

President Ronald Wilson Reagan

Compilation by D. A. Sharpe

President Ronald Wilson Reagan was born February 6, 1911 in Tampico, Whiteside County, Illinois. He is the [seventh cousin, once removed](#) to me. The Ancestors in common between President Reagan and me are Susannah Goldman and her husband, John Bishop. They are my seventh great grandparents from the 1600's



Ronald Reagan

40th President of the United States

Reagan was the 40th President of the United States (1981-1989) and was elected earlier as the 33rd Governor of the State of California (1967 - 1975). Prior to his political successes, he was a professional screen actor and elected President of the Screen Actors Guild. He is the only U. S. President who also served as a labor union president.

Ronald Reagan was raised in a poor family in small towns of northern Illinois, Reagan graduated from [Eureka College](#) in 1932 and worked as a sports announcer on several regional radio stations. After moving to Hollywood in 1937, he became an actor and starred in a few major productions. Reagan was twice elected President of the [Screen Actors Guild](#)—the labor union for actors—where he worked to root out [Communist influence](#). In the 1950s, he moved into television and was a motivational speaker at [General Electric](#) factories. Reagan had always been a [Democrat](#)

until 1962 when he became a conservative and switched to the [Republican Party](#). In [1964](#), Reagan's speech, "[A Time for Choosing](#)", supported [Barry Goldwater](#)'s foundering presidential campaign and earned him national attention as a new conservative spokesman. Building a network of supporters, he was [elected Governor of California](#) in 1966. As governor, Reagan raised taxes, turned a state budget deficit to a surplus, challenged



the protesters at the [University of California](#), ordered [National Guard](#) troops in during a period of [protest movements](#) in 1969, and was [re-elected in 1970](#). He twice ran unsuccessfully for the Republican nomination for the U.S. presidency in [1968](#) and [1976](#); four years later, he easily won the nomination outright, becoming the oldest elected U.S. president up to that time, defeating incumbent [Jimmy Carter](#) in [1980](#).

Entering the presidency in [1981](#), Reagan implemented sweeping new political and economic initiatives. His [supply-side economic](#) policies, dubbed "[Reaganomics](#)", advocated tax rate reduction to spur economic growth, control of the money supply to curb inflation, economic deregulation, and reduction in government spending. In his first term he survived an [assassination attempt](#), spurred the [War on Drugs](#), and fought public sector labor. Over his two terms, the economy saw a reduction of inflation from 12.5% to 4.4%, and an average annual growth of [real GDP](#) of 3.4; while Reagan did enact cuts in domestic discretionary spending, tax cuts and increased military spending contributed to increased federal outlays overall, even after adjustment for inflation. During

his re-election bid, Reagan campaigned on the notion that it was "[Morning in America](#)", winning a [landslide in 1984](#) with the largest electoral college victory in American history. Foreign affairs dominated his second term, including ending of the [Cold War](#), the [bombing of Libya](#), and the [Iran–Contra affair](#). Publicly describing the Soviet Union as an "[evil empire](#)", and during his famous speech at the [Brandenburg Gate](#), President Reagan challenged Soviet General Secretary [Mikhail Gorbachev](#) to "[tear down this wall!](#)". He transitioned Cold War policy from [détente](#) to [rollback](#), by escalating an [arms race](#) with the USSR while engaging in talks with Gorbachev, which culminated in the [INF Treaty](#), shrinking both countries' nuclear arsenals.^[1] Reagan's presidency came during the decline of the Soviet Union and just ten months after the end of his term, the [Berlin Wall](#) fell, and on December 26, 1991, nearly three years after he left office, the [Soviet Union collapsed](#).

When Reagan left office in 1989, he held an approval rating of sixty-eight percent, matching those of [Franklin D. Roosevelt](#), and later [Bill Clinton](#), as the highest ratings for departing presidents in the modern era.^[2] He was the first president since [Dwight D. Eisenhower](#) to serve two full terms, after a succession of five prior presidents did not, some under unusual circumstances. Although he had planned an active post-presidency, Reagan disclosed in



British Prime Minister [Margaret Thatcher](#) (here with Reagan outside [10 Downing Street](#) in June 1982, as the [Falklands War](#) drew to a close) granted the U.S. use of British airbases to launch the Libya attack

1994 that he had been diagnosed with [Alzheimer's disease](#) earlier that year. He appeared publicly for the last time at the [funeral of Richard Nixon](#). He [died ten years later](#) in 2004 at the age of 93.

