

ROLES AND PURSUITS AFTER THE PRESIDENCY

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Presented by

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Roles and Pursuits After the Presidency

United States Presidents galore (44 to be exact). This was my first response when I reviewed the Quest Club email announcing the topic for this paper. “Roles and Pursuits After the Presidency.” I am not a student of history nor will I ever be. However, I determined that the paper at least narrowed down my task to only include former presidents’ lives after the White House.

As I considered this, my curiosity was such that I questioned if the presidents’ performance while president could be an indication as to the predictability of the ex-presidency performance. Through the years there have been countless numbers of public, as well as scholarly polls, conducted to rank the performances of U.S. presidents. The sources of these polls included C-SPAN, ABC, Washington College poll, Gallop poll, U.S. News and World Report, Scholarly Surveys conducted by Harvard University, Siena Research Institute of Siena College, Wall Street Journal, and Yale Times newspapers. These sources revealed a grouping of presidents’ ranking at the top of the list and those who generally fell near the bottom. The top performing presidents generally were George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Thomas Jefferson, and Theodore Roosevelt. The remaining places at the top were generally rounded out by Harry S. Truman, Woodrow Wilson, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and James K. Polk. Presidents such as John F. Kennedy, Ronald Reagan, and Bill Clinton tended to be rated among the greatest in public opinion polls. But do not always rank as highly among presidential scholars and historians. The bottom tier generally included Andrew Johnson, Franklin Pierce, Warren J. Harding, Millard Fillmore, James Buchanan, Herbert Hoover, John Tyler, Richard M. Nixon, Jimmy Carter, and George W. Bush.

There is no set pattern to the ex-presidency, for each president is different. A number of well-performing presidents during their term of office did not necessarily translate into a post presidential performance with a high ranking. The converse is also true that a poor performing president while in office was not a predictor of the ex-president's performance following his term of office.

Article Two of the United States Constitution creates the executive branch of the government. Article Two Section One states "No person except a natural born Citizen or a citizen of the United States at the time of the adoption of this constitution shall be eligible to the office of president; neither shall any person be eligible to that office who shall not have attained to the Age of thirty-five years and been fourteen years of residence within the United States."

Pretty simple and straight forward qualifications for a person leading our great country. A person could, theoretically, be reelected to this office for life prior to 1951. That is when the two term limit was adopted per the Term Limit Amendment–U.S. Constitution, Article XXII, Section 1, ratified February 27, 1951.

Historically, former presidents had to rely on their own resources to finance their retirement. Before 1958 the U.S. Federal Government provided no pension or other retirement benefits to former United States presidents. It had taken 171 years since the nation's founding to arrive at a pension for former presidents. Signed by Dwight D. Eisenhower on August 25, 1958, the Former Presidents Act (3 U.S.C. § 102) was the first official measure providing ex-presidents with a lifetime salary as well as compensation for staff, travel, phone bills, office space, and other benefits. Until this point, the president had remained virtually the only government employee without a retirement package. In fact, 27 previous commanders-in-chief left office with no

guaranteed income whatsoever.

With the large numbers of former presidents in our nation's history, I attempted to put forth reviews, critiques, other performers for a select few former presidents and my attempt to narrow the field found there were a number of sources that spoke to who were considered the most effective post-presidencies and those considered the worst ex-presidents. My research and study revealed a less than stellar performer as president oftentimes translated into an exceptional performance as ex-president. An article in the *New York Times* dated May 23, 2015, by Justin S. Vaughn entitled "The Making of a Great Ex-President" included some of the best as John Quincy Adams, Jimmy Carter, William Howard Taft, and Herbert Hoover. Some of the worst were John Tyler, Millard Fillmore, Franklin Pierce, and Teddy Roosevelt. Another scholarly piece was written by a Jamie Harrison of the University of Maryland where the five best ex-presidents were considered Herbert Hoover, Thomas Jefferson, John Quincy Adams, Bill Clinton, and Jimmy Carter. I have selected from the aforementioned groups of former presidents of whom I considered as top performers following a mediocre presidency, as well as considering a high ranking president in office while revealing a less than stellar performance as an ex-president.

John Quincy Adams

First up is John Quincy Adams (JQA), who was generally ranked in the lower half of best presidents of the United States. Adams was the 6th president of the United States (1825 to 1829). He served one term and was defeated in 1828 by Andrew Jackson.

