." It was almost as if we did not exist, but we somewhat existed. Very strange, and later in this report, I'll explain why we got the silent treatment.

Unlike scenes from the movies, no one left the train. Of course not. We passengers were traveling through a Communist country. No one in their right mind would try to smuggle themselves into East Germany, Russia, Latvia, or any place under Soviet rule. But the return train trip out of East Germany was a different matter, and the train was stopped for a longer time. Most likely, the guards were looking for concealed émigrés.

The ride through the East Berlin corridor was as depressing a train ride as any I've taken...perhaps with the exception of an Amtrak jaunt. The railroad line was surrounded on both sides by high fences. Every few thousand feet, guard towers had been erected, just to make sure no one jumped off the train and tried to flee into captivity. Or perhaps some brave soul might attempt to jump on the train, cruising along at 50 MPH, in order to make it into West Berlin.

"Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"

During our visit to West Berlin, we spent an evening in the East Berlin sector. The two cities, separated only by the Iron Curtain wall, seemed as if they were on different planets. Just like the two sides of the wall itself.

Going through Checkpoint Charlie, the entrance/exit between the two sectors, was a surreal experience. Our friend was an Army Colonel, and as he drove us toward Checkpoint Charlie, he gave us this advice (I paraphrase the conversations and actions):

- Reporter, *Ron, why are you wearing your uniform?*
- Ron, *Part of the protocol. And here's how we must behave going through Checkpoint Charlie. Look straight ahead. Don't say anything. Don't get out of the car. Don't roll your window down. Don't do anything!*
- Ron pulled up to the security gate, where East German guards stood. I expected Ron to roll down his window and utter a protocol-like greeting. Nope. He kept his window up. He placed a piece of paper (a one-time pass) against the window. A guard examined the paper through the window. He made some notes on a clipboard. He said not a word, nor did he look at Ron. And Ron stared straight ahead.
- I cheated. I moved my head ever so slightly so I could watch the paper-against-the-window protocol execution. The gate was opened, and Ron drove us through a depressing city of drab, gray buildings.
- Reporter, *What was that all about?!*
- Ron, *The two sides don't acknowledge the existence of each other. It's complicated. Cold War politics.*

- *But they had to acknowledge you. They looked at your pass.*
- *But they didn't look at me, and I didn't look at them. And we didn't talk to each other.*
- *Hmm, we had a similar experience on the train at a security checkpoint. Pretty weird. So, the Russians and Americans don't accept each other's presence, but they do somewhat, because both are physically present?*
- *It's complicated, but yes, sort of.*

With that Kafkaesque encounter behind us, we made our way to a five-star restaurant. Its shabby décor once spoke of elegance, even opulence. We dined for three hours on one of the best tasting and best tended dinners I have ever experienced. The total cost for the meal was not much more than what a customer would pay at an American fast food restaurant.

Next to the Checkpoint Charlie display was a gray wall, symbolizing the Berlin Wall, with quotes inscribed on it. Figure 7 shows the quotes I thought were interesting and worthy of inclusion in this report.

