

# Ronald Reagan

The Great Delegator  
Fortieth, 1981-1989



**Nicknames:** "Dutch", "The Teflon President", "The Gipper", "Bonzo", "The Great Communicator", "Ronald Ray-Gun"

**Birth:** February 6<sup>th</sup>, 1911, Tampico, Illinois

**Death:** June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2004, Bel-Air, California

**Significant Events During Reagan's Terms:** AIDS ... Challenger Disaster ... Stock Market Crash ... Iran/ Contra Scandal

**Quotes:** *"For such a little bit of a fat Dutchman, he makes a hell of a lot of noise, doesn't he?"*

-- "Jack" Reagan, Ronald's father, on the boy's birth

*"I think when you make that decision [on who to vote for] it might be well if you could ask yourself, are you better off than you were four years ago?"* -- Ronald Reagan, 1980

*"I'm not going to exploit for political purposes my opponent's youth and inexperience."*

-- Ronald Reagan, 1984, referring to Walter Mondale

*"Honey, I forgot to duck."*

-- Ronald Reagan, to his wife Nancy after being shot in an assassination attempt in 1981

*"How can you take this man seriously? Perhaps even he doesn't know what he's talking about...He is the biggest liar of all the American Presidents...the worst terrorist in the history of mankind...a madman, an imbecile and a bum...His ideas are from the era of Buffalo Bill, not the nuclear age."*

-- Fidel Castro, 1985

*"Reaganites say that Reagan has lifted our 'spirits' – correct if they mean he led the nation in a drunken world-record spending binge while leaving millions of American workers, consumers, and pollution victims defenseless."* -- Ralph Nader

*"Can we abandon a country that has stood by us in every war we have ever fought, a country that is essentially strategic to the free world?"* -- Ronald Reagan, speaking of Apartheid-tarnished South Africa (the USA vetoed every UN resolution to stop Apartheid in South African during Reagan's time in office)

**How his term ended:** Term limits and advancing age prevented Reagan from running a third time.

**Other Professions:** Lifeguard, Radio Sports Announcer, Actor, Labor Union Leader (President of the Screen Actors Guild), Soldier

**Worst Mistakes:** Reagan lied when he promised while on the campaign trail to balance the federal budget. Once he got into office, Reagan ran up record multi-billion dollar deficits.

More egregiously yet, Reagan also lied about the Iran/Contra scandal, denying that he had sold arms to Iran and routed the proceeds to rebels in Nicaragua who were fighting the government there – after Congress had passed legislation specifically forbidding aiding these forces.

Some claim that Reagan may not have ordered, approved, or even known about the "Contra" part of the hyphenated scandal. However, in his book "When Presidents Lie: A History of Official Deception and Its Consequences," Eric Alterman asserts that Reagan lied through his teeth about the entire affair.

And it's hard to imagine that Reagan didn't know of and approve the aiding and abetting of the Contras, anyway, as he had the harbors in Nicaragua mined (an act of aggression that is not only downright nasty, but also violated international law).

While raising military expenditures, Reagan cut aid to the needy, such as Disability payments.

Soon after taking up residence in the White House, Reagan cut research into renewable energies by 90%. Coincidentally, perhaps, twenty-three oil company executives contributed \$270,000 to redecorate the White House living quarters.

**Saving Graces:** Mr. Reagan had an engaging smile (possibly attributable to acting lessons) and a full head of dark, wavy hair (possibly attributable to hair care products).

But seriously, over his seven-year span as a lifeguard, Reagan claimed to have saved seventy-eight people from drowning. Even if exaggerated, that truly was a commendable feat.

**Notes:** Much to his credit, Reagan's father Jack would not allow his children to watch the pro-KKK film "Birth of a Nation," a favorite of Woodrow Wilson's (#28).

During his acting career, Reagan headed up the Screen Actors Guild.

Reagan was the first President who had been divorced. Being sixty-nine at the time he entered the White House, he was also the oldest man ever to become President.

The fifty-two hostages held in Iran for 444 days were freed at the very beginning of Reagan's presidency. However, similar to Kennedy's guarantees to Russia at the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis, Reagan had to first promise Iran that he would:

- 1) Not interfere in their internal affairs
- 2) Remove existing sanctions against them
- 3) Unfreeze their assets in the United States

The budget deficit created during Reagan's time in office was greater than that of all the previous Presidents *combined*. On a related note, the U.S. went from the largest creditor to the largest debtor nation during Reagan's "reign."

Similar to the Revenue Acts of 1924 and 1926 (when thirtieth President Calvin Coolidge was in office) and the perhaps resultant Great Depression, Reagan's "trickle down theory" of favoring the wealthy with his economic policies quite possibly had much to do with the Wall Street meltdown, called Black Monday, that occurred on October 19<sup>th</sup>, 1987. On that day, the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 508 points, an even steeper fall than the one experienced in the 1929 crash that preceded the Great Depression.

Members of his staff who later wrote books about him depicted Reagan, while President, as "a remarkably passive figure, disengaged from day-to-day operations, timid about asserting

his authority, inept at personal confrontation, and lacking at times even a basic understanding of major issues...As President, he permitted his schedule to be influenced by an astrologer consulted by Mrs. Reagan."