JQA was the son of former president John Adams who served as president from 1797 to 1801. Adams, as his father, opposed slavery, and refused to attend his victor's inauguration. JQA's Louisa Johnson Adams had not enjoyed living in the president's house and was quite happy to leave it behind. JQA was disappointed that he had been unable to achieve anything on the broad and ambitious programs he had pressed upon congress to improve the infrastructure. He pushed for more roads, bridges, canals, a national astronomical observatory, and a national university, all of which fell on congressional deaf ears.

At some point when JQA's friends asked him shortly before he left office what he planned to do in retirement, he "gleefully predicted" that he would devote the rest of his life to the vindication of his reputation.

Adams had a son, George Washington Adams. He was a highly intelligent but sensitive boy who was predisposed to depression, despair, and who seemed never able to live up to his father's high expectations. George had grown up to be an irresponsible alcoholic and a womanizer who had fathered an illegitimate child. He was perpetually in debt.

As fate would have it near the end of his administration the disappearance of George devastated JQA and Louisa. On April 30, 1829 the younger Adams had taken a steam boat to New York only to vanish before it docked. A month later, shortly after JQA left his presidency, the body of the troubled alcoholic and probably suicidal young man washed ashore.

A stern disciplinarian with all his children, JQA blamed himself for his son's death. He had to remain strong for his wife, who became seriously ill after learning of George's probable suicide. JQA described himself as being overwhelmed with a grief he had never known before.

Filled with gloom and sadness for life and his country, JQA stayed in Washington for a few months before returning to his home town of Quincy, Massachusetts. Once home, in an effort to avoid depression, he spent much of his time making extensive repairs on the family house, tending to the grounds and gardens, and trying to plant trees from seeds, a hobby he had cultivated while at the White House. In addition, he had bookcases built and busied himself unpacking his extensive library of 5,000 to 6,000 volumes. His family encouraged him to write a biography. JQA attempted to do so but found himself preoccupied with figuring out his present situation and declared he couldn't settle his mind on a regular course of future employment. During this time, the summer/autumn of 1829, friends and an editorial in the Boston Courier urged him to run for a seat in the United States House of Representatives. He did and on November 7, 1830, he was announced the winner. He was quite pleased, though his family considered a seat in congress was beneath him as a former U.S. president. In contrast to former presidents Madison and Monroe; John Quincy Adams became the first former president to reject the concept that former presidents should not be involved in politics. Adams returned to Washington D.C. where he had performed the daily ritual as president of swimming naked in the Potomac River each morning. JQA served nine post-presidential terms in congress from 1830 until his death in 1848. He was a progressive, usually voting in the minority. He supported the rechartering of the Bank of the United States, opposed the annexation of Texas in the war with Mexico, and struggled for eight years to rid the House's "notorious gag rule" which tabled

without debate, any petition critical of slavery. Adams attempt to read into the record at every opportunity the hundreds of anti-slavery petitions that abolitionists around the country sent him on a regular basis. The House finally caved in and repealed the gag rule in 1844.

Adams earned the nickname of “old man eloquent,” as one of the House’s most articulate and forceful spokesmen against slavery. Whenever he rose to speak, especially in his twilight years, silence swept over the chamber as congressmen (no woman in congress as yet) turned their attention to the former president. In 1841 Adams argued successfully before the U.S. Supreme Court to win freedom for the slave mutineers aboard the Spanish ship Amistad (“Amistad” is a great movie by the way, you should see it). The Africans had engaged in mutiny against their Spanish captors on the high seas and were then captured by an American warship off Long Island. A court case ensued in my home town of New Haven, Connecticut. The case worked its way up to the Supreme Court to settle the legal issues. Adams did the work *pro bono*. The court ruled that the mutineers were free men because international slave trade was illegal under British and U.S. law.

Education in the sciences were always a passion of JQA. He championed the bequest of James Smithson of England, son of the Duke of Northumberland, who willed five hundred thousand dollars to the United States for the creation of an institution dedicated to knowledge – later called the Smithsonian Institution. It might seem today that Smithson’s generosity would have been immediately welcomed in Washington. Instead, Adams devoted eight years as chairman of a special Smithsonian committee battling to get the fund appropriated as intended. At the age of 76 in 1843, JQA traveled to Cincinnati to officiate at the laying of the cornerstone of the institute. Adams campaign to enhance human welfare continued as he advocated for the

1847 congressional measure, The Wilmot Proviso, which would have prohibited slavery in any territory acquired from Mexico. The measure was defeated.