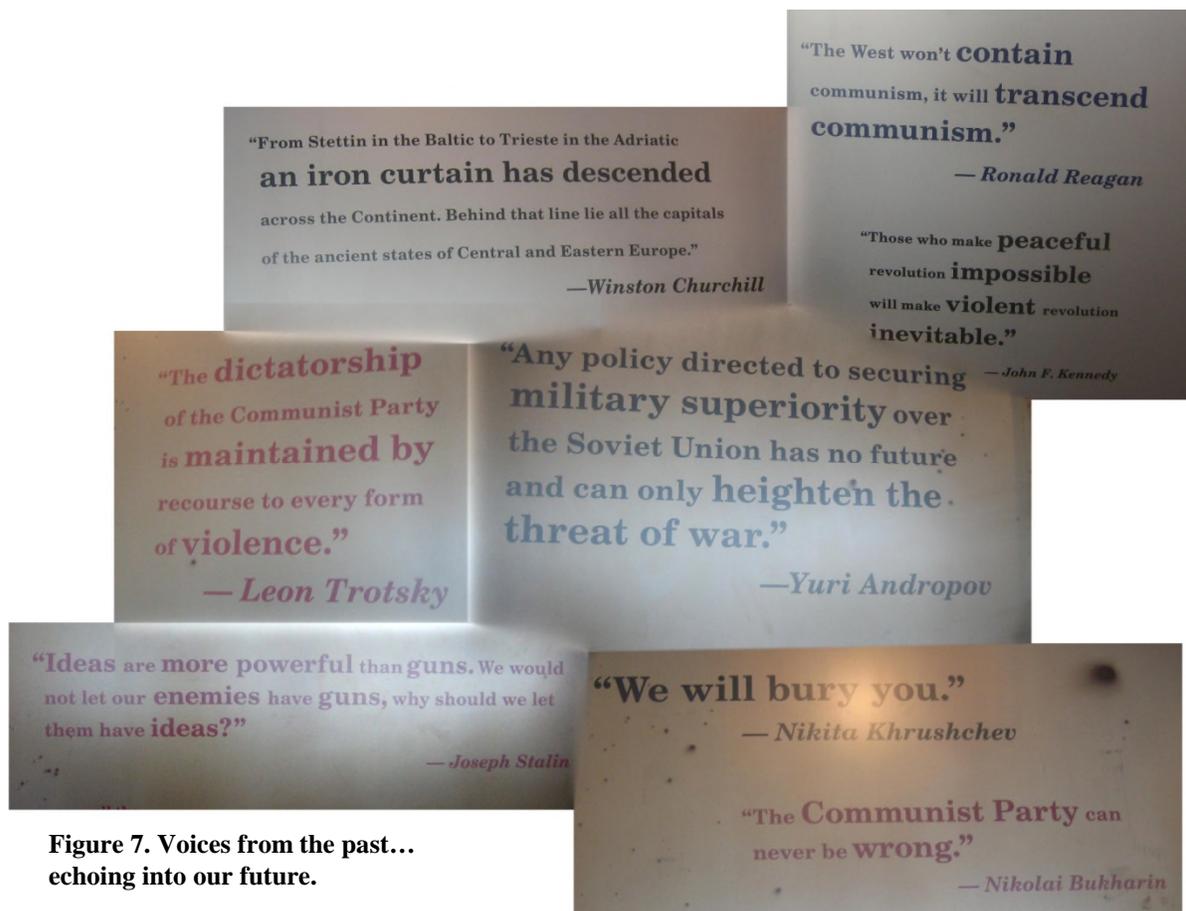


Figure 7. Voices from the past... echoing into our future.

The quote from Leon Trotsky, "The dictatorship of the Communist Party is maintained by recourse to every form of violence," rings true today. Just substitute Communist Party as in,

" The dictatorship of the Taliban and al-Qaeda is maintained by recourse to every form of violence." If I have doubters, if any reader thinks I'm wrong, read this passage. It's part of an al-Qaeda training manual.¹⁴

In the name of Allah, the merciful and compassionate. To those champions who avowed the truth day and night.....And wrote with their blood and sufferings these phrases...The confrontation that we are calling for with the apostate regimes does not know Socratic debates..., Platonic ideals..., nor Aristotelian diplomacy. But it knows the dialogue of bullets, the ideals of assassination, bombing, and destruction, and the diplomacy of the cannon and machine-gun.

Islamic governments have never and will never be established through peaceful solutions and cooperative councils. They are established as they [always] have been by pen and gun, by word and bullet, by tongue and teeth.

Consider the quote from that loveable despot, Joe Stalin, "Ideas are more powerful than guns. We would not let our enemies have guns. Why should we let them have ideas?" Try expressing a contrary view, an idea, in the caves where Osama hangs-out, or being a contrary Shiite in a Sunni neighborhood in Baghdad. Chances are, you'd be dead in a heartbeat. Unfortunately, Stalin's views of suppressing ideas are alive and well...Okay, alive and sick.

So are those of Nikita Khrushchev, "We will bury you!", and Nikolai Bukharin, "The Communist Party can never be wrong." Just substitute the nouns in these sentences for the name of your favorite demagogue, and the statements reflect appropriate comments on the present state of world affairs.

Consider Reagan's statement, "The west won't contain Communism. The west will transcend Communism." America sorely needs to come to grips with the wisdom in this simple statement. I alter it to fit today's world, "Democracies won't contain militant Islamic terrorists. Democracies will transcend them." It seems we have forgotten the fact that in the long run, our way of life travels better.

And in the (very) long run, we will succeed---*if we hold to our ideas and ideals, and if we practice them with other peoples.* The other side is hopelessly outmatched in the idea and ideal departments. But we need to work on this aspect of our game plan. I'm concerned America made a wrong turn after the Cold War. We went from "Walk softly, but carry a big stick," to "Don't bother with much of anything but hitting with a big stick." It did not start with Bush. It began with the notion that as the only kid on the block with a hammer, we could use it---and it alone---to get what we want. Bush managed to bring this arrogance to a fine art, and we see the results today.

Next, consider the quote of Yuri Andropov, "Any policy directed to securing military superiority over the Soviet Union has no future and can only heighten the threat of war." Andropov was

¹⁴ "The al Qaeda Training Manual," found at an al Qaeda member's home by Manchester, England Metropolitan Police.http://www.usdoj.gov/ag/manualpart1_1.pdf.

dead-wrong. The Reagan years witnessed a huge build-up of America's defenses. During Ron's terms, defense spending as a percentage of GNP went from just under 5% to just over 6%.¹⁵ Ronnie told the Soviet leaders he was determined to build Star Wars. He installed additional missiles in Germany. In the end, the USSR realized it was bankrupting itself with the arms race, that it could not succeed against America's power and wealth. Ron out-spent the Soviets into defeat.

When I heard Reagan's speech about his intention about Star Wars, I thought he had lost his marbles. It was never considered feasible by most scientists. But it did not matter. The idea was just one more nail in the Communist coffin. A coffin increasingly filled with the bones of Communist ineptitude, inefficiency, corruptness.

The Wall Speech

We finish this segment of the report with a brief description of how Reagan decided to give Gorbachev some advice about the landscape in Germany. The two argued about the wall, with Gorbachev declaring the United States had its own border problems. He cited quotas and security guards at the Mexican border. Ron put this discussion to rest with a short, "There's a big difference between wanting in and wanting out."¹⁶ Touché.

In 1987, the President traveled to Berlin to help the city celebrate its 750th anniversary. Ron wanted to give a speech that would compare with President Kennedy's 1963 "Ich bin ein Berliner" speech. And he wanted to make a statement about getting rid of the wall.

Some of his aides, notably his chief of staff Howard Baker, disagreed. They thought it would do no good, and would only exacerbate matters. The speechwriter, Peter Robinson, who had spent a lot of time writing then re-writing the line, has this to say about the conversation between Reagan and his staff:¹⁷

- "Now, I'm the President, aren't I"
- "Yes, sir!"
- "So I get to decide?"
- "Yes, sir!"
- "Well then, the line stays in."

