

Which PRESIDENT KILLED a MAN?

Tantalizing Trivia
and Fun Facts About
Our Chief Executives
and First Ladies

JAMES HUMES

Former White House Speechwriter

Foreword by Helen Thomas



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JAMES HUMES

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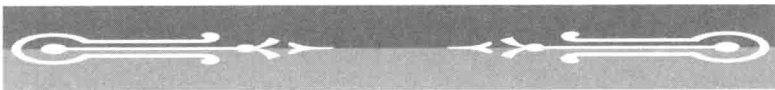
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FOREWORD



☞ I love history, especially White House history, and I thought I knew a lot about it since I've covered nine presidents—from John F. Kennedy to George W. Bush—and over the years I have regaled my family and even audiences with my eyewitness, intimate anecdotes about the White House. But after reading James Humes's encyclopedic book, *Which President Killed a Man?*, I realized how little I know and how much I enjoy learning more.

This book is a gold mine of fascinating information about our leaders of the past and their families. With the phenomenal research Humes has done, our knowledge of who we are as a nation and how we got here is greatly enhanced. I wish every family could have this book on its bookshelves—and certainly every school library. Besides, it's a great way to test the knowledge of your family and guests at parties during cold winter nights.

Humes was inspired to write this book of questions and answers about our presidents after touring the White House as a young boy. His parents bought him a paperback book of facts about the presidents. Now Humes has put together his own book, and it's crammed with interesting facts and anecdotes. Did you know, for example, that President Theodore Roosevelt was called the “Black Man's Buddy” for befriending African Americans and for being the first president to appoint them to federal positions? And did you know that on the day of his assassination,

Abraham Lincoln took his wife, Mary Todd, for a ride? Reaching out to hold his wife's hand, Lincoln said: "Dear, I have never felt so happy in my life." Mrs. Lincoln responded: "You said the same thing just before our boy Willie died."

These and many other great insights are included in this wonderful omnibus about those who once lived in the White House. It's fun to read and learn at the same time.

—Helen Thomas



PREFACE



☞ The seed for this book was planted more than half a century ago by a visit to the White House. It was the pilgrimage that so many families take in the spring to see their national capital amid the height of the cherry blossoms—then to be followed by a side trip from Washington, D.C., south to Williamsburg in Virginia. For Judge Sam Humes, his wife, Elenor, and their three sons, it was in 1941, the first year the restored Colonial Williamsburg was opened to the public. In our new powder blue Lincoln Zephyr, we drove from Williamsport, Pennsylvania, south on U.S. Route 15 to Washington.

We parked on Pennsylvania Avenue right in front of the White House. We then proceeded to follow the visitor's line through those first floors of the White House open for viewing. Upon leaving, we purchased a paperback fact book on the presidents with a picture of George Washington's face adorning the cover. That book, with its engravings of bearded countenances, reminded me of the two brothers of cough drop fame.

While our staunch Republican of a father attempted to see President Roosevelt on the strength of a letter from a mutual friend, my mother and the three of us boys waited for our father to emerge from the White House. My mother smoldered at the prospect of our father fraternizing with the enemy as my two older brothers started to fight in the backseat.

To quiet them, my mother took out the book on the presidents, giving it to my oldest brother, Sam, to divert him.

That presidential paperback would then later lie over the small desktop radio in the old nursery next to our bedroom. The factoids in the book still leap into my memory six decades later: James Buchanan, bachelor president; Benjamin Harrison, grandson of a previous president; William Howard Taft, president and also chief justice; James Polk, president and former Speaker of the House; and particularly Grover Cleveland, who hanged three men!

In 1969, this presidential fact book would prompt me to assemble “the White House Quiz”—a one hundred-question test composed with the aid of fellow Nixon speechwriter Lee Huebner along with help from John McClaughry and Robin West one slow summer weekend. Other questions were added—not solely about presidents. “What foreign capital is named after a U.S. president?” “Name the four state capitals named after U.S. presidents.” “What are the four commonwealths in the Union?” “What is the country in Europe that has a predominant religion other than Christianity?” “What states are the farthest northern, eastern, southern, and western in latitudes and longitudes?” “Name ten cities in the world with over a million population, beginning with the letter *M*.” “Name the only vice president who resigned” (not knowing that the then-current vice president would resign four years later).

