

United States Presidential Trivia

George Washington

- * By age 16, he was an enthusiastic spelunker (he liked to explore caves).
 - * He kept a diary from 1748 until the day before his death.
 - * He was the only unanimously-elected president.
 - * He had false teeth carved from wood, rhinoceros ivory, whale bone, and deer antlers.
 - * Washington's family motto was *Exitus acta probat*: "the end justifies the means."
 - * He loved cream of peanut soup.
 - * He was the only president who did not belong to a political party.
 - * Washington introduced the jackass to America.
- y's independence from England.

Thomas Jefferson

- * He was the country's first-known speleologist (cave explorer).
- * He once described the White House as "a great stone house, big enough for two emperors, one pope and the grand lama in the bargain."
- * He was the first president to be inaugurated in Washington, D.C. The story that he walked to his inauguration in 1801 wearing a gray homespun suit is true: bad weather had delayed the arrival of a new \$6,000 carriage and an expensive velvet suit.
- * While president, he wrote a book rejecting the divinity of Jesus, *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth*, though it was not published until after his death.
- * The Library of Congress purchased his 6,500 volume book collection in 1815 to replace the collection that had been burned by the British. He received \$23,950 for his books.
- * On the day he died, friends were soliciting money for his relief at a ceremony in the House of Representatives marking the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. His assets had dwindled considerably and he desperately needed cash. Had he lived, however, he would not have been able to depend on this solicitation. According to John Quincy Adams, only four or five people at the ceremony contributed to Jefferson's relief.
- * Jefferson dies on July 4th, 1826—the same day as his friend/enemy/rival John Adams. This was the 50th anniversary of the country's independence from England.

James Madison

- * His friends called him "Jemie."
- * A war with Great Britain seemed imminent, so he came up with a unique idea for our national defense. He proposed that instead of building a navy from scratch, that the U.S. simply rent Portugal's navy.
- * Dolley Madison served as Thomas Jefferson's White House hostess when James was his Secretary of State. As First Lady, she courageously rescued the famous portrait of George Washington by Gilbert when fleeing from the burning White House in 1812. That portrait is the only remaining possession from the original building.
- * He was the smallest of all the presidents. He was only 5'4" tall and weighed less than 100 pounds.

- * He and Zachary Taylor were second cousins.
- * He was the first president to wear long trousers. All the previous presidents wore knee breeches.
- * His last words were: "I always talk better lying down."

James Monroe

- * He was a student at the College of William and Mary—the events of the Revolutionary War lured him into the army.
- * He is best remembered for the Monroe Doctrine, which warned European countries not to interfere with the free nations of the Western Hemisphere.
- * The White House was still being rebuilt when he became president. On January 1, 1818, the president and his wife held a public reception marking the reopening of the White House. He sold his own furniture to the government because the White House was almost empty when he moved in. The charred remains of the mansion's interior were used to fill a pit on top of which Monroe planted his vegetable garden. Archaeologists unearthed the pit when President Ford's swimming pool was dug.
- * The White House was painted white the year Monroe became president.
- * In the election of 1820, Monroe received every electoral vote but one. A New Hampshire delegate wanted Washington to be the only president elected unanimously.
- * The visit of the Marquis de Lafayette on New Year's Day, 1825, added a touch of splendor to the last months of Monroe's term.
- * He became president after more than 40 years of public service. Long public service made him a poor man, and in 1830, he was forced to move in with his daughter. He died there on July 4, 1831.

John Quincy Adams

- * He customarily took a nude early morning swim in the Potomac River. Anne Royall, the first U.S. professional journalist, knew of his 5:00 AM swims. After being refused interviews with the president time after time, she went to the river, gathered his clothes and sat on them until she had her interview. Before this, no female had interviewed a president (least of all naked!).
- * He was the first president to have his photo taken (April 13, 1843).
- * As an old man responding to questions about his health, he said, "I inhabit a weak, frail, decayed tenement; battered by the winds and broken in upon by the storms, and, from all I can learn, the landlord does not intend to repair."

Andrew Jackson

- * Both of his parents came from the village of Boneybefore in Carrickfergus, Ireland.
- * He was the only president who served in both the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812.
- * He was involved in many duels. In 1806, in a duel against Charles Dickinson over some unflattering remarks made about Jackson's wife, Jackson was wounded. He then fired, killing Dickinson. The that wounded Jackson was lodged near his heart and could not be safely removed. He carried that in his chest for the rest of his life.
- * When John Quincy Adams lost to Andrew Jackson in the election of 1828, the town of Adams,

New Hampshire, changed its name to Jackson. The town had been named in 1800 to honor the election of John Adams.

- * He bought 20 spittoons for the East Room for \$12.50 each. Some said it was a great waste of government money while others said it would save the White House carpets.