For the speech, the President stood on a platform near the wall and the Brandenburg Gate. He went through a rather desultory address, then said,

We hear much from Moscow about a new policy of reform and openness. Are these the beginnings of profound changes in the Soviet Union state? Or, are they token gestures? ...There is one sign the Soviets can make that would be unmistakable, that would advance dramatically the cause of freedom and peace. General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the

¹⁵ Mark Thompson, *Broken Down*, Time, April 16, 2007, p. 32.

¹⁶ *Newsweek*, December 21, 1987; Richard Reeves, *President Reagan, The Triumph of Imagination*, 435.

¹⁷ Richard Reeves, 400-401.

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!

The speech made page 3 in America's newspapers the next morning. The moment itself passed, but its effect was everlasting. Before long, the sentence caught on. In a few days, it was seen all over the world on television. It remains a part of Cold War lore. Eastern Europe is one of the few parts of the world today in which America has a positive image. The main reason for this support was our anti-Soviet stance during the Cold War. We were patient but vigilant. We waited our enemy out. The enemy eventually self-destructed. So too, will militant, religious terrorism. Just as long as we do not throw-out the baby with the bath water.

In the next report, we look at the assassination attempt on the President and what the museum has to tell us about this event.

Your on the Street Reporter

Presidential Places
Ronald Reagan: Museum and Grave
Report Four

February 15, 2007

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter, who is at the Ronald Reagan's Presidential Museum, Library, and burial place. A previous report dealt with America's confrontation with Communism during the Reagan administration and the tensions that existed between the East and the West during this time in history. Before moving to another subject, let's listen-in on another comment made by Ronnie about the Soviets. After one of his weekly radio addresses in 1984, he announced:¹⁸

- " 'My fellow Americans, I am pleased to tell you I just signed legislation which outlaws Russia forever. The bombing will begin in five minutes.'
- He chuckled.
- The technicians laughed---until they realized the microphone was on."
- That Ronnie, always the jokester!

We continue our tour with a look at a museum display of the White House Situation Room, as seen in Figure 8. This windowless room, located under the West Wing, is used by the President and a small group of people to conduct their affairs in a highly secure setting. The fifteen-by-twenty-foot room is bomb proof and lead-lined. Next door is a state-of-the-art communications facility. President Reagan's advisors met in this room to deal with his near-death from an attempted assassination. It was here Secretary of State Alexander Haig appointed himself Chief-of-State.



Figure 8. Museum display of the White House Situation Room.

¹⁸ *New York Times*, August 14, 1984; Richard Reeves, 228.

In the spring of 1981, President Reagan spent much of his time in Washington, D.C., making speeches and meeting with dignitaries. On March 30, he was at the Hilton Hotel to talk to delegates at an AFL-CIO conference---not exactly a group friendly to Ron's political philosophies. Undeterred, he warmed-up the audience with this joke about a wife instructing her baseball-playing husband how to put on their baby's diaper:¹⁹ "Look, buster, you lay the diaper out like a diamond, you put second base on home plate, put the baby's bottom on the pitcher's mound, hook up first and third, slide home underneath, and if it starts to rain, the game ain't called, you start all over again."

Shortly thereafter, as he was leaving by a side exit of the hotel, he was shot. Do you recall where you were when you heard this news? I was working nearby, at the Federal Reserve Board. We turned on a portable TV to discover Reagan had been taken to the George Washington University Hospital. What we did not know was that several Cabinet members and key staff members had assembled in the Situation Room. What we also did not know (for a long time) was that the President almost died. Yet, in pain, bleeding profusely, very weak, and having trouble breathing, he got out of the car at the hospital, telling his security staff, "I'll walk in." He made it twenty feet and "sagged to the floor."²⁰ The man had panache. He also had grit.

Shortly, Nancy was by his side at the hospital, at which time he informed her, "Honey, I forgot to duck."

Meanwhile back at the Situation Room, Haig had taken charge...as Haig was wont to do. I'll not repeat the compelling story of Reagan's fight for his life at the hospital. Let's spend a few moments with Haig. After all, these reports are meant as satire.

Upon learning the Vice President was in Texas, Haig informed the folks in the room and others on the telephone, "So the helm is right here. And that means right in this chair (the chair in which he was sitting) for now, constitutionally, until the Vice President gets here."²¹

Whoa, Alex! The 25th Amendment to the Constitution respectfully requested you queue-up behind the Speaker of the House and the President pro tempore of the Senate in the line to Presidential succession. This small point made no difference to Secretary Haig. Shortly after his announcement to the very surprised folks in the Situation Room, Haig scrambled upstairs and interrupted an ongoing press conference, "Constitutionally, gentlemen, you have the President, the Vice President, and the Secretary of State in that order...As of now, I am in control here..."²²

Fantastic. Staff members watching his coup thought he had gone off his rocker. My take on this man is that he was a semi-ego maniac. I use the word *semi* in order to avoid a lawsuit by calling a spade a semi-spade.

¹⁹ Richard Reeves, 33-34.

²⁰ Ibid., 35. Interview with Michael Deaver.

²¹ Ibid., 38. Interview with Larry Speakes discussing his book, *Speaking Out: The Reagan Presidency from Inside the White House*.

²² Ibid., 40.

William Clark was one of Reagan's National Security Advisers. On his first day, Haig said to him, "Okay, you run the building, I'll run the world." He later said of Clark, "He doesn't know his ass from third base." Of Baker, "That son-of-bitch is the worst influence I have ever seen in the federal government." Of Reagan, "His staying power is zilch. He isn't a mean man. He's just stupid."²³ Yes, Haig savagely disparaged Reagan, his boss, the man whom he owed absolute loyalty.