Reagan had the [second-longest life](#) out of all the presidents; the current longest lifespan of a president is held by [Gerald Ford](#), who [died two years after Reagan](#). An icon among Republicans, he is viewed favorably in [historian rankings of U.S. presidents](#), and his tenure constituted a [realignment](#) toward [conservative](#) policies in the U.S.



With first wife [Jane Wyman](#), 1942

He married actress Jane Wyman in 1940, and they divorced in 1949. He married Nancy Davis in 1952.

According to [Paul Kengor](#), author of *God and Ronald Reagan*, Reagan had a particularly strong faith in the goodness of people; this faith stemmed from the optimistic faith of his mother and the [Disciples of Christ](#) faith, into which he was baptized in 1922. For the time, Reagan's opposition to [racial discrimination](#) was



Wedding of Ronald and [Nancy Reagan](#), 1952. Matron of honor [Brenda Marshall](#) and best man [William Holden](#) were the sole guests

unusual. He recalled the time in Dixon when the proprietor of a local inn would not allow [black people](#) to stay there, and he brought them back to his house. His mother invited them to stay overnight and have breakfast the next morning. After the closure of the Pitney Store in late 1920 and the family's move to Dixon, the Midwestern "small universe" had a lasting impression on Reagan.

Reagan attended [Dixon High School](#), where he developed interests in acting, sports, and storytelling. His first job involved [lifeguarding](#) at the [Rock River](#) in Lowell Park in 1927. Over a six-year period, Reagan reportedly performed 77 rescues as a lifeguard. He attended [Eureka College](#), a Disciples-oriented liberal arts school, where he became a member of the [Tau Kappa Epsilon](#) fraternity, a cheerleader, and studied economics and sociology. While involved, the [Miller Center of Public Affairs](#)



In Los Angeles after leaving the White House, early 1990s

described him as an "indifferent student". He majored in economics and sociology, and graduated with a C grade. He developed a reputation as a "jack of all trades", excelling in campus politics, sports, and theater. He was a member of the [football](#) team and captain of the swim team. He was elected student body president and led a student revolt against the college president after the president tried to cut back the faculty.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ronald_Reagan

On Reagan's 87th birthday, in 1998, Washington National Airport was renamed [Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport](#) by a bill signed into law by President [Bill Clinton](#). That year, the [Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center](#) was dedicated in Washington, D.C. He was among 18 included in [Gallup's most admired man and woman poll](#) of the 20th century, from a poll conducted in the U.S. in 1999; two years later, [USS Ronald Reagan](#) was christened by Nancy Reagan and the [United States Navy](#). It is one of few Navy ships christened in honor of a living



person and the first [aircraft carrier](#) to be named in honor of a living former president.

Ronald Reagan was a man to express his Christian faith. Here is a quotation:

“Of the many influences that have shaped the United States of America into a distinctive Nation and people, none may be said to be more fundamental and enduring than the Bible ... The Bible and its teachings helped form the basis for the Founding Fathers’ abiding belief in the inalienable rights of the individual – rights which they found implicit in the bible’s teachings of the inherent worth and dignity of each individual.”

Source: Reagan, “[Proclamation 5018 – Year of the Bible](#), 1983,” American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=40728>

When Reagan addressed a Prayer Breakfast in Dallas, Texas in August 1984, during the Republican National Convention in Dallas where he was made the Party’s Presidential candidate for his second term, we hear a quote that reinforces his Christian view:

“Without God, there is no virtue, because there’s no prompting of the conscience. Without God, we’re mired in the material, that flat world that tells us only what the senses perceived. Without God, there is a coarsening of the society. And without God, democracy will not and cannot long endure. If we ever forget that we’re One Nation Under God, then we will be a nation gone under!”

It was the privilege and honor for Suzanne and me to be volunteers at the 1984 Republican National Convention when it met in Dallas, Texas, where we lived, to witness the nomination of Ronald Reagan to be the Republican Party's candidate in November that year for his second term!

Ronald Wilson Reagan died on June 5, 2004 at age 93 in Bel Air, Los Angeles, California. The cause of death was pneumonia, complicated by Alzheimer's disease. His final resting place is at the [Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Center](#).

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