



### SPOTLIGHT

## The Complex Legacy of Jimmy Carter

Originally, I had intended to write a tongue-in-cheek article about New Year's Resolutions for Washington's swamp creatures, but since Jimmy Carter passed away recently, there has been a change in plans. After all, counting Grover Cleveland and Donald Trump's non-consecutive terms, only 45 different men have risen to the highest office in the land during America's 248-year history.

In my lifetime, I have heard two Presidents speak at campaign rallies - Ronald Reagan in 1980 and Donald Trump in 2024. However, I have only met one President in person and that was James Earl Carter in December 2003. More on that later...

In the fall of 1976, I was a senior in high school and our class conducted a mock election. Those who know me now as a rock-ribbed Republican might be surprised to learn that I was a liberal Democrat at the time, meaning that I supported Jimmy Carter over Gerald Ford. Carter won a slender victory over Ford at Pennsauken High School, foreshadowing his narrow win (by 1,683,247 popular votes and 59 electoral votes) that November.

(I think I still have a few Carter-Mondale buttons lying around

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## Is Donald Trump the New Teddy Roosevelt?

Who said the following... and in what year?

"Every immigrant who comes here should be required within five years to learn English or leave the country."

Donald Trump in 2016? Donald Trump in 2020? Or Donald Trump in 2024?

Would you believe Teddy Roosevelt, circa 1903?

That's right, folks. America's 26th President - whose face was forever carved onto Mount Rushmore alongside those of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln - said those words more than 120 years ago.

To be one of only 45 men to serve as our nation's chief executive is one thing, but to be included in the "Pantheon of Presidents" is another. And what, pray tell, made Teddy Roosevelt so great? He was an "America First" populist, just like Donald J. Trump.

Shortly after becoming president following the assassination of William McKinley - and amidst some med-

dling in Central America by Germany, Great Britain, and Italy - Roosevelt issued what became known as the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine.

"Chronic wrongdoing or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemi-

sphere, the adherence of the United States to the Monroe doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant

cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power."

That certainly put Kaiser Wilhelm II on notice!

In 1903, the United States acquired the rights to build a canal through the Isthmus of Panama, choosing that route over a similar one in Nicaragua. However, after the U.S. Senate ratified a treaty with Panama (which was a part of Columbia at the time), Columbia rejected it outright. The result was a rebellion - vigorously supported by the U.S.- after which the

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## ***Is Donald Trump the New Teddy Roosevelt?***

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treaty was approved for a second time by the newly independent Panamanian government.

Chalk one up for Teddy Roosevelt and heavy-handed diplomacy!

The United States paid the bankrupt Panama Canal Company and the New Panama Canal Company \$40,000,000 (equivalent to \$13.56 billion in 2023) for the rights and equipment to build the canal. However, President Roosevelt later described the transaction as follows: "I took the Canal Zone and let Congress debate; and while the debate goes on, the canal does also."

In other words, it is sometimes easier to ask for forgiveness than permission.

Three years later, Roosevelt sent Secretary of War William Howard Taft to Cuba following an insurrection there. Although Taft's job was to monitor the situation, Roosevelt was convinced that he had the authority to deploy U.S. Marines, if necessary, without congressional approval.

Dr. Serge Ricard, professor emeritus of American studies and U.S. history at the Sorbonne Nouvelle (University of Paris III), wrote the following about Roosevelt's foreign policy approach...

"The most striking evolution in the twenty-first-century historiography of Theodore Roosevelt is the switch from a partial arraignment of the imperialist to a quasi-unanimous celebration of the master diplomatist... [Recent works] have under-

lined cogently Roosevelt's exceptional statesmanship in the construction of the nascent twentieth-century "special relationship"... The twenty-sixth president's reputation as a brilliant diplomatist and real politician has undeniably reached new heights in the twenty-first century...yet, his Philippine policy still prompts criticism."

Sounds to me like Donald Trump and Teddy Roosevelt, had they been contemporaries, would have seen eye-to-eye... and may very well have become good friends and political allies.