A year later on February 21, 1848, Adams was rising to address the house in opposition to a resolution honoring the generals in the recently concluded war with Mexico. He suddenly collapsed and was carried off to the speaker's room. After lingering in a coma for two days, he died on February 23, 1848 at the age of 80.

Even after his death southern sentiments against JQA continued. So much so that the Virginia legislature repealed a resolution honoring the former president and congressman. Throughout the rest of the nation, however, Americans responded differently to the news of his passing. He was considered as contributing far more to humanity than all but a few persons in history. For the most part he didn't as president, but afterward.

John Tyler

John Tyler of Charles City County, Virginia, was the 10th president of the United States (1841-1845) and a southern Democrat/Whig.

Tyler's ascension to the presidency was no foregone conclusion. He had been the first U.S. vice president to fill the position of a president who died in office. U.S. president William Henry Harrison's death came on April 4, 1841. One month to the day after he had been inaugurated as president.

Harrison had participated in all the lengthy inaugural celebrations which were outside in brisk, chilly wind. He wore no coat or hat and sometime later he developed a severe cold that worsened into pneumonia. At the time of president Harrison's death, there was not yet a constitutional provision for the vice president to assume power upon the death of the chief executive. Among those who rejected Tyler's rise was former president John Quincy Adams (term 1825-1829) who belittled him as the country's "acting president" or worse "his accident" charging Tyler as a Virginia political sectarian supporting slavery.

When Tyler became president he defied the Whigs who had put him on the ticket in the first place. Vetoing their enactments and destroying their program. As a result, they expelled him from the party. As president he had been struggling, proud, and independent. The Whigs should not have been surprised. Tyler's views had never been compatible with theirs and he had been rigid and unyielding throughout his entire political career. Also as president his pro slavery and expansionist policies contributed greatly to the tensions that developed so rapidly and that ultimately almost destroyed the country. Tyler may have hoped for another term, but without the party he had no chance to remain as president. He could not get support to run for reelection

from either the Whigs or Democrats.

James K. Polk won the presidential election in 1843 and following the March, 1844 inauguration John and Julia Tyler were on their way home to Virginia. They retired to the former president's plantation. While money was often tight, they lived comfortably and his family grew larger.

Tyler, at 51, had been the youngest person yet to occupy the presidency. He had come into office with eight children by his first wife, Letitia. Letitia died of a stroke in 1842. Tyler had been 53, however, when he was remarried to Julia who was three decades his junior, which led to many jokes that had nothing to do with his politics. While in retirement at the village estate, he and Julia had seven more children. His fifteen children set a record among presidents that remains standing today.

Former president Tyler set another record that most hope will remain forever. Tyler became the only former president in America history to give open aid and comfort and to affiliate formerly with an enemy of the United States of America. After departing the presidency, Tyler settled again, apparently happily into plantation life. He rejoined the Democratic party and continued to hope for preservation of the union, with a secure place for the south with its slavery system intact and protected.

He was no more happy with the Republican victory in 1860 and with Abraham Lincoln's forthcoming presidency than were other southerners. Tyler journeyed to Washington to meet with president-elect Lincoln and presented him the Richmond Convention Resolutions. This was the result of a peace convention in Virginia where Tyler was the presiding officer. The convention passed several resolutions hoping to achieve a national compromise that nevertheless

would provide for slavery's expansion. Among them one proposed extending the Missouri compromise line all the way to the Pacific, dividing the country into a slave holding region south of the line and a free region above it. Lincoln may have appreciated Tyler's efforts but was under no illusion that they would satisfy the extremists who had seized control over policy in the south. When the president did not act on the proposals, John Tyler, former president of the United States of America, at last threw up his hands and lost hope. He joined other Virginia leaders in recommending that they proceed to destroy the union. Virginia, he asserted, should secede. He went so far as to take a seat in the provisional congress of the confederacy and accepted election in November to the new House of Representatives of the Confederate States of America. He died, however, on January 18, 1862, before he could serve. No other person who had been an American president accepted an official position among the confederates who, after all, were seeking to supplant the Constitution of the United States and its union.