- * His advisors were known as the “Kitchen Cabinet” (thus why the president today has his “Cabinet”).

- * He loved children and the White House was always filled with kids. He raised 11 children, none of them his own.

- * He was the first president to ride on a railroad train.

- * His picture is on the twenty dollar bill.

Martin Van Buren

- * When he was vice president, he presided over the Senate wearing a pair of pistols, as a precaution against the frequent outbursts of violence.

- * He was the first president who was born a U.S. citizen.

- * Van Buren was one of the founders of the Democratic Party.

- * He was known as the “Little Magician” and the “Red Fox of Kinderhook” because of his reputed cunning and skill as a politician

- * He took \$100,000, the sum of his salary as president for four years, in a lump sum at the end of his term.

- * His autobiography does not mention his wife once.

William Henry Harrison

- * Having become nicknamed “Tippecanoe” for his victory over the Shawnee at the Battle of Tippecanoe, his campaign slogan was “Tippecanoe and Tyler, too!”

- * In 1840, his supporters pushed a huge paper ball covered with campaign slogans from city to city. They added a phrase to the language: “Keep the ball rolling.”

- * His inaugural address was the longest of any president. And he served the shortest time: one month, to the day. In his address he made the prophetic remark that he would not be a candidate for a second term.

- * He couldn’t shake hands at his inauguration because they were so sore from handshaking on the campaign trail.

- * He was the first president to die in office.

John Tyler

- * He was on his knees playing marbles when informed that he had become president upon the death of Harrison.

- * He played the violin, loved to dance, spoke softly, and had good manners.

- * He was the first president to marry while in office. His new wife was Julia Gardiner. No U.S. president sired more offspring. With two wives, Tyler fathered 15 children.

- * He was the first president to have his veto overridden by Congress (March 3, 1845).

- * Appearing on a grave in Virginia is the following inscription written by Tyler: “Here lies the body of my good horse, The General. For 20 years he bore me around the circuit of my practice,

and in all that time he never made a blunder. Would that his master could say the same!”

* He was elected to the Confederate House of Representatives. He died in 1862 and was buried in Richmond, pointedly ignored by the federal government as a sworn enemy of the U.S.

James K. Polk

* His family name had originally been Pollock, a common Irish name. Both of his parents’ families came from Ulster.

* He was the most successful president in American history. During the 1844 campaign, he made five promises: to acquire California from Mexico, to settle the Oregon dispute, to lower the tariff, to establish a sub-treasury, and to retire from the office after four years. When he left office, his campaign promises had all been fulfilled.

* He was the first “dark horse” presidential nominee in U.S. history.

* He was the first president in office to have his photo taken (1849).

* He didn’t approve of dancing and didn’t like music, except for hymns. He thought having fun meant wasting time and he didn’t like to waste time. No refreshments were served at White House receptions during his tenure. Also, when Sarah Childress Polk became first lady, she immediately banned dancing from the White House. For four years no one danced a step there.

* The first gaslight was turned on in the White House during Polk’s administration, December 29, 1848.

* He was the first president in office to have his photo taken (1849).

* He had ruined his health from overwork while in office. He died of exhaustion only three months after his term ended. A week before he died, Polk fulfilled a lifelong promise to his wife and was baptized in the Methodist Church.

Zachary Taylor

* He was known as “Old Rough and Ready.” Plain, unassuming, and downright messy, he almost never wore a proper uniform. “He wears an old oil cap,” said one man, “a dusty green coat, a frightful pair of trousers and on horseback he looks like a toad.”

* Jefferson Davis married Taylor’s daughter, Sarah Knox Taylor, over Taylor’s objections. They waited over two years until she was legally of age to marry. “Knox” then died of malarial fever only three months after her wedding. When the Mexican War broke out, the two men fought together and Taylor changed his mind about Davis. When Taylor, a Whig, became president in 1849, Davis, a Southern Democrat, and his second wife, Varina, were treated as part of the Taylor family. They were in and out of the White House almost as constantly as if Knox had never died.

* He refused all postage due correspondence. Because of this, he didn’t receive notification of his nomination for president until several days later.

* Visitors to the White House would take souvenir horsehairs from Whitey, Taylor’s old Army horse that he kept on the White House lawn.

* He never lived in one place long enough to register to vote. He voted for the first time when he was 62 years old.

* He almost never wore a proper uniform

Millard Fillmore

* He married his teacher, Abigail Powers, who was two years older than he. Abigail arranged for the purchase of the first cooking stove in the White House. But the cook couldn't figure out how to work the stove, so the president went to the U.S. Patent Office, read the patent for the stove, and went back to the White House and taught the cook how to use it. Abigail also set up the first White House library and had the first bathtub installed.

* When the Library of Congress burned in 1851, he and his Cabinet helped fight the blaze.