Many Americans are familiar with Roosevelt's most famous quote, "Speak softly and carry a big stick; you will go far", which is a diplomatic strategy adopted, modified, and enhanced by President Trump. A lesser-known Roosevelt quote that also sounds eerily similar to Trump's foreign policy is this: "Don't hit at all if it is honorably possible to avoid hitting; but never hit soft."

Hamas had better take notice because if the past is indeed prologue, Trump's promise that "All hell will break out" if the American hostages aren't released by Inauguration Day is anything but an idle threat.

Which brings me back to Teddy Roosevelt's quote about requiring immigrants to learn English within five years of entering our country. If illegals think for a minute that President Trump - aided and abetted by Tom Homan, Michael Waltz, and Kristi Noem - won't send them packing ASAP, they have another thing coming.

As for the legal immigrants in the U.S., learning English, adopting American values, and assimilating

into American culture sure sounds like a good idea to me. After all, that is exactly what many of our ancestors did from the moment they landed on Ellis Island.

There is one more similarity between these two New York born and bred presidents. During the 1912 presidential campaign, Roosevelt was shot in the chest by a would-be assassin while in Milwaukee. The bullet tore through his eyeglass case and the 50-page speech in his coat pocket, lodging in Roosevelt's chest but not penetrating his lung. Against his doctor's advice, Roosevelt insisted on delivering his entire 90-minute speech with blood soaking through his shirt. As for the bullet, it remained buried in Roosevelt's body for the rest of his life.

That tragic but inspiring episode reminds me of the assassination attempt on Donald Trump on July 13, 2024, in Butler PA. Grazed by a bullet fired from a semi-automatic rifle less than 100 yards away, Trump rose to his feet with a clenched fist, urging his supporters to "Fight! Fight! Fight!"

Teddy Roosevelt would have been proud.

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## ***The Complex Legacy of Jimmy Carter***

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the house in case you're interested.)

After the glow of Inauguration Day - when Jimmy, Rosalyn, Jack, Chip, and Amy Carter walked the length of Pennsylvania Avenue, smiling and waving to the crowds lining America's most famous street - things started to unwind pretty quickly for the nation's 39th President. On his second day in office, President Carter issued Proclamation 4483, also known as the Granting Pardon for Violations of the Selective Service Act, which pardoned hundreds of thousands of Vietnam War draft dodgers. Republican Sen. Barry Goldwater, a supporter of the Vietnam War, referred to the proclamation as "the most disgraceful thing that a president has ever done".

From there, it was pretty much downhill with runaway inflation and an OPEC embargo that created a gas shortage. I still remember all too vividly paying 22% interest on my first car, a used Honda Civic hatchback, and waiting in long gas lines (on alternate days, depending on your license plate number) to fill its tank.

Carter's lone domestic accomplishments were the establishment of a Superfund to clean up Love Canal, New York and other toxic waste dumps; and a series of deregulatory orders that fostered healthy competition in industries from airline travel to beer production. He also signed the Chrysler Corporation Loan Guarantee Act of 1979, which is credited for saving Chrysler from bankruptcy. However, his establishment of the Department of Educa-

tion - an unconstitutional boondoggle - more than offset his achievements at home.

Abroad, Carter deserves enormous credit for forging an historic peace treaty between Israel and Egypt. The Camp David Accords, signed by Israeli prime minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian president Anwar Sadat, ended decades of animosity between the two countries and earned Begin and Sadat the Nobel Peace Prize in 1978. (President Carter would win the same award in 2002.)

Other than that, Carter's foreign policy featured one debacle after another. He ceded control of the Panama Canal and signed the SALT II pact with the Soviet Union (only to see the USSR invade Afghanistan, leading to a U.S. boycott of the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow and a Soviet boycott of the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles). President Carter also formally recognized the People's Republic of China while severing diplomatic relations with Taiwan, our longtime ally.