Let's leave Haig to his self-imposed misery and recall another classic one-liner from Reagan. Later in his time in office (1993), he had gone down in the polls. His pollster Richard Wirthlin told him his approval rating was down to 35%. "Reagan patted Wirthlin's arm and said, 'I know what I can do about that'---he smiled---'I'll go out and get shot again.'"²⁴

Presidential Gifts

The variety and number of gifts a U.S. President receives is astounding. If you are into stuff---tons of it---you should run for the U.S. Presidency. The Reagan museum has a large room containing a small sampling of the thousands of gifts Ron received during his Presidency, post-Presidency, and post-life. Upon walking into the room, we were greeted by a tour guide who showed us around and let us know she could not understand why people sent their beloved possessions to a stranger.

We marveled at the idea that Ronald received almost 400 belt buckles from buckle groupies, as seen here. Our guide informed us many of these gifts came-in after President Reagan had died. I thought, *Why send gifts to a dead person? It's not like you'll get a thank-you note.* But I did not volunteer this opinion to the guide.



Figure 9.

We were impressed with a giant ball of yarn, shown to the right. The guide told us, "This was a gift as part of a White House Conference on Aging. Yarn! As if old folks had nothing to do but knit sweaters."

"Why a woman even sent the museum her wedding ring set! Why in the world would she do that? She was probably divorced and didn't want the rings."

I thought, *A tart wit this one. And pretty funny. Maybe she would have liked my comment about thank you notes from dead people.*

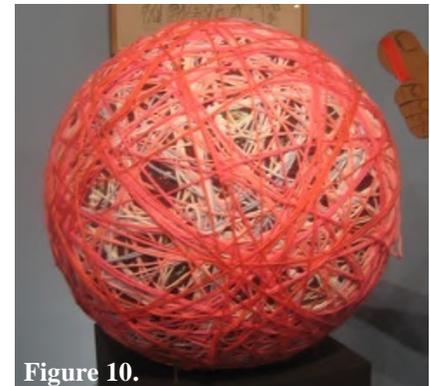


Figure 10.

²³ Richard Reeves, 111, interview of Reeves with William Clark.

²⁴ Ibid., 132, interview with Michael Deaver.

One of my favorite displays is seen here. It is a portrait of Ronnie rendered in butterfly wings, with a frame of cola nuts. *Every* part of the picture is composed of wings. At first glance, I was sure parts of the picture were created with other material, such as ivory for the teeth, glass for the eyes, or hair for the hair. Nope, the artist was into butterflies.

The display informed us, "Urban legend has it that only right wings were used in this portrait." Ha! The museum curators did something besides curate. They also wrote good one-liners. They couldn't envision Ronald Reagan's picture rendered with left wingers.



Figure 11.

Just outside the gift room was a display of a huge quilt, shown here. It is called the Ronald Reagan Presidential Museum Freedom Quilt. The 200 pieces were created by children and put together by local quilters in the Simi Valley area. Reporterette had gone to other parts of the museum, so I took this picture to show her later. An elderly couple walked by as I snapped the photo. Elderly, as in older than this elderly reporter. As in very old. Doddering-like.



Figure 12.

- The woman asked, "Young man (whoa!), would you like us to take a picture of you with the quilt?"
- "No, thanks. I'm taking the photo for my wife. She has lot of pictures of me."
- The woman responded, "The picture of you and the quilt will let her know you were here."
- "Eh, sorry ma'am, but where else could I have been if my camera contains a picture of this quilt? I'm not sure I'm following you."
- Man, "Come along Emma, leave the man alone."...As they traipsed out of my vision and life.

What on earth was going on in her mind? Send in your opinions to busybody.org. Anyway, in the next report we visit museum displays about Reagan's life as an actor.

Your on the Street Reporter

Presidential Places Ronald Reagan: Museum and Grave Report Five

February 15, 2007

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. We continue our tour of Ronald Reagan's Presidential museum, library, and grave site. For starters, Figure 13 is a picture of a movie theater mock-up and several display cases. This part of the museum informs visitors of Reagan's exploits as a youngster, a movie actor, and later, as president of the Screen Actor's Guild (SAG).

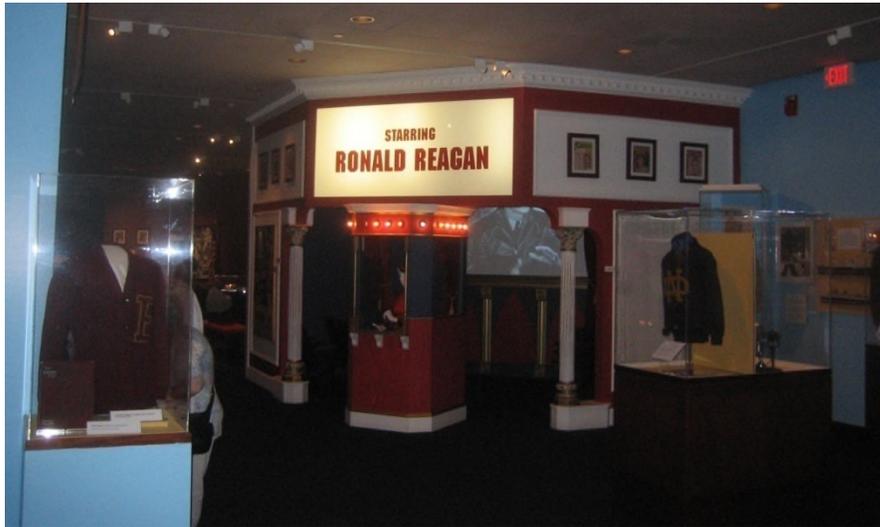


Figure 13. College and movie days.