Although there were official ceremonies in the confederacy marking Tyler's passing, his flag draped body (with a confederate flag) lay in state in Richmond. There were no such ceremonies in Washington. It should be no surprise that many people outside the south considered him a traitor. Union troops vandalized his plantation during the civil war, and not until 1915, some half century following the close of that war, did congress authorize a memorial at Tyler's grave site.

Richard Milhous Nixon

Richard Milhous Nixon, born in Yorba Linda, California was the 37th president of the United States. He entered retirement suddenly. On August 9, 1974, not two years since he had won one of the greatest landslide victories in American presidential history, he resigned his office. Nixon is the only president ever to do so. He would have assuredly been impeached and removed if he had not resigned on his own. His holy mess came from a series of events known to Americans as “Watergate.” The central issue was a case of Nixon’s White House aides directed a break-in at the Democratic National Headquarters in the Watergate Apartment Complex in Washington D.C. Nixon and his aides attempted to downgrade the episode as a mere burglary. Yet Watergate, as it turned out, was far more. It was, in fact, a direct attack on the constitutional system of elections. It was further viewed as a direct attack on the constitutional government in this country.

It was determined there was more than one burglary of which the White House conspiracy sought to sabotage the Democratic party and to ensure that it would not select the strongest candidate. Coupled with “dirty tricks” involving illegal fund raising and payoffs and the use of government agencies such as the Internal Revenue Service, as Nixon put it on oval office tape recordings, to “screw our enemies.” Following Nixon’s resignation Vice President Gerald Ford assumed the presidency. Telling Americans “Our long national nightmare is over.” One month later on September 8, 1974, President Ford pardoned Nixon of all crimes associated with the Watergate scandal. He granted “a full, free, and absolute pardon onto Richard Nixon for all offenses against the United States which he, Richard Nixon, has committed or may have committed or taken part in during the period from January 20, 1969 through August 9, 1974.”

Nixon was reluctant to accept the pardon because it implied guilt, but his friends and advisors warned him that any legal battle would be protracted and expensive and it would be very hard to find an impartial jury or to receive a fair trial. Ford's pardon of Nixon angered many in the public, including the present writer who felt Nixon should have been held accountable for any crimes he might have committed. Historians point to the pardon as a significant factor in Ford's failure to win reelection in 1976.

After leaving Washington, Nixon and his wife Pat returned to California and "La Casa Pacifica," their home in San Clemente. The former president was a broken man with little idea of what to do next and how to pick up his life. He soon suffered a physical setback as well. At the end of October, 1974, Nixon underwent surgery to remove a blood clot that had formed in his leg. Although the surgery was successful, Nixon went into shock because of internal bleeding and had to undergo another operation. He spent considerable time in the hospital before returning home for a long convalescence. As 1974 came to an end, according to many accounts, Nixon hit one of the lowest points of his life. Yet the man who had come back so many times before had only just begun working on his final comeback.

He has spent more than one million dollars defending himself in various lawsuits relating to Watergate and owed back taxes to the federal government. He needed to find ways to reestablish his financial wellbeing. First he agreed to write his memoirs which was sold for more than two million dollars. *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon (1978)* went on to become a best seller. He gave an interview to British television personality David Frost for six hundred thousand dollars. The interview aired in May, 1977, to mixed reviews. The Nixons also sold their properties in Florida, all of this went a long way in paying off many of his debts. During 1976

Nixon traveled to China to the consternation of the Ford administration, thereby venturing to reenter the public eye. The trip, however, went very well and when he returned in February Secretary of State Henry Kissinger asked him for a written report, which he agreed to provide. Nixon was on his way back. Much of the international community could not understand the controversy over Watergate and all the fuss. The former president was warmly received by his Chinese hosts. He made his first public speech in 1978 in a small town in Kentucky before a friendly audience and he mostly concentrated his first post presidential appearances on small gatherings of supporters. In 1980 the Nixons moved to New York city which allowed them to be back in the heart of activity. Two years later they moved to the community of Saddle River, New Jersey. He and Pat spent considerable time with their children and grandchildren.