* Abigail died less than a month after he had left office. She was buried in Washington, D.C. He married again in 1858.

* When Great Britain's Oxford University offered him an honorary degree, he replied that he had done nothing to deserve the honor and would not accept the degree.

Franklin Pierce

* He was elected the same year that Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin was published.

* Shortly before the inauguration, the Pierce family was involved in a train wreck and their 11-year-old son, Benjamin, was thrown from the car and crushed to death before their eyes.

* When he took office, he was the youngest and probably the handsomest president up to that time.

* He was the first president to have a Christmas tree in the White House.

James Buchanan

* The only bachelor president, he almost married in 1819. His fiancée, Anne Caroline Coleman, broke off the engagement and died a week later, probably by suicide. Buchanan maintained an ironclad silence about the relationship throughout the rest of his life.

* As Polk's Secretary of State, he was appointed minister to Russia in Jackson's first term: "It was as far as I could send him out of my sight, and where he could do the least harm. I would have sent him to the North Pole if we had kept a minister there!"

* Queen Victoria sent greetings to Buchanan over the first Atlantic cable.

* He liked to give sauerkraut and mashed potato parties.

* Americans were singing a new tune called Jingle Bells during his tenure.

* Harriet Lane, his niece, served as White House hostess during his administration. They entertained many important guests including the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII of Britain.

Abraham Lincoln

* He patented his floating drydock on May 22, 1849, patent #6469. He was the first U.S. President to receive a patent.

* The Lincoln-Douglas debates centered upon a Senate seat from Illinois. Lincoln won national prominence, but Douglas got the job.

* He grew a beard because a little girl wrote him a letter telling him that he would look more handsome with a beard.

* Called two-faced by a rival, he responded, "If I had another face, do you think I'd wear this one?"

* He liked wrestling.

* In the winter of 1862, when his adored little son Willie died of typhoid fever in the White House, he turned to the Reverend Phineas Gurley of New York Avenue Presbyterian Church, located a few blocks from the White House. Gurley and the president began going on long walks. During one of the walks, he converted to Christianity, accepting Jesus as his personal savior. Though he never formally joined any denomination, Lincoln started attending Gurley's church twice a week and studying scripture avidly.

* Lincoln was shot at twice before John Wilkes Booth killed him. Both times were while he was on his way to the Soldier's Home and Lincoln joked about them and ordered that they not be publicized.

* A form of the word "sockdolager" (meaning anything big or otherwise outstanding) figured in the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. As an actor, John Wilkes Booth knew that the biggest laugh line in the play Our American Cousin would be, "Well, I guess I know enough to turn you inside out, you sockdologizing old man-trap!" So Booth waited until that line, and then as the audience roared, he fired his gun and fled.

* When Lincoln was assassinated on Good Friday, many ministers in their sermons and newspaper editors in their columns compared him to Jesus.

* His face appears on the one cent piece and the five dollar bill.

Andrew Johnson

* He never attended school. He taught himself to read after his friends in a tailor shop taught him the letters of the alphabet.

* Republican Senator Benjamin Wade voted not to convict Johnson though he would have become president if Johnson had been found guilty—Johnson was acquitted by only 1 vote.

* He was buried wrapped in a U.S. flag and with his well-worn copy of the Constitution under his head.

Ulysses S. Grant

* His mother, Hannah Simpson, was an Irish immigrant from Dergenagh, County Tyrone.

* His given name was Hiram Ulysses Grant. Before leaving for West Point, he decided to reverse the names, but his appointment was in the name of Ulysses S. Grant. The Army never changed it's mind about U.S. Grant, so he finally began to use the patriotic name himself.

* He set a high jump record at West Point that lasted for more than 25 years.

* Remarking in 1846 on the short-range muskets used during the Mexican War, he said, "A man might fire at you all day without your finding it out."

* He owned a slave named William Jones, acquired from his father-in-law. At a time when he could have desperately used the money from the sale of Jones, Grant signed a document that gave his freedom.

* Although he had 15 years in the regular military, his initial offer to serve in the Civil War was overlooked by the War Department. His letter was not found until after the war was over.

* "I saw that the ordinary, scrubby-looking man, with the slightly seedy look, cigar in mouth, had a clear blue eye, and a look of resolution, as if he could not be trifled with." (Richard Henry Dana, March 1864)

* His favorite breakfast was a cucumber soaked in vinegar.

* A future Republican president, he cast his first vote for president in 1856, voting for James

Buchanan, a Democrat. His explanation was that “I didn’t know him and voted against Fremont because I did know him.”