The display on the left represents his time at Eureka College, a small school near Peoria, Illinois. He attended on a scholarship, where he majored in economics---not a subject a mental light-weight would choose. He was president of the student body, a member of the football team, and captain of the swimming team. He liked acting, but in 1932, show business jobs were hard to come by. In 1936 he became a sportscaster for station WHO in Des Moines, Iowa.²⁵

The display on the right commemorates his role as Notre Dame football halfback George Gipp in the movie *Knute Rockne---All American*. Gipp was nicknamed "The Gipper" by the sportswriters. Eventually, Ronnie took on this moniker, and it seems he also came to believe in the myths surrounding this subject. As Reagan grew older, as he succumbed to Alzheimer's, he was known to tell tall tales, and he eventually believed the tall tales were true. Sound silly? Maybe. See Mark Twain for a role model.

No question, Ronald Reagan did not sweat the small stuff. And there is also no question that he often lost track of where he was or what he was doing. In another report, we examine the Iran-Contra deal, an affair that almost got Ronnie into a lot of trouble....except for the fact that he *forgot* about his illegal arms deals and his blatantly illegal cover-ups. So, an investigation would

²⁵ "Ronald Reagan," Microsoft ® Encarta ® Reference Library 2005.

never have gotten anywhere. After all, the principal of the setup couldn't remember anything about it.

Here are three of his more famous and humorous gaffes:²⁶

In June 1982, he was speaking to a veterans organization in Columbus, Ohio, about ongoing arms control negotiations. He said the U.S. needed to, "...strengthen three delegations of Americans, two of which are in Geneva, and one, I believe, still in Switzerland."

Toward the end of 1982, he took a trip to Latin America. During this trip, he met with several heads of states. At one meeting, "He raised a glass to toast the 'President of Bolivia,' as he looked into the eyes of the President of Brazil. And he came back saying it was interesting to discover that the Latin American countries were different from one another."

In 1984, he made a trip to China, where he signed trade and cultural agreements. During this time, he met with China's leaders and attended several festive functions, "Not only did Reagan fall asleep during the formal welcoming banquet in Beijing's Great Hall of the People, he dozed off in a private meeting as Premier Deng Xiaoping was laying out China's position on the future of Taiwan. When that meeting was over, Deng turned to an aide and said, 'Did he understand anything I said?' "

No big deal. It was only the leader of the most populous country on earth discussing one of the most dangerous issues between US and China. Clever diplomacy on Ron's part. Deng couldn't confront America on this issue if America's President was asleep. Anon tells us: Let sleeping dogs lie and let volatile issues sleep.

Do You Believe?

The readership for these reports, some of whom I have never met, come from many parts of the globe, and I expect have many different views about subjects such as astrology. The dictionary definition of astrology is the belief that the positions of the moon, sun, and planets affect human beings.

Of course, they do! Some of my best buddies have been known to howl at the moon---especially after a few shots of vodka. And I've been sunburned more than I care to admit. What is more, high and low tides don't just happen. So there, case settled. Okay, but about the notion that Jupiter's position in the universe during the exact second I was born reflects my stellar personality and my taste for fried okra---well, I'm skeptical. An anecdote about the subject:

My undergraduate degree was psychology. During my senior year in college, I took a course titled, "The Psychology of Testing." It dealt with IQ tests, personality tests, aptitude tests, and others. The students in this class took tests, both as guinea pigs and testers. I did okay on them except the attitude test. My teacher had suspected all along I had an attitude problem and the test confirmed it.

²⁶ Richard Reeves, 99, 154, 218.

Anyway, our professor was well-known and respected in the field of psychology testing. At the beginning of the class, he announced he had been working on a new personality test for quite some time, that the project was nearing completion, and that he would like us to take the test as part of his evaluation of the test. He told us our personality profile would be kept a secret, shared only between each person and him. Fair enough. And I knew I had a good personality. I was eighth runner-up in the Best Personality Poll at my high school. (It was a tightly contested race between eight candidates.)

We took the test, and a few weeks later, he brought-in the results in sealed envelopes---our personality profile. He had us open the envelopes, read our profiles (each person had 10 traits listed), then answer questions about our judgment of the accuracy or inaccuracy of the test's ability to profile our personas. With one exception, 24 students said the personality profiles were accurate reflections of their personalities. I was impressed with my profile. It declared I was a cool dude.

He then asked a student to read to the class the first personality characteristic on the student's sheet. We were surprised about the request, as we thought the results were to be kept secret. For myself, I was eager to let my classmates know a great personality was sitting nearby. So was everyone else. As it turned out, all 24 students were cool dudes or dudettes because all of us were profiled with the same traits. Our professor had played a trick on us. He had selected horoscope entries in the local paper for the 10 traits. His only decision was to choose positive descriptions. Otherwise, he selected them randomly.

We were sophisticated test-takers and test-evaluators. Yet, we were taken-in. The one student who said the profile was inaccurate was a regular reader of the horoscope column in the newspaper.

To wrap-up this story, our teacher told us he had been asked to speak to a local astrology chapter about psychology. He made two talks. The first one he used as a ploy to administer his "test." He came back the next week, and as he did with us, revealed his trick to the astrology buffs. He informed us he was not invited back for a third speech.

Nancy's Astrology

Don Regan served as Ronald Reagan's Secretary of the Treasury and later, as his chief-of-staff. During a conversation with Vice President Bush, Regan told Bush the release of the Tower Report (on the Iran arms deals, detailed in a later report).²⁷

- " 'That's in the hands of an astrologer in San Francisco, George.'
- The Vice President looked mystified. Regan poured out his frustrations about the woman Mrs. Reagan called, 'My friend,' Joan Quigley.
- 'Good God,' said Bush.
- Warming up with a vengeance, Regan told the Vice President that he had to keep color-coded calendars of good days and bad days, all based on Quigley's reading of the stars. He

²⁷ Richard Reeves, 385.

pulled out a strip of paper, calculating which dates were good and bad for dealing with the Tower Report (and other actions): Feb. 20-26 be careful...March 7-14....bad period...March 10-14 no outside activity...March 12-19 no trips exposure...March 19-25 no public exposure...March 16 very bad...March 21 no...March 27 no...April 3 careful..."