Nixon's rehabilitation such as it was, would never again include law practice. The Supreme Court had permitted him to resign his practice privileges. California too permitted him to surrender his law license, but only after admitting that he was the subject of disciplinary proceedings. New York disbarred him. Nevertheless, he remained active – more active than ever. Nixon began to reclaim a place on the national scene. He dispensed advice to all who would listen, including talking to President Jimmy Carter about normalizing relations with China in 1978. Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush began to consult him, although they did not publicize that fact. Republicans were still wary of the public's reaction to Nixon but they were interested in his opinions about foreign affairs. He remained an acknowledged expert on foreign policy, gave countless speeches around the world. One of Nixon's highlights, perhaps, was the 1986 Newsweek cover story entitled "He's Back: The Rehabilitation of Richard Nixon."

He gave advice on how to handle the crumbling Soviet Union when Mikhail Gorbachev

visited the United States in the spring of 1990 seeking aid for Russia, for example President George H.W. Bush – along with many members of congress – cited Nixon’s arguments to justify refusing the request. On March 8th of that year the former president spoke to the House Republican Conference and met with the Republican senators who were seeking reelection to provide them with advice and counsel. He was in demand to pose with Republican leaders for pictures. Newt Gingrich, then Republican Speaker of the House, said the meeting with Nixon was an extraordinary experience. Robert Dole, the prominent Republican senator and future presidential candidate proclaimed him rehabilitated.

On Nixon’s part, there has never been a gesture of contriteness. The public yearned for him to ask for forgiveness so that they could forgive, but he would not. He was quoted as saying “hell would freeze first.” It helped that Nixon had lived so long; not only had many of his enemies died but so had much memory of what Watergate and his intended misdeeds had meant. Presidential papers and tapes were a thorn of contention for Nixon. Although it was customary that presidents control their papers, congress passed the Presidential Recording and Materials Preservation Act to keep Nixon’s presidential materials in the Washington area because some people were afraid the former president would destroy them. Eventually they were stored at the National Archives in Maryland. Meanwhile, the former president and a group of his friends raised more than 20 million dollars to establish the Richard Nixon Library and Birthplace Foundation in Yorba Linda, California. The library was not an official “presidential library”. It received no federal funds and did not contain any presidential papers, just materials from his pre- and post-presidential career. When it was dedicated in 1990, former presidents Ford, Reagan, and President Bush all attended. In 2007 the Nixon Presidential Library and Museum opened in

Yorba Linda as part of the Federal Presidential Library System. Nixon's presidential papers and tapes are now located in both Maryland and California.

Nixon died from complications of a stroke in April, 1994 and his funeral drew luminaries from around the globe, including every living president. President Bill Clinton's eulogy dwelled on Nixon's great accomplishments, particularly in foreign affairs, rather than on his constitutional crimes "May the day of judging president Nixon on anything less than his entire life and career come to a close." He was 81 years old.

Though Nixon has been rated as one of the worst presidents, his return to prominence following his resignation will always stand as a significant turnaround and accomplishments for the general good of humanity.

Herbert Clark Hoover

Our 31st president was Iowa native Herbert Hoover. He brought a stellar record and a background of success to the presidency. Hoover was a mining engineer and business person with self-made wealth having become a millionaire by age 40. He and his wife, Lou Henry Hoover, were both Stanford geology graduates who had lived and worked in China and who had mastered the Chinese language (they spoke it to one another in the White House when they wished to keep their conversations confidential). He had organized and administered food and distribution programs in Belgium during World War I, that averted mass starvation for which he received great acclaim. He had also been a cabinet member under preceding presidents Harding and Coolidge as Secretary of Commerce.

When Hoover was inaugurated on March 4, 1929, the nation held great hopes for his administration. Hardly more than a half year later the stock market crashed. The subsequent onset of the Great Depression eclipsed Hoover's humanitarianism and revealed his rigid ideology as simply inappropriate to deal with the situation he faced.

The problem with Hoover then was not that he was a cold and uncaring do-nothing president, as his critics charged, but that he relied too heavily on the private sector to deal with the worst economic crisis in the nation's history. He seemed to care more about saving the banks than feeding the poor and unemployed. Hoover believed that government aid directly to those in need would be unconstitutional and that it would be unthinkable in any case because it would "weaken character." He just didn't do enough.