- * He suffered from intense migraine headaches that were sometimes reported as bouts of drunkenness.
- * A friend of his once tried to get him to learn the increasingly popular game of golf. Finally, he went along as an observer. His friend, however, could not connect with the ball. Confused, Grant admitted that it did look like very good exercise but asked what the little white ball was for.
- * He was tone deaf and could not recognize any of the light airs of the time. Military music was especially annoying to him. He once told a reporter, “I only know two tunes. One of them is Yankee Doodle and the other isn’t.”
- * While president, he was arrested for speeding in his horse carriage.
- * He appointed a Seneca Indian, Ely S. Parker, who had been one of his aides during the Civil War, as Commissioner of Indian Affairs.
- * He used Lafayette Park as his private zoo until the aroma of the presidential prairie dogs became intolerable.
- * His picture is on the fifty dollar bill.

Rutherford B. Hayes

- * Upon becoming president in 1877, Hayes immediately banished wine and liquor from the White House. He was not a temperance fanatic but wanted to set a good example for the country. White House guests were not appreciative. He was ridiculed and his wife was called “Lemonade Lucy” since she refused to serve anything stronger than lemonade.
- * Lucy Hayes was the first president’s wife to be called First Lady of the Land.
- * He had the first telephone installed in the White House. Then he talked to Alexander Graham Bell, who was 13 miles away.
- * The first White House Easter Egg Roll was held April 2, 1879. The presidential tie to the egg roll began when Congress abandoned its own long Easter Monday children’s festival and declared in 1878 that the western slope of Capitol Hill and the Capitol’s lawns and terraces could no longer be used as “playgrounds or otherwise.” Then on Easter Monday in 1879, Capitol police refused to admit the children to the grounds. They went to the grounds of the National Observatory and the White House, apparently at the invitation of the president.

James A. Garfield

- * He served as an officer in the Civil War.
- * He was the only man in U.S. history who was a congressman, senator-elect, and a president-elect at the same time. He campaigned for the presidency from the front porch of his house.
- * His mother, Eliza Ballou Garfield, was the first mother of a president to live in the executive mansion.
- * Lincoln’s son, Robert Todd, was his secretary of war.
- * He was the first left-handed president.
- * It took him 11 weeks to die after being shot by assassin Charles Guiteau on July 2, 1881.

Chester A. Arthur

- * His father was an Irish immigrant from Dreen and his mother's family was of Ulster ancestry.
- * This president spent his last years in office knowing he could very well die of Bright's disease before his term ended. He knew that the more active he was the greater his chance of succumbing to the disease and yet he even made a halfhearted attempt to gain his party's nomination for another term. He survived his nearly 4 years in office and did not die until a year and a half later, in 1886.

Grover Cleveland

- * His father was a Neal (or Neill) who had immigrated from Ulster, Ireland.
- * Reform-minded Independent Republicans who were alienated by the Republican Party's choice of James G. Blaine backed Democrat Grover Cleveland for president. They were called Mugwumps, from the Algonquian Indian language meaning "big chief." The campaign generated into one of U.S. political history's most scurrilous. Cleveland narrowly won the election, getting just over 60,000 more popular votes than Blaine and 219 electoral votes to his 182.
- * While a bachelor, a love child conceived while he was a young man in Buffalo was brought up during his presidential campaign. He admitted paternity and his honesty helped calm the issue, despite the popular campaign chant against him: "Ma, Ma, where's my Pa? Gone to the White House, Ha, Ha, Ha!" Cleveland narrowly defeated Blaine in the election.
- * He was the first president to have a child born in the White House. The Baby Ruth candy bar was named for her.
- * He contracted, and had surgery for, cancer of the jaw during his second term, keeping it from the public and his pregnant young wife. It did not become public knowledge until 9 years after his death.

Benjamin Harrison

- * He was called "the Centennial President" because he was inaugurated 100 years after George Washington.
- * He and his family often went to bed and left all the new electric lights burning because they were afraid to touch the switches.
- * He was the first president to attend a baseball game.

William McKinley

- * He was the first man in his hometown to volunteer when the Civil War broke out. He worked in a regiment commanded by another future president, Rutherford B. Hayes.
- * Whenever his wife suffered an epileptic seizure in public, there was always one thing he would do: throw a napkin over her face. He ignored protocol at official dinners by seating his wife at his right so he could help her if necessary. Captain Leonard Wood, assisting attending surgeon in Washington, D.C., treated Mrs. McKinley with skill and compassion and became close to the president
- * He refused to leave his invalid wife for long campaign tours, so his campaign manager arranged to have thousands of visitors travel to Canton. McKinley stood on his front porch and gave brief, well-rehearsed talks keyed to the interests of the delegations.

