

Remembering Ronald Wilson Reagan

Memories and tributes to the nation's 40th president on the occasion of his funeral.

Brooke Rollins

President, Texas Public Policy Foundation

I was in the 8th grade when the space shuttle Challenger disaster occurred. I will never forget President Reagan's words that evening: "On this day 390 years ago, the great explorer Sir Francis Drake died aboard ship off the coast of Panama. In his lifetime the great frontiers were the oceans, and a historian later said, 'He lived by the sea, died on it, and was buried in it.' Well, today we can say of the Challenger crew: Their dedication was, like Drake's, complete." I was forever changed. I understood for the first time that day what complete dedication to a greater purpose truly meant. It was one of the greatest gifts I have ever received. President Reagan, thank you for changing the world, and for inspiring millions to complete dedication.

Michael Quinn Sullivan

Vice President, Texas Public Policy Foundation

"Ronald Reagan dead at 93," screamed the *Austin American-Statesman* headline. My heart sank, but only for a moment. After all, Reagan presented to a desperate America a bold vision of endless sunrises, unfettered growth driven by personal liberty and responsibility. He was a man who deeply understood the pragmatic importance of good ideas driven with the right symbolism. He was a man who casually read the works of great economists and philosophers, but is

forever to be remembered as a rugged cowboy working his ranch. A humble man born to limited means, he stood on the world stage and demanded the Soviet Union's leaders "tear down this wall." They did, and today the world is a demonstrably better place because of Ronald Wilson Reagan's commitment to liberty, passion for freedom and devotion to good ideas. It is still dawn in America. Thank you, Mr. Reagan.

Chris Patterson

Director of Research, Texas Public Policy Foundation

"We have every right to dream heroic dreams. Those who say that we're in a time when there are no heroes, they just don't know where to look." (January 20, 1981.) President Reagan leaves a legacy of hope. His life shows that each of us can become a hero, transforming from the ordinary to the extraordinary, and that the world can be changed for the better by just one person.

Byron Schlomach, Ph.D.

Chief Economist, Texas Public Policy Foundation

Since 1989, when Ronald Reagan left office, I've missed him. He was for me the embodiment of America, a bit brash and overconfident at times, but essentially good and convinced that everybody essentially wants the same thing – liberty and a chance to make a better life. Ronald Reagan had principles that could be summed up in that one word – liberty. It included the liberty to do the best with one's own

talents, the liberty to take one's earnings and do the best for one's own family, and the liberty to do the best for others as one sees fit. Finally, Ronald Reagan, I believe, gave my children the liberty to go to sleep at night confident that tomorrow will come and that they have no reason to fear being incinerated by a nuclear bomb. God bless you, Ronald Reagan. I love ya, man.

Tonda Bunge

Director of Operations, Texas Public Policy Foundation

With strength and poise, President Reagan shared with the young and old alike the pride and privilege of being American. He spoke of the importance of freedom, liberty and prosperity. For his leadership and initiative, his sincere belief in the ability each of us to make a difference in our American life, I give thanks and honor to his memory, and hold his legacy of change and reform dear to my heart.

“Every new day begins with possibilities. It's up to us to fill it with the things that move us toward progress and peace.” -- Ronald Reagan

Shari Hanrahan

Director of Development, Texas Public Policy Foundation

Ronald Reagan left office 15 years ago, the same time the Texas Public Policy Foundation was founded. Although the timing is coincidental, people of all persuasions finally understood there was a different road to take toward economic recovery. Reagan persuaded them to take that road. He consistently communicated his conviction that government is not the solution, but the problem. The Foundation continues to reflect the economic philosophy of this great president through our work. Like Reagan, we believe that the fruits of your labor should not be taken by the government for increased programs, but instead be put back into the economy by free choice. For communicating this message so effectively to so many Americans, we thank President Reagan.

Gloria Villanueva Anderson

of Denton, Texas

I was a Reagan Appointee to the US Small Business Administration (one of many Hispanic appointees) as an advocate for small business. I am forever grateful for the opportunity he gave me to help small business owners create new businesses and learn how to improve existing businesses. I coordinated seminars in 45 states and twice as many cities and was honored when President Reagan was the keynote Speaker in Atlanta, GA. I was allowed to stand by him and VP Bush in the Blue Room for a ceremony press conference for a large minority business contract that had been facilitated by the SBA. I had tea in the Rose Garden with President Reagan and he was delightful, chivalrous, attentive, and exuded confidence and strength- all the traits women like to see in a man.

Dale Laine

of Austin, TX

It was the fall of 1980 when I first worked as a volunteer in the Presidential campaign of Ronald Reagan. I was a small bit player, to be sure, but I knew

something big was happening when I stood with hundreds of others to cast our ballot that day in November... an astonishing one and one half hour wait.