With his presidency devastated (along with the nation) by the Great Depression, a personally discredited Herbert Hoover was trounced by Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the 1932

election. Immediately after the inauguration of Franklin Roosevelt, Herbert Hoover retreated to his home in Palo Alto, California. Still a relatively youthful person upon his defeat, the 58-year-old former president lived another 32 years before his death on October 20, 1964. Through much of the 1930s, because his image was so tarnished, Hoover largely stayed out of the public eye. The public, and especially the Democratic party, blamed Hoover for the Great Depression. Likewise, few Republicans in the 1930s wanted Hoover involved in party politics because of his negative standing in the popular mind.

Wealthy Hoover did not need to work, but even the fishing that he loved could consume only so many hours of the week. From his home in Palo Alto Hoover launched a series of strong attacks on the New Deal in letters and essays condemning many of FDR's programs as fascism. Roosevelt's decision to abandon the gold standard (following England's lead two years earlier), to recognize the Soviet Union, to pack the Supreme Court, to support federal government intervention in the economy, and to build the foundations of a wealthier state angered and worried Hoover. In the 1936 presidential campaign, Hoover actively supported Kansas Republican candidate, Alfred M. Landon, who lost to Roosevelt by a wide margin.

Hoover traveled extensively in his post presidential years. While on tour of Europe in 1938, he met with Adolph Hitler. The former U.S. president scolded the German dictator, irritated at Hitler's shouting in their private audience. Still, Hoover recalling what he regarded as the needless bloodshed of World War I, opposed U.S. entry into the European conflict that broke out in 1939 after Germany attacked Poland. However, Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor changed Hoover's mind. As in 1918, war created a need for Hoover's organizational and humanitarian skills. FDR put aside his animosity towards his predecessor and supported

Hoover's appointment to chair an international relief organization for Poland, Finland, and Belgium. Hoover, however, was unsuccessful in getting food relief to nations occupied by Nazis. In the post World War II years, Hoover remained committed to public service and to commenting on both domestic and international affairs. In the Truman administration, Hoover served as coordinator of the food supply for world famine in 1946 and advised the U.S. government on occupation policies in Germany and Australia. In 1947, fifteen years into Hoover's post presidential era, a Republican led congress named him chairman of the commission on the organization of the executive branch of government, which became known as the Hoover Commission.

This was a monumental responsibility. The congressional Republicans hoped the Commission would cause a roll back (and hopefully demolish) FDR's New Deal policies and program. Instead, Hoover recognized the greater burdens of the modern presidency and proposed bureaucratic and administrative reforms to strengthen the executive branch. Hoover set up 19 task forces to concentrate on areas such as accounting, budgeting, personnel, transportation, real estate, purchasing, medical and veterans affairs, natural resources, etc., and the machinery of the principle cabinet departments. Over 300 specialists were personally selected by Hoover with the consent of the other commissioners attached to appropriate task force.

Hoover submitted the first of 19 sections of the Hoover Commission report to congress on February 7, 1949. Other sections came in at a rate of three per week. In addition to the overall report, Hoover wrote sixteen of the sections. It was certainly one of the most comprehensive governmental report in history.

The report was enormously influential. Truman accepted it enthusiastically and so did

congress. It became the basis for the Executive Organization Act of 1949 which authorized the president to make significant changes in many structures on his own. It also resulted ultimately in the formation of the a new cabinet department under President Eisenhower: the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

It should be noted Hoover displayed great energy and a pragmatic approach in his view of government. His skills also translated into a number of charitable causes. In fact, in 1936 he accepted the chairmanship of the Boys Club of America. His energetic administration saw Boys Clubs springing up all over the country. As war devastated much of Europe in the late 1930s, he conducted massive efforts to raise funds for food relief in Finland, Belgium, and Poland, but because of the depression, along with the wartime conditions, did not meet with the success he had during World War I. It was an international fear during the 1940s and 1950s, however, that Hoover attracted the most attention. He opposed the use of the atomic bomb on Japan. Hoover's commentary on America's cold war policies was at times supportive and other times highly critical. For instance he encouraged Truman's policies in the immediate aftermath of World War II to rebuild Germany both economically and politically as a barrier against Soviet communism.

Hoover became increasingly unhappy and disappointed with the administration's cold war policies which demanded ever greater military commitments in both Asia and Europe. He criticized Truman's decision to intervene in the Korean war and to station four additional American divisions in Europe after the outbreak of hostilities on the Korean peninsula in 1950. Hoover became a leading voice among a group of influential Republican conservatives, including senate majority leader Robert Taft of Ohio, who advocated building American naval and air power and basing American military strategy on the defense of the western hemisphere. Hoover

supported such a position because he feared that massive land wars in Europe and Asia would cost millions of American lives. Because he believed that Europeans could do more to defend themselves against the Soviets, he thought that the costs of maintaining the global commitments outlined by the Truman administration would bankrupt the United States. Hoover and Taft, of course, ended up on the losing side of what came to be known as the Great Debate concerning America's cold war foreign policy.