- * He liked to wear a white vest and a lucky red carnation in his buttonhole.
- * Theodore Roosevelt, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, called him a “white-livered cur” when he delayed for weeks deciding whether to commit the U.S. to the Spanish-American War. He also said that McKinley had “no more backbone than an chocolate éclair.”
- * He said later in life: “I have never been in doubt since I was old enough to think intelligently that I would sometime be made President.”
- * When he was shot, he begged that the man who shot him not be hurt and that his secretary be careful in how Mrs. McKinley was told. He died 8 days later. His wife never returned to the White House and did not attend his burial rites.

Theodore Roosevelt

- * Known as “Teddy.”
- * Reportedly, while on a bear hunting trip, he refused to shoot a bear cub. Political cartoons exploited this event. A doll maker, intrigued by the event and in need of a good seller, began making stuffed bears, calling them “Teddy Bears” in honor of the president.
- * When the Great White Fleet, which he sent around the world in 1907, returned to America in 1909, it was immediately painted gray.
- * Booker T. Washington was the first black man invited to dine at the White House, a guest of TR.
- * His sons, Archie and Quentin, sometimes lined up for morning roll-call with the White House police.
- * He was the first American to win the Nobel Peace Prize (1906).
- * He was the first president to ride in an automobile—it was a purple-lined Columbia Electric Victoria. He rode through Hartford, Connecticut on August 22, 1902. 20 carriages followed the president’s car. He was also the first president to own a car.
- * He had a guinea pig named Father O’Grady and a snake named Emily Spinach.
- * He was the first president to ride in an airplane, a Wright biplane October 11, 1910 in St. Louis, Missouri.

William Howard Taft

- * He was his predecessor’s most trusted advisor. Whenever a situation became too difficult for lesser men to handle, it was Taft who was sent to “sit on the lid.”
- * “Big Bill” was over 300 pounds and 6’2”. Needing a big bathtub, he had a 7’ long 41” wide tub installed that could accommodate four normal-sized men.
- * He was the first president to have a car at the White House (he had the White House stables converted into a 4-car garage), to throw out the first ball to begin the professional baseball season, and the first president to be buried in the National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia.
- * Biographer Henry F. Pringle wrote: “It was by all odds the most infectious chuckle in the history of politics. It started with a silent trembling of Taft’s ample stomach. The next sign was a pause in the reading of his speech, and the spread of a slow grin across his face. Then came a kind of gulp which seemed to escape without his being aware that the climax was near. Laughter followed hard on the chuckle itself, and the audience invariably joined in.”

Thomas Woodrow Wilson

- * Both of his paternal grandparents, James Wilson and Annie Mills Wilson, were from Ireland.
- * He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1920.
- * Though he never met Wilson, Sigmund Freud wrote a psychological study of Wilson in which he asserted that Wilson unconsciously identified himself with Jesus Christ.
- * He was the only president with a Ph.D.
- * During World War I, when the government clamped down on the fledgling radio industry in the interests of security, the U.S. Navy had a corner on radio. In 1919, he became the first U.S. president to make a radio broadcast when he spoke from a ship to World War I troops aboard other vessels.
- * Partially paralyzed and nearly blind from a massive stroke, he was protected by his wife, Edith, who ran what was called the “Petticoat Government.” As the government limped along, she was also called the Iron Queen, the Presidentess, and the Regent.
- * He was the first president to hold regular news briefings.
- * He finally died in 1924, a year after his supposedly more vigorous successor, Warren Harding. He is the only president buried in Washington, D.C.
- * His vice president, Thomas Riley Marshall, uttered the immortal words: “What this country needs is a good five-cent cigar.

Warren G. Harding

- * He campaigned for the presidency by meeting visiting groups on his front porch in Marion, Ohio.
- * He was the first candidate to hire a speechwriter.
- * Loudspeakers were used at his inauguration for the first time in the event’s history.
- * His dog Laddie Boy delivered his newspaper each day. The dog had a birthday party and a cake made of dog biscuits. He also had his own chair for cabinet meetings.
- * Harding coined the word “normalcy.”
- * Nan Britton claimed in a sensational book, *President’s Daughter*, that Harding had fathered her daughter, Elizabeth Ann. Carrie Phillips, the wife of one of Harding’s best friends, was involved in a 10-year affair with him. He also maintained a room next to the Oval Office for quick liaisons.
- * Harding hosted weekly poker games at the White House while he was president. Jess Smith, brought to the Justice Department by Attorney General Daugherty, guaranteed an ample supply of liquor for the games.
- * When Harding died in 1923, there was no autopsy. Insiders came to believe that he had been poisoned by his wife to save him from the disgrace of his scandal-ridden administration.

Calvin Coolidge

- * During the Garfield-Hancock campaign of 1880, he asked his father for a penny to buy candy. John Coolidge refused, explaining that if the Democrats should be elected, hard times could be expected. After Garfield won, he reminded his father that the Republicans had stayed in power. He got the penny.
- * On August 2, 1923, he was vacationing at his father’s home in Plymouth, Vermont. It took several hours for the news of President Harding’s death in California to reach the small town. Traditionally, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court swears in the president, but he was 500

miles away. So at 2:30 a.m., Coolidge's father, a notary republic, administered the oath of office to his son by the light of a kerosene lamp.