His eight year Presidency lasted throughout my years following college, and his bold leadership, clarity of vision and common decency had a profound effect on me in the early part of my business and political career.

I had the honor to visit with him and do the off-stage announcement of him as the 40th President of the United States to a packed ballroom at an event for Senator Gramm in 1990 in Houston, and I will always cherish the honor of doing so.

History will be kind to this tremendous leader of the free world, a top 5 President to be sure; he helped change our state, our country and our world for generations to come.

May God bless this good man.

Max A. Castaneda

of Corpus Christi, Texas

I remember listening to Ronald Reagan's radio show when me and my brothers ran a rather large paper route where we grew up in Washington State. I remember how comforting his voice was, especially how he kindly thanked his listeners with "This is Ronald Reagan, thanks for listening."

I'll always remember President Reagan because I voted for him the first time I could vote, his second term. The stories I like most about him come from the book "You Are The Message" by Roger Ailes one of President Reagan's speech writers and handlers.

During one of the Presidential debates, there was a concern that someone would ask the "age question" since some believed that President Reagan was too old for the job. President Reagan simply answered, that of course he felt up to the job and then he said, "I want you to know that I will not make age an issue in this campaign, I am not going to exploit for political purposes my opponents youth and inexperience." Ailes says he was a successful communicator because he could be himself and he had a "light touch." He had a great disarming sense of humor. Reagan said, "I've been getting a lot of flack about ordering the production of the B-1. How did I know it was an airplane? I thought it was a vitamin for the troops." To a group of doctors, "We've made so many advances in my lifetime, for example, I've lived ten years longer than my life expectancy when I was born- a source of great annoyance to many people." Or, during the New Hampshire primary, just before a debate, the moderator shut off Reagan's microphone. Reagan jumped to his feet, grabbed the microphone and yelled at the moderator "I paid for this microphone Mr. Green." "He was tough and decisive," Ailes says.

And I agree, tough, decisive and a great sense of humor are some of the many things a lot us liked about him. A great man, a great President!

Jim Harding

Of Kingwood, Texas

Like many father's I was running late to fulfill my commitment to my daughter to be at Deerfield-Windsor School in Albany, Georgia in time for her Young Astronauts Program. I made it to the school's center court just minutes before the launch of Challenger, or more specifically the launch of the school teacher into space. The Young Astronauts sat cross legged in the very front of the large screen TV. Every child glistened with aluminum foil simulations of NASA uniforms. My daughter was the mission specialist for this flight. The kids cheered as the rockets lifted the Challenger skyward. My wife, a forth grade classroom Mom smiled at me from across the court, I was saved from the parental gallows, I hadn't missed it. When the Challenger exploded the room went still, the adults knowing full well the likely outcome for the souls within that fountain of debris. The silence was broken by the acting shuttle pilot, a rough cut kid, "The g**d*** thing blew up on me," bellowed the fourth grader. With that announcement every child in the court ran around looking for someone to hug them.

My daughter ran first to her Mom and then they both joined me as I rushed towards them, we took strength from each other, we were a family. For the next several days my daughter couldn't get enough of the post mortem. No explanation would satisfy her, until President Reagan addressed the nation. He was very much our national father, he spoke to us as a father would and made everything better. After he spoke my daughter turned to us saying, "these things happen when you are an explorer." She never spoke of the tragedy again.

Brian Berry

of Austin, Texas

Ronald Reagan lit a fire in me that continues to this day. His talk of liberty, freedom and love for America reminded me that we do indeed live in 'one nation, under God.'

Memories rush over me as I walk the streets of Capitol Hill today waiting for the funeral procession of President Reagan. I remember meeting candidate Reagan at a campaign rally on the West Capitol steps during the 1980 campaign. He reached out his hand, said 'how are you young man?' and smiled that Reagan smile.

These same West Capitol steps bore Ronald Reagan at his Inaugural and will support him later this day as his body is carried upon them one last time.

I'm a Reaganite and proud of it. I'm and an American and thank God for it. And, I'm optimistic that America's best days lie ahead because Ronald Reagan helped make it so.

Gary & Patricia Sturrock

My Heart is broken, but I have peace; my eyes are wet from a broken heart, but I have peace. I see how true Americans feel how about you, and my eyes get wet all

over again. I see in my fellow Americans what Americans stand for. So Mr. President and Mrs Reagan, I give thanks to GOD above for your legacy, the legacy of loving your country, the legacy of the need absolutely to be absolute in matters, such as the need to destroy terrorists, but also to build up what is good!

Thank you for the lessons taught, but thank you especially for the lessons learned!! Goodbye, my friend!!

Harvey J. Haas

Colonel USAF (Ret.)

