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Ronald Reagan *Top 100 Americans*

Ronald Wilson Reagan (February 6, 1911 – June 5, 2004) was an American actor and politician. He was the 40th President of the United States (1981–89), and served as the 33rd Governor of California (1967–75) before his presidency.

Born and raised in small towns in Illinois, Reagan graduated from Eureka College and then worked as a radio broadcaster. He moved to Hollywood in 1937, where he began a career as an actor, first in films and later in television. Reagan served as President of the Screen Actors Guild and later as a spokesman for General Electric (G.E.); his start in politics occurred during his work for G.E. Originally, he was a member of the Democratic Party, but due to the parties' shifting platforms during the 1950s, he switched to the Republican Party in 1962.

After delivering a speech in support of Barry Goldwater's presidential candidacy in 1964, he was persuaded to seek the California governorship, winning two years later and again in 1970. He was defeated in his run for the Republican presidential nomination in 1968 and in 1976, but won both the nomination and general election in 1980, defeating incumbent Jimmy Carter.

As president, Reagan implemented sweeping new political and economic initiatives. His supply-side economic policies, dubbed "Reaganomics", advocated reducing tax rates to spur economic growth, controlling the money supply to reduce inflation, deregulation of the economy, and reducing government spending. In his first term he survived an assassination attempt, took a hard line against labor unions, escalated the War on Drugs, and ordered an invasion of Grenada to reverse a Communist coup.

He was re-elected in a landslide in 1984, proclaiming that it was "Morning in America". His second term was primarily marked by foreign matters, such as the ending of the Cold War, the 1986 bombing of Libya, and the revelation of the Iran–Contra affair. Publicly describing the Soviet Union as an "evil empire", [2] he supported anti-communist movements worldwide and spent his first term forgoing the strategy of détente in favor of rollback by escalating an arms race with the USSR. Reagan subsequently negotiated with Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev, culminating in the INF Treaty and the decrease of both countries' nuclear arsenals. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union occurred soon afterward.

Reagan left office in 1989. In 1994, the former president disclosed that he had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease earlier in the year; he died ten years later at the age of 93. A conservative icon, he ranks highly in public opinion polls of U.S. Presidents and is credited for generating an ideological movement or paradigm shift on the American political right.