* Called "Silent Cal," he was once challenged by a reporter, who said to him, "I bet someone that I could get more than two words out of you." He responded, "You lose."

* He was the first president to have his speeches heard on the radio and the first president to make a radio broadcast. The first presidential political speech on the radio originated from New York City and was broadcast on 5 radio stations. An audience estimated to be about 5 million people listened in to hear him speak.

* He loved having his head rubbed with Vaseline while he ate breakfast in bed.

* He eased the burdens of his office by confining himself to 4 hours of work a day and by taking a nap every afternoon.

* He was expected to attend a fair. A reporter asked if he would say anything at the fair. He replied, "No. I am just going as an exhibit."

* When he died, columnist Dorothy Parker asked, "How can they tell?"

Herbert Clark Hoover

* In 1922, Hoover, then Commerce Secretary, participated in the first successful long-distance television demonstration in New York.

* He was the first president to have a telephone right on his desk.

* Hoover required White House servants to be "invisible." Whenever he or the first lady appeared, the servants would jump into the nearest closet to avoid being seen.

* When Hoover invited the black wife of a congressman to the White House for tea, he was officially denounced by the state legislature of Texas.

* Charles Curtis, Hoover's vice president, was the only nonwhite person to be elected vice president of the U.S. He was a Kaw Indian.

* When the Hoovers wanted to speak privately while in the presence of White House guests, they spoke Chinese.

* His son had two pet alligators that would sometimes wander around the White House.

* A common sign held up by hitchhikers during the fall of 1932 read: "If you don't give me a ride, I'll vote for Hoover."

Franklin D. Roosevelt

* Known by his initials, "FDR."

* Genealogists have determined that FDR was related to: George Washington, John Adams, James Madison, John Quincy Adams, Martin Van Buren, William Henry Harrison, Zachary Taylor, Ulysses S. Grant, Benjamin Harrison, William Howard Taft, and, of course, Theodore Roosevelt.

* In 1933, he declared that Home on the Range was his favorite song.

* He held the record for the number of times he met with the press: 998 times.

* He served hot dogs to the King and Queen of England when they came for a visit. And his dog, Major, once bit the British Prime Minister, Ramsey McDonald.

* In 1935, all plane flights over the White House were barred because they were disturbing his sleep.

* After his inauguration in 1937, he watched the parade from a reviewing stand in front of the

White House built to look like Andrew Jackson's Tennessee home.

- * He was the first president to have his own airplane.
- * He was the first president to travel through the Panama Canal.
- * He was the first president to visit a foreign country during wartime (June 10, 1943)
- * He was the first president to name a woman to his Cabinet.
- * I'd Rather Be Right was a humorous play that opened on November 2, 1937. It satirized the highest office of the land as it related to him.
- * He requested that the White House Easter Egg Roll be discontinued, which it was, for 11 years. Dwight D. Eisenhower brought the tradition back in 1953.
- * He started the presidential library tradition in 1939 when he donated his papers to the U.S. and asked the National Archives to administer them. His presidential library was the first to be dedicated.

Harry S. Truman

- * A good piano player, he considered a career in music but went into politics instead.
- * The train he used to campaign in 1948 was called the Ferdinand Magellan.
- * His opponent in the presidential race was a man named Dewey. On election night, it was so sure Dewey had won that newspapers ran headlines purporting that fact. A famous picture shows a smiling Truman holding a paper with "DEWEY DEFEATS TRUMAN!" across it.
- * One day he walked into the Green Room and looked down at the rug. Something bothered him about that rug—finally he realized that the head of the eagle on the presidential seal in the center of the rug was turned the wrong way. Instead of facing the olive branch, this eagle's head pointed toward the arrows. Promptly Truman ordered that the rug be re-stitched with the eagle's head turned the right way. Contrary to popular belief, the eagle's head is not turned toward the arrows during times of war, then back to the olive branch when war was over with; Truman's change has lasted continuously and the eagle always faces the olive branch.
- * The smartest boy in Truman's graduating class of 1901, Charles G. Ross, became Truman's press secretary.
- * Bess never found a laundry she liked in Washington, so she sent the family's clothes back to Independence to be washed.
- * He was the only president who didn't have a dog in the White House.