During Gorbachev's 1987 visit to America, the time chosen for the signing of the arms treaty was chosen by Mrs. Reagan's astrologer.²⁸ President Reagan did make some comments about Nancy and astrology, but generally dismissed it by saying he did not guide his life by it. But it was well known that he and Nancy "fooled around" with astrology for many years before he went into politics. He mentioned to friends, "I never even think of making an important decision without consulting (a *Los Angeles Times* astrology writer, Carroll Righter) first."²⁹ Ronald Reagan was called a star for a good reason.

In our next report, we look at President Reagan's efforts to scale-down government, some displays in the museum on the subject, and one of the more endearing stories of Reagan's time in office: The Fish Story.

One more one-liner from Ron. During Reagan's time in office the Libyan leader Qaddafi was making the front pages for his acts of terrorism. During CIA briefings to Reagan, the subject came around to his "flamboyancy." Ron was informed Qaddafi was said to use makeup and dress in women's clothes and high heels. The President responded, "Maybe we can stop the terror by letting him into Nancy's closet."³⁰ As I said, you may not have like his politics, but it would be hard not to have liked the man.

Your on the Street Reporter

²⁸ Selwa Roosevelt, *Keeper of the Gate* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 245.

²⁹ Richard Reeves, 456, Reeves' interview with Mr. Righter.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 319, Reeves' interview with Larry Speakes.

Presidential Places
Ronald Reagan: Museum and Grave
Report Six

February 15, 2007

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. We continue our tour of Ronald Reagan's presidential museum with a look at his battle to contain the size and influence of government. A battle he lost. Figure 14 is a museum display that symbolized Reagan's view on the issue, one he tackled as soon as he was in office. In a speech at Notre Dame a few weeks after his swearing-in ceremony, he declared, "Central government has usurped powers....government has been fixing things that aren't broken and inventing miracle cures for unknown diseases...All of this has led to the misuses of power and preemption of the prerogatives of the people and their social institutions."³¹



Figure 14. A fitting symbol.

As most of us can recall, Ron's economic program became known as Reaganomics. He said more money should be left in the hands of citizens and less in government coffers. This idea---supply side economics---held that the economy would be better off by citizens spending money than by government spending money. So, Congress was persuaded to pass the Economic Recovery Tax Act, which resulted in tax cuts of 25% over three years. Some folks were not happy. Some were very happy.³²

³¹ Richard Reeves, 59.

³² "Ronald Reagan," Microsoft ® Encarta ® Reference Library 2005.

Most individuals in the income categories below the national average saw a slight increase in their tax rates, while most individuals in the upper income categories had their tax rates reduced by a moderate amount. The greatest increase involved a 1.6 percent rate increase for taxpayers among the lowest ten percent of wage earners. On the other end of the spectrum, those 1 percent of taxpayers with the nation's highest incomes saw their rates decrease by 6 percent over the same period.

Reagan succeeded in cutting many federal social programs, including job training, college loans, food and medical programs, payments for those with disabilities, child daycare centers, and centers for the elderly. He was able to relax environmental and safety standards. He did not tackle what has become the biggest economic problem facing America today: He exempted any budget reductions for social security and Medicare.³³ As well, during his presidency, the budget for defense spending increased from \$134 billion in 1980 to \$290 billion in 1988.

So, was Reagan really a conservative? In my view, fiscal and monetary restraint is the bedrock of a sound conservative philosophy. Ronnie was President from 1981 to 1989. In 1980, U.S. government debt was \$908 billion. In 1988, it was \$2.6 trillion. Just before Reagan took office, America used 10 percent of its budget for interest payments. Just after he left, the number was 15 percent. In 1980, the US trade deficit was \$24.2 billion. In 1986, it was \$152.7 billion. A conservative approach to governing? Hardly.

The silliness of using liberal and conservative handles nowadays is even more evident when we look at the next Democrat (i.e., liberal) in office, Bill Clinton.³⁴

In the 1998 fiscal year, the treasury experienced a surplus of \$70 billion, the first surplus since 1969. The surplus was achieved well ahead of expectations because of strong growth in the U.S. economy. The country began to use surplus revenues to pay down the national debt, which had risen to \$5.4 trillion by 1997. The U.S. economy continued to grow, and in February 2000 it broke the record for the longest uninterrupted economic expansion in U.S. history, lasting ten years.

Reagan's philosophy on taxes and money was simple: Give the money to the rich. One of his tax cutting programs revealed the legislation would save \$28,000 on the Reagans' joint return. Bill Plante of CBS News brought this fact to the attention of the President. Ronnie responded:³⁵

- "I think that just points out for everyone how advantageous the new tax system is."
- Plante then commented that the middle class would not save as much.
- Reagan finished this short debate, "Well, they also don't pay as much."

While working at the Federal Reserve in the 1970s and early 1980s, I became convinced that a large national debt is one of the most dangerous problems a nation can face. I'm told that debt

³³ "Ronald Reagan," Microsoft® Encarta ® Reference Library 2005.

³⁴ "Bill Clinton," Microsoft® Encarta ® Reference Library 2005.

³⁵ White House News Service, May 29, 1985.

makes no difference if it can be serviced by a country's wealth and ongoing revenues. I respectfully disagree. It is no different from my debt...or yours. The more we pay for interest on our credit cards, SUVs, and boats, the less we can spend on building up our wealth.

