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## **President Ronald Reagan**

In America, one man born on February 6, 1911 became first an actor, then a governor of California, and ultimately the President of the United States. This man was Ronald Wilson Reagan. Born in Tampico, Illinois, Ron finished his high school studies at Dixon, Illinois. He had no scholarships or free ride in college so the man who was to be the 40<sup>th</sup> President of the United States worked his way through college, excelled in athletics, and found his real joy in acting in school plays.

After his college graduation, Mr. Reagan worked as a sports announcer. But his real break came in 1937 when he was given an acting contract in Hollywood. Ronald Reagan acted in over fifty films during the next twenty years. Married first to the actress Jane Wyman, Ronald and Jane had two children, Maureen, and Michael. But they ultimately divorced. Ron then married Nancy Davis when he was forty one years of age. The new Reagan's also had two children, Ronald Prescott and Patricia Ann.

Mr. Reagan was a Democrat in his political beliefs early in his life but this slowly changed to being a conservative Republican by the time he ran for office. He spoke at dinners, banquets and all manner of events building the cause and philosophy of less government and a new style of economic policies that was not based upon complex tax programs. He championed the cause of a strong national defense.

When Mr. Reagan was elected Governor of California, he won by a margin of more than one million votes. His accomplishments as a governor inspired a large following across the entire country. Defeating George Bush Sr. to become the Republican candidate for President, Mr. Reagan ultimately asked Mr. Bush to be his vice presidential running mate and they easily won the election against the incumbent President Carter.

While Mr. Reagan may not have had total command of all the details of every situation, he was highly recognized for his oratory and ability to instill confidence into those who heard him speak. Throughout his two-term tenure as President Mr. Reagan gave many inspiring speeches. From this great volume of work three speeches are among the most outstanding.

On March the 8<sup>th</sup> of 1983 President Reagan gave a presentation that came to be known as the "Evil Empire" speech. Mr. Reagan spoke of how the Soviet Union followed the thoughts of Lenin. He said that the Soviet Union did not believe in morality from a religious base and that class warfare was of primary importance to the Soviets. Reagan continued to speak of the necessity of reducing nuclear arms between the Soviet Union and America. With this speech he rallied the American people to understand this great issue between the two super powers.

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### **President Ronald Reagan (Cont'd)**

President Reagan showed great compassion and the ability to express the sorrow of the entire nation during his address from the oval office on January 28, 1986 when he spoke of the tragic loss of the space shuttle Challenger earlier that day. He touched all who heard him with his words of faith, courage, pioneering spirit, and bravery. To the families of the seven astronauts, the children who saw the space launch on television in their schools and to everyone else in the nation, he spoke with eloquence of the national loss. His words brought to all who heard them a measure of inner peace that from this terrible loss the nation had just endured, Americans would continue to face the dangers of space travel with courage and strength.

The last of these selected three speeches highlights the profound influence President Reagan had on world affairs and events. During his term in office President Reagan built a relationship with General Secretary Gorbachev of the Soviet Union in order to promoting peace between the Soviet Union and the United States. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of June, 1987 Mr. Reagan spoke at the famous Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, Germany. Remember that Berlin was a city divided into East Berlin controlled by the Soviet Union and West Berlin governed by Germany. The Soviets had constructed a wall to separate East and West Berlin so people could not even visit their relatives who lived a block or two away in the other section of the city.

The speech spoke of the history of relations and actions by the Soviet Union since the end of the Second World War. Further words talked about the great recovery of the city of Berlin since the war ended. From rubble rose a magnificent city complete with universities, the arts, music, and great prosperity which occurred in spite of the Soviet blockade. President Reagan closed his speech with a summary of how freedom had led to prosperity throughout the world from the Pacific to both Central and South America. His most famous phrase taken out of this speech related to the wall that the Soviets had built separating the Eastern portion of Berlin from the Western portion. That phrase was: "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" As we have all seen, the infamous wall indeed was taken down and Germany was reunited.

After leaving office President Reagan wrote several books and enjoyed his retirement with his wife Nancy. He enjoyed horse back riding and ranching. The 40<sup>th</sup> President of the United States passed away in June of 2004. He is survived by his wife of more than fifty years.

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### President Ronald Reagan Questions

1. Ronald Reagan first was famous because he was
  - a. An actor
  - b. A governor
  - c. A lawyer
  
2. What political party did Ronald Reagan belong to when he was elected president?
  - a. Democratic Party
  - b. Republican Party
  - c. Neither party
  
3. Ronald Reagan was the Governor of the State of
  - a. Illinois
  - b. Indiana
  - c. California
  
4. Ronald Reagan is well known for his ability to
  - a. Pass healthcare legislation
  - b. Give impressive speeches
  - c. Understand details
  
5. Ronald Reagan was president when what tragedy struck the American people?
  - a. The Vietnam War
  - b. The Challenger Space Shuttle disaster
  - c. The attack on the World Trade Center on 9/11
  
6. Ronald Reagan is famous for improving international relations between the United States and
  - a. The Soviet Union
  - b. England
  - c. Iraq

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## President Ronald Reagan Answers

1. c
2. b
3. a
4. a
5. c
6. a