Dwight David Eisenhower

- * He played football in college and was injured trying to tackle Jim Thorpe. He was on West Point's team but was forced to quit the team due to a knee injury.
- * He was in charge of the D-Day invasion during World War II. He was made a 5-star general afterward.
- * He was the first nominee to travel by airplane while campaigning, he was the only president who was a licensed pilot, and he initiated the use of Air Force One.
- * He was the first president to be baptized after taking office.
- * A special green was installed on the White House lawn for him to practice his golf shots.
- * When the Eisenhowers bought a farm in Gettysburg in 1950, it was the first permanent home they owned.
- * He suffered a heart attack while he was president, but recovered quickly.

- * He liked to eat TV dinners while watching westerns.
- * He enjoyed painting pictures but wasn't able to draw, so he had someone else draw the pictures he painted.
- * His face appears on the dime (ten cent piece) and used to appear on the dollar coin.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy

- * Known by his initials, "JFK."
- * "Do you realize the responsibility I carry?" Kennedy asked his supporters during the presidential campaign. "I'm the only person between Nixon and the White House."
- * "Last Thursday night," Kennedy said during the campaign, "Mr. Nixon dismissed me as 'another Truman.' I regard that as a great compliment. I consider him another Dewey." This was in reference to the hot race between Dewey and Truman; Truman, of course, won.
- * He was the youngest man to be elected president
- * He was the first Roman Catholic to be elected president
- * He was the first president to win a Purple Heart
- * He was the fourth president to be assassinated.
- * He was the first president to win the Pulitzer Prize (Profiles in Courage).
- * He had been diagnosed as having Addison's disease, a debilitating and often fatal condition, according to one of his many doctors. He denied that he had it and was in very good health—and went on to win the presidency.
- * Jacqueline Kennedy believed that the furnishings and portraits in the White House should be preserved as landmarks in U.S. history. Her efforts have been supported by each succeeding president and first lady.
- * He had the U.S. ambassador to the U.N. attend his Cabinet meetings.
- * There are bizarre coincidences between his assassination and that of Lincoln (see our Presidential Links page).
- * His younger brother, Robert F. Kennedy (RFK) was planning to run for president a few years after JFK's death—but he, too, was assassinated.
- * The subject of his assassination has been the target of conspiracy theorists over the years, fueled by documentaries and a completely inaccurate movie about it, JFK. Recent extensive forensic tests and computer simulations have determined, beyond nearly any doubt, that his assassin did, in fact, act alone.
- * When visiting Berlin, Germany, Kennedy consulted a member of his staff who was fluent in textbook German. He wanted to say to the Berlin people, "I am a Berliner" to indicate he was one of them in spirit. The staff member translated it exactly and, grammatically, properly, as "Ich bin ein Berliner." However, German colloquialism indicated that the word ein ("a") should have been left out in the phrase, saying instead, literally, "I am Berliner." By including the "a" in there, the word "Berliner" was not taken to mean "one of Berlin" but of a special jelly doughnut known as "the Berliner." While Germans understood what JFK was trying to say, what he really said, literally speaking, was "I am a jelly doughnut."

Lyndon Baines Johnson

- * Known by his initials, "LBJ."
- * Sworn into office on an airplane in the Dallas airport, he was the only president who was

sworn in by a woman.

* He loved to give gifts. In his first year as president, he spent over three times as much as his predecessor on gifts. He particularly liked giving electric toothbrushes. "I give these toothbrushes to friends," he explained, "for then I know that from now until the end of their days they will think of me the first thing in the morning and the last at night." His biographer Doris Kearns received more than 12 from Johnson in 10 years.

* He was the first president to name a black person to his Cabinet.

Richard Milhous Nixon

* He once worked at a game booth at the Slippery Gulch Rodeo.

* In the Navy during World War II, Nixon's bunkmates taught him to play poker. He became such a dedicated player that he once turned down a chance to have dinner with Charles Lindbergh when it conflicted with a game. He also won a great deal of money and used his winnings partially to finance his first congressional campaign.

* Speaking to reporters about his health, Nixon once claimed that he had never had a headache during his whole life.

* During the funeral of French president Georges Pompidou, Nixon declared: "This is a great day for France."

* He was the first president to visit all 50 states and the first to visit China. He also met with Emperor Hirohito in Anchorage, Alaska, which was the first-ever meeting of a U.S. President and a Japanese monarch.

* On July 21, 1969, Nixon talked to astronauts on the moon from the White House by radio-telephone.

* He was the first U.S. President to attend a regular season National Football League game while in office.

* He was the only president who resigned.

* He broke with tradition and established a private library in Yorba Linda, California. The Presidential Papers Act of 1978 which decreed that Presidents don't own their papers was not enacted until after Nixon left office.

* Both front-running presidential candidates in 1968 were invited to make cameo appearances on the television show Rowan & Martin's Laugh-In in 1968, just before the general election. Hubert Humphrey declined, but Nixon accepted. He delivered the famous R&M line "Sock it to me!" as a deadpan question: "Sock it to ME?"

