



Handout 1 - Biographies of Ronald Reagan and Jerry Garcia

Biography of Ronald Reagan

Ronald Reagan, originally an American actor and politician, became the 40th President of the United States serving from 1981 to 1989. His term saw a restoration of prosperity at home, with the goal of achieving “peace through strength” abroad.

On February 6, 1911, Ronald Wilson Reagan was born to Nelle and John Reagan in Tampico, Illinois. He attended high school in nearby Dixon and then worked his way through Eureka College. Upon graduation, he became a radio sports announcer. A screen test in 1937 won him a contract in Hollywood. During the next two decades he appeared in 53 films.

From his first marriage to actress Jane Wyman, he had two children, Maureen and Michael. In 1952 he married Nancy Davis, who was also an actress, and they had two children, Patricia Ann and Ronald Prescott.

As president of the Screen Actors Guild, Reagan became embroiled in disputes over the issue of Communism in the film industry; his political views shifted from liberal to conservative. He toured the country as a television host, becoming a spokesman for conservatism. In 1966 he was elected Governor of California by a margin of a million votes; he was re-elected in 1970.

Ronald Reagan won the Republican Presidential nomination in 1980 and chose as his running mate former Texas Congressman and United Nations Ambassador George Bush. Voters swept the Republican ticket into office. Reagan won 489 electoral votes to 49 for President Jimmy Carter.

On January 20, 1981, Reagan took office. Dealing skillfully with Congress, Reagan obtained legislation to stimulate economic growth, curb inflation, increase employment, and strengthen national defense. He embarked upon a course of cutting taxes and Government expenditures, refusing to deviate from it when the strengthening of defense forces led to a large deficit.

A renewal of national self-confidence by 1984 helped Reagan and Bush win a second term with an unprecedented number of electoral votes. Their victory turned away Democratic challengers Walter F. Mondale and Geraldine Ferraro.

In foreign policy, Reagan sought to achieve “peace through strength.” During his two terms he increased defense spending 35 percent, but sought to improve relations with the Soviet Union. In dramatic meetings with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, he negotiated a treaty that would eliminate intermediate-range nuclear missiles.

At the end of his two terms in office, Ronald Reagan viewed with satisfaction the achievements of his innovative program known as the Reagan Revolution, which aimed to reinvigorate the American people and reduce their reliance upon Government. He felt he had fulfilled his campaign pledge of 1980 to restore “the great, confident roar of American progress and growth and optimism.”

Excerpted from: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/presidents/ronald-reagan>



Biography of Jerry Garcia

August 1, 1942: Jerome John “Jerry” Garcia is born in San Francisco, CA.

1950: Jerry attends Monroe Elementary School, and is greatly encouraged in his artistic abilities by his third grade teacher. It is during this time that Jerry picks up the five-string banjo.

1953: Garcia is introduced to early rock & roll and rhythm & blues by his brother.

August 1, 1957: On his fifteenth birthday, Jerry receives an accordion. Disappointed, he complains until the instrument is exchanged for an electric guitar and amplifier.

1960: Hoping to see the world, Jerry enlists in the US Army at age seventeen, and completes basic combat training at Fort Ord near Monterey on the Pacific Coast. Jerry is discharged from the Army only months after joining, on the basis of “lack of suitability to the military lifestyle.”

1961: Jerry narrowly survives a major car accident which changes his focus. He later cites it as a “sling-shot for the rest of [his] life.” This revelation causes him to choose the guitar over his hobby of painting and drawing.

1964: Jerry, Ron “Pigpen” McKernan, and Bob Weir join forces as Mother McCree’s Uptown Jug Champions.

1965: Phil Lesh and Bill Kreutzmann join Jerry, Pigpen, and Bob to perform their first gig as The Warlocks at Magoo’s Pizza in Menlo Park, CA. The Warlocks change their name to the Grateful Dead.

1966: Jerry and the rest of the band move into a communal house situated at 710 Ashbury Street. It becomes a fixture on the local music scene—providing a venue for many free concerts throughout the year-and-a-half they live there.

1985: Jerry’s decade-long heroin addiction culminates in the rest of the Grateful Dead holding an intervention. Given the choice between the band or the drugs, Jerry agrees to check into a rehabilitation center in Oakland, CA.

1986: Jerry lapses into a near-fatal diabetic coma for five days, after which he has to relearn the guitar.

1987: Named in tribute to Jerry, ice cream-makers Ben & Jerry’s release Cherry Garcia.

1994: The Grateful Dead is inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

August 9, 1995: Jerry dies at Serenity Knolls Treatment Center in Forest Knolls, CA, at age fifty-three.

August 13, 1995: Jerry is celebrated by twenty-five thousand family and friends at a public memorial in Golden Gate Park. Memorials span the nation as people all over mourn his passing.

Excerpted from: <https://jerrygarcia.com/jerrys-story/>