Anyway, I've given up trying to tell the difference between a conservative and liberal in relation to the matters of money. This table contains descriptions that might have been accurate twenty or thirty years ago. But now? I'd like your opinion, as I honestly do not know what defines a conservative or a liberal (regarding fiscal and monetary matters). Just log-on to www.uylessblack.com, click on "Contact Uyless", and send me your thoughts. Or if you are on the E-mailing list for this essay, simply click on "Reply".

Old Time Conservative	Old Time Liberal
Low taxes because excessive tax funds lead to extravagant and ill-suited social programs.	High taxes because tax funds lead to beneficial social programs.
High budgets for military because military must be ready to preserve and advance America's interests. The military keeps America out of trouble.	Low budgets for military because military is not the answer for preserving and advancing America's interests. The military gets America into hot water.
Reduce deficit spending. Social programs are breaking America's back.	Deficit spending is acceptable in light of the value of America's social programs.
A balanced budget because debt is dangerous.	An unbalanced budget to help society is worth its potential danger.
No free trade. It creates trade deficits. Well, okay, as long it's my product going overseas, not someone else's stuff.	Free trade is great, as it leads to income for the exploited masses in third world countries. Just as long as it does not put U.S. union folks out of work.
Pork barrel? Only in my district!	Pork barrel? Only in my district!

The Fish Story

We've been serious in this segment. Let's lighten the load with a story of Ronald Reagan's tending to a small boy's fish. During Reagan's 1985 summit meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev in Geneva, the President was staying at the home of a couple and their boy, who had vacated the place for Ron's use. The boy left a note for the President, asking him to look after the fish in his bedroom. Ron did his job, but he discovered the night before his meeting with Gorbachev that one of the fish had died. The Secret Service was dispatched into the city to look for a replacement.

Upon leaving the home, he placed a note next to the aquarium:³⁶

Dear Friends,

I put the white half dome in the tank according to the directions and fed them with 2 good pinches morning and night from the big food container. Now and then, I added some of the colored flakes from the small container. Lights on the morning and out at night. On Tuesday, I found one of your fish dead at the bottom of the tank. I don't know what could have happened, but I added 2 new ones (same kind). I hope this is alright. Thanks for letting me live in your lovely home.

³⁶ Edmund Morris, provided by Nancy Reagan, *Dutch, A Memoir of Ronald Reagan* (New York: Random House, 1999), 575; Richard Reeves, 293.

Ronald Reagan

Just as we suspected: Behavior straight from the heart of a bleeding-heart liberal!

In our next report, we revisit the Iran-Contra affair, and look into the personality of that All-American Boy, Ollie North.

Your on the Street Reporter

Presidential Places
Ronald Reagan: Museum and Grave
Report Seven

February 15, 2007

Hello from Your on the Street Reporter. We continue our tour of Ronald Reagan's museum, library, and gravesite. A display at the museum struck a chord with your reporter. One of Reagan's favorite hang-outs in Hollywood was the famous Chasen's Restaurant. Figure 15 is a model of part of this eatery. In the early 1960s, I spent a couple summers in the LA area, and my brother David took me to this place a few times. My fondest memory of Chasen's is not the food or drink, but the recollection of Rita Hayworth dining at the next table. I tried not to stare, but her stunning looks invited gaping.



Figure 15. A famous watering hole.

Great memories for a young man. Dave was a fine host. He took me to the Brown Derby, the Coconut Grove (where I watched performances of Judy Garland and Sophie Tucker), the Crescendo (Ella Fitzgerald), and the Interlude (Bobby Short). I visited Hollywood a few months ago. The once illustrious Crescendo has been replaced by The Body Shop...not body as in cars; body as in females.

Anyway, I was unable to locate any displays about the Iran-Contra affair. I was not surprised, as presidential museum curators do not expend a lot of energy putting up exhibits that might cast doubt on the nobility and purity of their subject.

After the hostage crisis in 1980, Congress designated Iran as a terrorist nation. It also outlawed the sale of arms to the Iranian government. In November 1986, it was revealed the U.S. government had sold weapons to Iran in order to win Iranian support in freeing U.S. hostages

held by Lebanese terrorists friendly to Iran.³⁷ Ronnie knew about this illegality, but he said he would never be forgiven by the American people if a legal question kept him from getting the hostages out.³⁸ Legal question? It was a matter of committing an impeachable offence! It was also a question of ethics, as Reagan had been adamant in not dealing with Iran or other countries that supported terrorists. What took the cake was the fact that *Israel* became the middle party for the sale. A deal in which:

The Iranians would receive \$3.65 million worth of Hawk missile parts from Israel. They would pay \$17 million into a Swiss bank account controlled by the government of Israel, and \$15 million of that would be transferred to private American accounts set up by (Oliver) North. Then \$3.65 million of the \$15 million would go through CIA accounts to the Pentagon to send replacement missiles and parts to the Israelis. And the Iranians would show their gratitude by effecting [sic] the release of five American hostages in Beirut.³⁹

Irony in action. Israel sold weapons to a country (Iran) whose leader now promises to wipe Israel off the face of the earth---perhaps with the help of the weapons sold to Iran by Israel. Actions of the past often haunt the present.

As another example, next door in Iraq. For many years, America funded Saddam Hussein's regime (Sunni) as a way to counter the Iranians (Shiite). Irony in action again: On December 20, 1983, Donald Rumsfeld (Reagan's special envoy to the Middle East) met with Hussein, which resulted in America providing funding for Iraq's war with Iran. Toss in more irony: Later, the Israeli Foreign Minister gave Rumsfeld a letter to deliver to Hussein stating that Israel was willing to provide secret assistance to Iraq in its war with Iran!⁴⁰ Hmm. Maybe that's one reason Iran is so piqued with Israel.