Gerald R. Ford

* He was named Leslie Lynch King, Jr. at birth. When his divorced mother remarried, he was adopted by his stepfather and named Gerald R. Ford after him. He was known as "Jerry."

* He once worked as a fashion model.

* He was the only president not elected by the people. Further, his vice president was also not elected. Nixon and Agnew were elected, and then Agnew resigned. Nixon then appointed Ford. When Nixon resigned, Ford became an unelected president, who then appointed Nelson Rockefeller as vice president.

* A month after assuming office, he gave Nixon a blanket pardon for any crimes Nixon may or may have not committed while President. many historians believe that move cost him the 1976

election, when he lost to Jimmy Carter.

- * He pardoned Iva Toguri D' Aquino, known as "Tokyo Rose," in 1977.

Jimmy Carter

- * At the age of 9, he bought 5 huge bales of cotton for 5 cents a pound. He stored the cotton and sold it a few years later when the price had more than tripled.

- * A giant peanut-shaped balloon was part of his Inauguration Day parade.

- * He was the only president who commanded a submarine.

- * He insisted on being called "Jimmy" not "James."

- * He had a dog named Grits.

- * His brother, Billy, was known to like his beer. In fact, a limited edition beer, named "Billy Beer," was produced for a time.

- * He ended much of the ceremony and pageantry that had marked official receptions in the White House. He got rid of the trumpeters that announced the presidential family and the color guard. State dinners ended far sooner—about 11:00 p.m.

- * Amy Carter was 9 when her father became president. She attended public schools near the White House and had a tree house built on the White House grounds. When she labeled White House trees as a school project, her father thought it was a good idea and made it official. Now all of the White House trees have labels with their common and Latin name as well as information about who planted them or gave them as a gift.

- * On the last night of his presidency before Ronald Reagan took office, Amy and friends burned cookies in the White House kitchen. They reportedly left the mess.

Ronald Wilson Reagan

- * At 73, he was the oldest person ever elected president.

- * He was an actor who was most famous for his Bonzo movies. His acting ability was translated to the presidency, and he is known as perhaps the president who knew best how to deliver a speech and talk to the camera.

- * He kept a jar of jelly beans on his desk. He especially loved Jelly Belly jelly beans. Jelly Belly created their blueberry flavored beans for his inauguration in 1981. Reagan sent Jelly Belly beans on the 1983 flight of the space shuttle Challenger.

- * After John Hinckley tried to kill him, former sportscaster Dutch Reagan, said to his wife: "Honey, I forgot to duck."

- * When Federally-employed air traffic controllers went on strike, Reagan warned them in 1981 that they had no legal right to do so, and ordered them back to work or else they'd all be fired. They ignored him and he fired all 11,350 of the strikers.

- * He became the first U.S. president to address Japan's legislature.

- * In his retirement years he was diagnosed as having Alzheimer's Disease.

George Herbert Walker Bush

- * Having jumped out of airplanes during World War II, he always said he'd do it again before he died. After leaving office, he did indeed jump again.

- * He requested Nixon's resignation as president in the name of the Republican Party.

- * He resigned from the CIA after Jimmy Carter was elected president in 1976.
- * His entire family stayed in the White House the night after he was inaugurated. Extra beds had to be put up in all the bedrooms.
- * He liked to play horseshoes.
- * The First Dog, Millie, had her own room, in Nancy Reagan's old beauty parlor.
- * His vice-president, Dan Quayle, was often the source of jokes considering some of the unique misspeaks he made.
- * When Bush left office in 1993, he became the nation's 5th living ex-president, joining Richard Nixon, Gerald R. Ford, Jimmy Carter, and Ronald Reagan.

William Jefferson Clinton

- * He was named William Jefferson Blythe IV at birth. After his father's death, his mother married Roger Clinton. He began using his stepfather's last name while in grade school and formally changed his name to William Jefferson Clinton when he was 15.
- * He met John F. Kennedy when he was 17.
- * His family brought a First Cat-Socks-from Arkansas when they moved into the White House.
- * Storytelling by celebrities and Clinton's welcoming remarks cybercast over the Internet were innovations added to the traditional Easter Egg Roll on April 13, 1998.
- * His wife, Hillary, was the first wife of a president to attain elective office herself.
- * Was almost impeached.
- * Was the only sitting president to be featured in a movie as himself. The movie was Contact, a film about the first alien communication sent to Earth. Footage of Clinton reacting to the actual discovery of a Martian meteorite believed to contain fossils of bacteria was used, digitally editing in the other film's actors to fit the movie.

George W. Bush

- * He was the second president to follow in his father's footsteps. The other was John Quincy Adams (who followed his father, John Adams). The names were almost the same, too: George Herbert Walker Bush and George Walker Bush.
- * Once owned the Texas Rangers baseball team.