I was the Base Civil Engineer at McGuire AFB, N,J, [in 1980]. The military morale was at the lowest point that I ever observed during my 26 year Air Force career. The moment the election results were announced, everyone knew better days were ahead. They were. I arrived at McGuire AFB the day the hostages were taken in Iran, so I observed the full cycle.

Carol Bernhard

of Austin, Texas

Ronald Reagan shaped many aspects of my adult life. My parents, hardworking business owners, showed my brother and sister and I how to live by being good role models. My four grandparents, born within months of Reagan, in 1910, shared his core values. Ronald Reagan brilliantly verbalized their beliefs, their way of approaching life and gave a voice and character to their actions in my mind. He was able to give me moral direction through his words as he validated and reinforced what I was taught growing up by family.

When I was eighteen, my parents drove me to vote in my first election . It was 1980 and I had just graduated from high school. We all talked about how excited we were to cast our votes for Ronald Reagan. I was just maturing and growing out of the confusing pains of adolescence. It was if a dark cloud was being lifted from all our lives and our country. The memory is unmistakably one of anxious optimism for the future. It was if we all knew that our votes for Reagan would change America for the better.

President Reagan died the last day of the 2004 Texas Republican Convention, the first political convention I attended. I doubt I would have ever been a Republican delegate from Travis County without Reagan's influence. In February of this year, my 93 year-old grandfather died. One of the last things I remember my grandfather saying was "I was a Republican" -- to the hospice nurse inquiring about his charmed newspaper owner's life. I lost my two very best heroes at the same exact age and in the same year. As they flashed Reagan's picture on the big screen at the Convention, I remembered my grandfather, my parents and that first vote I cast. Although it was 24 years after that vote, I realized that without either my family or Reagan, my life would have been very, very different. Their optimism and positive words gave me the ambition I needed for success in business, family and life. Their faith and love for family showed me what was

important. They all shaped the way I approach and look at life and they always will.

I will always remember his positive encouraging message of self reliance, limited government and the freedom to choose your life's path. I will always be grateful that he communicated those values to me and to many others so eloquently, in words we could easily understand and relate to. I believe Reagan epitomized what is great about our country, its people and its freedoms. He made me understand that certain things are worth fighting and working for. He will live on in the lives of those he has touched, their children and in the better world he left behind.

Arthur Lara

He cut taxes for the working man, and gave us pride in ourselves and our county.
God bless him!

Courtney Moore
of Austin, Texas

My parents, staunch Republicans to the core, were of course bewildered like all of America when they heard Reagan had been shot. It was at the same time period that they were blessed with the birth of their second child, me. I still love to hear my mom tell me how if Reagan would not have recovered from his wounds, I would have been named Reagan after the great president, Ronald Reagan.

Of course as a young girl all I knew of Reagan was that he was an old guy with these big ears and there was something about him and this wall they kept referring to, I believed he called it, "The evil empire." Of course my first reaction was that he was referring to Star Wars, and in a way he was. I mean he had a defense plan actually called Star Wars.

Leadership connotes innovation, but leaders emerge and maintain their position only when if they embrace current fashions and beliefs. Leaders win acclaim and their followers win reassurance and hope from courses of action that reaffirm accepted ideals while connoting boldness, intelligence, change, and paternal protection. The powerlessness that characterize the lives of most citizens furnish the incentive to believe in leaders who signify hope and a talent for coping with complex forces.

Reagan guided America to victory in the cold war. Under his leadership, a conflict that had absorbed a half-century of Western blood and treasure was ended — and democracy won. Reagan stood bold and tall and faced down the "evil empire" and was a symbol of the American way.

I think as we look back we will see him as a gentleman of American politics. He was a person of dignity and weight, warmth and wit. He was a master of language and rhetoric which he used to attract audiences and gain support of the American people. He was The Great Communicator, but not only that, he was a communicator of great ideas!

I think they broke the mold when they made Ronald Reagan. He had such integrity and seems truly genuine. A leader who feels like he has nothing to prove is a true blessing. He said what he thought, believed what he thought, and furthermore, acted on what he said!

Carol Lyle

of Austin, TX

Dear Ronnie,

You'll never know us, but you not only made it possible for us to fully enjoy the "American Dream" of prosperity, you passed along the wonderful, "old-fashioned" personal characteristics that are required for living a "great" life. I feel forever indebted to you and your eternal optimism and wish I could stay in that state of mind as often as you did! NO ONE could EVER say that your life didn't make a difference; by comparison, I often wonder if even a dozen people will remember me a decade after I'm gone!

We're indebted and grateful for all of eternity, I hope to see you eventually and be able to give you a personal hug, something I wasn't fortunate enough to do in this life.