Back then (1983), America saw Hussein's Iraq as a very important counter-force to Iran. That critical fact did not change when, some 20 years later, America took him out of the picture. We now have the Middle East increasingly controlled by radical Shiites in Iran (and maybe Iraq). The Sunni states of Saudi Arabia and Jordan are getting very nervous.

Anyway, for whatever reason, the Bushes managed to upset a very effective balance-of-power situation in the Middle East, which is resulting in a catastrophe.

By the way, the money that went to North was used (illegally) for funding the contra war in Nicaragua. Here's what Ron had to say about this (in his diary):⁴¹

After the meeting in the Situation Room, Ed M. and Don R. told me of a smoking gun. On one of the arms shipments, the Iranians had paid Israel a higher purchase price than we were getting. The Israelis put the difference in a secret bank account. Then our Colonel

³⁷ "Ronald Regan," Microsoft ® Encarta ® Reference Library 2005.

³⁸ Richard Reeves, 298.

³⁹ Ibid., 314.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 236.

⁴¹ Ibid., 368.

North (N.S.C.) gave the money to the 'Contras'...North didn't tell me about this. Worst of all, John P. (Poindexter) found out about it and didn't tell me. This may call for resignations.

Yes, but Ronnie was being disingenuous. He may not have known that some of the Iran funds had been diverted, but he certainly knew his aides were illegally raising money for the Contras. It is well documented that Saudi Arabia contributed millions of dollars to the cause, under the guise of buying two air plane tankers, four hundred Stinger ground-to-air missiles and two hundred launchers. When Reagan was informed of the transfer of this money, he noted, "Mum's the word."⁴²

Illegal sales? Yes. Illegal cover-up? Yes. As mentioned, getting money from anyone (including third world countries) for the Contras was an impeachable offence. North and his cadre held U.S. laws in contempt. They were disdainful of anything other than their own ideology. They lied and destroyed evidence.

Right wing. Left wing. Doesn't matter folks. Democracy only works if its cumbersome machinery is allowed to grind away; if its laws are followed. Otherwise, what's the point? No idea, no doctrine, however noble, should ever allow anyone---even self-designated patriots---to engage in Constitutional debauchery. That was North's sin. That was also the sin of Ronald Reagan.

Reagan and Bush Sr.

As you may have noticed from the footnotes in these reports, I've used Richard Reeves' biography of Reagan for much of my research. I recommend this book to you. It presents a balanced view of Reagan's policies, even though Reeves' affection for Ronald is evident. I suspect mine is, too.

Reeves states several times in his book that Ronald treated his staff as if they were hired hands. Yes, because that's what they were. But the term *hired hands* is used in a negative connotation by Reeves. In other readings about Ronald Reagan, and in my recollections of his behavior, I gained the sense that he treated his aides with respect and affection. For sure, he liked to joke and pleasantly disparage the subjects of his humor. But his wit was rarely cruel. Equally telling about the nature of the man, he was not above self-disparagement.

Here's one more example of Ronald Reagan's wit; another illustration of his sense of humor and love of repartee. His Vice President (George H.W. Bush) was the dupe for this joke.⁴³ The two men often met for lunch. At one, they talked about the country's trade deficit:

- "Reagan said, 'You'll never believe what's one of our most important exports. Condoms.'
- 'I didn't know that,' Bush replied.
- 'Yep, there's a big *Made in the USA* marked on every one.'
- 'Wow, I didn't know that either.'
- 'Well, you have to unroll them all the way to see it.' "

⁴² Richard Reeves, 368.

⁴³ Ibid., 478.

Ronnie Rented His Time. They All Do.

In previous reports, I have not spared the rod for Bill Clinton's renting the Lincoln bedroom to political fund contributors. And to strangers no less. But given equal time, Ron was not above the fray of soliciting money for his political survival. It comes with the territory. On one occasion, through an Ollie North arrangement, two people pledged \$300,000 for a "quiet" meeting with the President. Reagan accepted. It is told that he met with the donors, had a quiet talk, and greenbacks were transferred into Ollie's illegal account.⁴⁴

Does money guarantee a politician will succeed? No, but it helps. Should we be concerned that America's major political offices are filled by folks who (with few exceptions) bring in big bucks to their coffers? I am not concerned. If these guys and gals are expending most of their time raising money for their next TV ad, they are less likely to have the time and energy to pass yet another law. A law that would be added to America's legal inventory now containing over 100,000,000 words. As I said in "A Visit to the Supreme Court":

In a democracy, the law is supposed to function as a pilot, a guide, for a society. It keeps the citizens on a even keel, away from each other's throats. But how can the law act as a stabilizing force if it takes three years of reading to just peruse the statutes?⁴⁵ How can we practice democracy if we can't even read our laws?

Reagan said, "Democracy is less a system of government than it is a system to keep government limited."⁴⁶ Amen, Mr. President. But you cannot keep government limited if its laws intrude into every nook and cranny of your life.



Figure 16. Ronald Reagan's burial site.

It's been fun writing about President Reagan and his museum. Once more, you may not have like his politics---and I liked most of them---but it would be hard not to have liked the man. I hope you enjoyed taking the trip with me to Reagan's library and museum. In closing, Figure 16 is a snapshot I took of his grave, which is located in the back yard of the museum.

It's time to move on. We've other streets to travel and other places to visit.

Your on the Street Reporter

⁴⁴ Richard Reeves, 247.

⁴⁵ 100,000,000/250 words per minute = 400,000 minutes/60 minutes = 6,666 hours/40 hours in a work week = 166 weeks/52 weeks in a year = 3.21 years!

⁴⁶ Richard Reeves, 474.