Hoover remained active in party politics as well. He supported the candidacies of Robert Taft in 1948 and 1952 and Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1956. He was less enthusiastic about Vice President Richard Nixon's run for the presidency in 1960.

As he neared his 88th birthday, Hoover and a large contingent of friends and supporters gathered at his birthplace of West Branch, Iowa, for the dedication of the Hoover Presidential Library. He died on October 20, 1964 at the age of 90. At the time of his death he was the second oldest former president who still retained his mental faculties. Only John Adams was older. Hoover had brought new purpose and meaning to being an ex-president. It has been observed that more than any other former president he had an increased responsibilities of those who had served in the oval office. He had shown that the former presidents could be political either alone or in partnership with incumbent presidents, or could be potent political instruments for influencing public opinion in serving the state. Many considered him as the nations first modern ex-president.

James (Jimmy) Earl Carter

Jimmy Carter of Plains, Georgia is the 39th U.S. president. He served one term 1977 to 1981. He was defeated by Ronald Reagan in 1980 after what many have considered to be one of the worst presidencies of the 20th century. When Carter left the White House in 1981 with a 34% approval rating in a Gallop survey, now has enjoyed greater public approval in his post-presidency years. Gallop surveys gave him a 45% approval rating in 1994; 69% in 1999; and 52% in 2011. In 1990 an NBC/Wall Street Journal poll found him to be as popular as Ronald Reagan, the man who devoured him in 1988. A 2009 C-SPAN survey of historians placed Carter 25th of the 42 former presidents in terms of presidential leadership qualities.

Following the inauguration of his successor, President Reagan in January 1981, the Carters returned home to Plains, Georgia. Preoccupied with the depressing results of the election, they then discovered that not only was the Carter Peanut Warehouse bankrupt, but they were in debt by some one million dollars.

They sold the business, signed lucrative book deals thereby assuring their financial security and settled down into their new lives. The Carters were prolific writers, which has not been primarily political. Rosalyn Carter has written four books, including a lengthy successful autobiography. Jimmy Carter has written eighteen books, also including an autobiography and recently a well-received novel. Jointly they have authored two books. Their subjects range from guides for caregivers to the mentally ill to childhood remembrances, explorations of religious faith and even – Jimmy Carter's case – a children's book and a book of poetry. For a while the Carters kept a low profile but this could not continue long for the restless, energetic former president. In April, 1992, he received appointment as the university distinguished professor at

Emory University and began planning for the policy research center.

At the same time, Carter also worked toward establishing the Jimmy Carter Library and Museum and the Carter Center. The center opened first in October 1986. The library followed in January 1987. Even before the center officially opened it began to host symposia on such topics as arms control negotiations, health policy, and natural resources.

From the beginning Carter envisioned the Carter Center as a duplicate Camp David in Atlanta, primarily as a neutral forum within which hostile groups could meet to explore common approaches to problems. According to interviews with his wife, Rosalyn, the idea for the center came to her husband about a year after he left the presidency. Carter's goal was peace. He wanted to be a peacemaker, even if it meant inviting African warlords or Latin American desperados to Atlanta. The center has been a great success in dealing, on a case by case basis, one at a time, with various problems around the world. Especially with regard to such issues as health care, peacemaking agricultural development especially impoverished countries, and hunger. The center has served as Carter's base as he has engaged in projects around the world. One of the most prominent has been his efforts to eradicate Guinea Worm in various African countries and Pakistan. The worm produces a debilitating condition that had maimed and crippled some five million people a year. The victims – all of whom are human, the worm seems to infest no other creature – ingest the larvae in contaminated water and the worm grows within the body to a length of two or three feet over the course of a year. Ultimately it burrows near to the skin and grows there before busting through a blister to the outside, usually on near the feet, causing intense pain. Carter speculated that Guinea worm infestation had troubled humanity since ancient times and that it might be what the Bible called the fury serpent that inflicted the

Israelites on the shore of the Red Sea. The solution to the problem is clean water, even filtered water to screen out the larvae. Some of the very qualities that impeded Carter's performance as president came to be advantageous in his new, much less political role. A brief selection of his many activities is sufficient to demonstrate the remarkable nature of Carter's post-presidential agenda.