However, the foreign affair disaster most closely associated with the Carter administration was the takeover of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran by radical Iranian students who supported the Ayatollah Khomeini-backed revolution against the Shah. For 444 days, the world watched in horror and disbelief as Carter failed to negotiate the release of the 52 American hostages, and the covert rescue operation he authorized failed miserably. The hostages were finally released within hours of Ronald Reagan taking the oath of office as America's 40th President.

Now... back to my story about meeting President Carter.

My maternal grandmother was turning 100 and so, our family decided to make the long drive from Cinaminson, New Jersey to St. Pete's Beach, Florida over Christmas break. As I mapped out the route, I realized that we would be passing within spitting distance of Plains, Georgia, Jimmy Carter's hometown. Not only that, but our local newspaper ran a story about how President Carter often taught Sunday School at his home church, Maranatha Baptist.

I called the church before we left and a recording confirmed that President Carter would indeed be teaching that Sunday and so, we booked a hotel in nearby Americus for Saturday night and made sure we were one of the first to arrive at church the following morning.

The church's parking lot soon filled up with scores of cars and buses from all over the United States, but we managed to find some seats in the back of the sanctuary. A church employee told the overflow crowd that Rosalyn Carter would emerge from one door at a specified time after which President Carter would enter from a different door, stand for a few minutes while people took pictures, and then transition into his Sunday School lesson.

Just like clockwork, the Carters did exactly what we had been told they would and then the former president did something spontaneous. "Do we have anyone here from another country?" he asked, and about a dozen people stood and shared their country of origin.

"And do we have any pastors or missionaries here today?" President Carter asked next. Along with a handful of others, I stood and

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sheepishly gave my name and the name of my ministry.

When everyone was seated - and before launching into a detailed description of world events followed by an in-depth Bible study based on the Christmas story - President Carter had one last request. "I'd like to ask my friend, the prison minister, to open us in prayer."

GULP!!!

As every eye in the sanctuary turned towards me, I stood and prayed. I have no idea what I said, but I'm sure it was short if not sweet.

After the service, President Carter walked into a small courtyard where he posed for pictures with the larger bus groups and one family... ours. That's right; we have a picture of the 39th

President of the United States standing in the middle of our family as if he was a close relative, his hands resting on the shoulders of

our youngest son, Christopher.

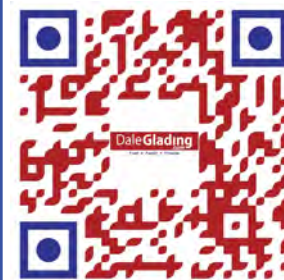
Everyone is familiar with President Carter's post-presidency work with Habitat for Humanity and the incredible job the Carter Center has done supervising overseas elections and virtually eradicating Guinea-worm disease in Africa. If only all former presidents had such a servant's heart (yes, I'm talking about you Bill Clinton and Barack Obama).

However, just like Jesus told the Ephesian Church in Revelation 2:4, there is one thing that I have against President Carter. Whereas he and Chuck Colson popularized the phrase "born again" in the mid-70s - Carter through his infamous Playboy interview and Colson via his autobiography - and made me proud to be an evangelical Christian, Jimmy Carter also occasionally strayed from his faith when it came to his political affiliations. Born and raised in a conservative and very Democratic south, Carter failed to realize that the Democratic Party of his youth had evolved into a liberal coalition of progressives that supported abortion-on-demand, same-sex marriage, and other radical positions that are anathema to biblical teachings and

standards.

Instead of holding fast to the legacies of FDR, Harry Truman, JFK, and even LBJ, President Carter found himself all-too-often in bed with Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton, Planned Parenthood, and the three Democrat presidents that succeeded him: Clinton, Obama, and Biden. And yet, no one in public office ever honored his marriage vows for 77 years, so there's that.

It is tempting - and a bit simplistic - to summarize Jimmy Carter's life with the phrase "Good man, bad president", but if the shoe fits, you have to wear it.



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