In 1989 he and the team made several visits to Panama to prepare and observe elections that were to take place there in February of 1990. Although the voting had been conducted in a reasonably fair fashion, Emmanuel Noriega government quickly began to report false figures. Carter denounced the election as a fraud and discredited the results. Also in 1990 he led a team to observe elections in Nicaragua. Astonishing most observers, the vote turned the leftist government of Daniel Ortega out of office and Ortega accepted the results. After sending troops to Haiti, Carter and his team monitored Haitian teams that began that unfortunately country's first fair contest. In February 1991 the Carters attended the inauguration of the democratically elected Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

And so it has gone and continues to go. The Carters have observed elections countless times around the world. They have journeyed to troubled areas working for peace. A recent example came during the unrest in Venezuela in 2002. Carter undertook a peace mission to counsel president Hugo Chavez at the president's own invitation. After demonstrations against Chavez became serious, an army coup removed him from office. In response to counter demonstrations loyalist troops reinstated him on April 14, 2002. Carter arrived July 6. Carter told Chavez the elected leader to adopt policies to reconcile with the 33% of the people who despise him.

Most visible to Americans and most well received have been the Carters work with Habitat for Humanity, a nonprofit organization that builds homes for the poor. Members devote regular hours to projects, actually working themselves to help build houses. Habitat has expanded with projects around the world.

What is less visible but no less important, both in actuality and symbolically, has been Carters private human-rights activities. He employs his prestige as a former president of the United States to communicate directly to foreign leaders to halt torture and to release political prisoners. In this regard, Carter has worked closely with Amnesty International. It has been noted it may be difficult to give precise numbers but between 1981 to 1997 Carter was directly responsible for the release of approximately 50,000 political prisoners whose human rights had been violated. Carter did this without any fanfare or media attention. In 2002 Carter made one of the most dramatic journeys of his post-presidential career. Cuban leader Fidel Castro had invited the former president who is enormously popular in Latin America to visit Cuba. Carters five day trip began on May 12. Castro permitted Carter to inspect biotechnology centers that some American officials believed harbored facilities for concocting biological weapons. He offered to let Carter choose technical experts to accompany him. Carter reported that it was unlikely that Cuba was developing anything substantial and at that time Secretary of State Colin Powell agreed, although both noted also that Cuba did have the capability. Also during the visit Carter received a petition with the names of over 11,000 dissidents and pro democracy advocates and he was permitted to address the Cuban people on live national television. He spoke in Spanish and mentioned the petition. In addressing the Cuban people he called both for the United States to end its sanctions against Cuba and challenged Castro to allow elections to bring

broad reforms and political rights. For these actions Carter received many jeers and complaints from Political Right. Syndicated columnist Goldberg accused Carter of calling the United States a liar because he contradicted a lower level state department assertion that Cuba had biological weapons.

Regardless of that columnist's opinion, every year for years it was no joke that Jimmy Carter had been nominated to receive the Nobel Peace Prize for peace. In 2002 he finally became a Nobel laureate. The Norwegian Nobel committee selected him because of his decades of untiring effort to find peaceful solutions to international conflicts, to advance democracy and human rights, and to promote economic and social development. Jimmy Carter thus reinvented himself. He could have gone down in history as a failure. His nature is such that he wasn't going to sit and do nothing. He did so by devoting his enormous energy to improving the world.

Conclusions

A cursory view of this thing called ex-presidency and/or post-presidency is a unique experiment in serving self vs. serving humanity. Here we have the most powerful leaders in the world abruptly turned loose from the White House.

At last these commanders-in-chief enjoy virtually unlimited liberation, space and unbridled opportunities. Gone is the baggage of a sitting president, burdened by constraints of time, secrecy, elections and party loyalties.

Ex-presidents enjoy both the means and autonomy to continue playing an active role in national and international affairs. So, the modern ex-presidents, with their superbly comprehensive retirement benefits, coupled with the persona of respectability, influence, and connections, are poised to pursue their heart's desire.

In the end, I believe that a post-presidency clearly illuminates the ex-presidents' true character.

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