“The White House Quiz” had grades assigned to the respondents. The score of ninety qualified you as a summer Harvard intern. A score of ten—that of vice president! Interestingly, the highest score (except those of ourselves, who created the questions—but no one else knew that!) was Pat Moynihan’s. Vice President Spiro Agnew’s office called me for many of the answers because they heard I had scored the highest!

Some questions from that 1941 presidential fact book were sprung by my brother Graham on his grandson, Christopher Bartlo, on a visit to his daughter’s home last summer. Christopher is in that prepubescent age when boys and girls soak up facts as if they are sponges. I remember my preteen years when I poured over baseball statistics and the girls I knew collected data on film stars.

My brother's grandson is a bright, inquisitive youth, and he gobbled up the presidential tidbits. The favorite question in our family was "Which president received a 1,235-pound cheese?" because our paternal grandmother's ancestor Israel Cole from Cheshire, Massachusetts, was the one who carted it to the White House for Thomas Jefferson. That visit of my brother Graham with Christopher inspired him to call me with this book idea. At first, I was cool to the suggestion, but I warmed up to it as I started to think of a title—*Which President Killed a Man?*—and the question format to make it less like a fact book. It was my brother Graham who suggested putting it into sections—like "Sports" and "Religion." I thank him for launching me on this fun project.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



☞ Anyone who assembles such teasing trivia in presidential history will be much indebted to William A. DeGregorio's *The Complete Book of U.S. Presidents*. His is the best reference book. Also excellent is the *Presidential Fact Book* by Joseph Nathan Kane. Although this book of mine is not intended as a reference book, these two books should be in and on the shelves of any presidential scholar.

I also am indebted to some of the presidential libraries—the Richard Nixon Library and Birthplace in Yorba Linda, California; the Gerald R. Ford Library in Ann Arbor, Michigan; the Lyndon B. Johnson Library and Museum in Austin, Texas; the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, California; the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene, Kansas; the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library and Museum in Hyde Park, New York; the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library in Boston, Massachusetts; and the Theodore Roosevelt Association in Oyster Bay, New York.

These libraries and museums should be supported for their endeavors in helping to reach and teach new generations about our presidents and our American heritage.

I also want to thank those at the University of Southern Colorado—Dean Rex Fuller, Professor Dick Eisenbeis, Professor Lia Sissom, and the able manager, Carol Prichard Toponce.

In addition, thanks to Linda Graham, who read and typed my manuscript.



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ADMINISTRATION MILESTONES



Which president signed the first Civil Rights legislation?

Civil Rights Milestone

Dwight D. Eisenhower, in 1960, signed an administration-backed bill that provided sanctions against obstructing the voting rights of blacks. Three years earlier, Eisenhower had dispatched troops to Arkansas to ensure the safety of black students attempting to enroll at a Little Rock high school.

Who was the first president to deliver the same address from the Oval Office in two languages?

Gracias, Señor Presidente

George W. Bush in March 2001 delivered the Saturday radio address first in English and then in Spanish.

2 WHICH PRESIDENT KILLED A MAN?

Which president was the first to invite an African American to the White House?

Let's Do Lunch

Theodore Roosevelt invited Booker T. Washington, the African American educator, for lunch at the White House. The visit stirred an outcry in the South. "Pitchfork Ben" Tillman, a Democratic senator from South Carolina, was particularly furious, claiming that because of TR's actions it would be a long time before blacks "learn their place again."

Who was the first president to recognize the State of Israel?

Israel Recognized

Harry Truman. In 1948, Truman was the first head of a major country to recognize Israel. The recognition was opposed in Truman's own State Department. They thought it would antagonize the Arab world and that it was influenced by political considerations in a presidential election year. Secretary of State George C. Marshall told President Truman that because of this action against Marshall's recommendation, he would not vote for Truman in the November election.

Who was the only president to resign his office?

Resignation and Reflection

Richard Nixon resigned on August 9, 1974. The votes in the Democratic House of Representatives were more than enough for impeachment. Some political aides wanted Nixon to fight for acquittal in the Senate, where a two-thirds vote is required for conviction, but Nixon wanted to spare the nation the ordeal.

Nixon had won one of the greatest landslide victories for reelection in 1972. He resigned in ignominy. He said about this failure to address the Watergate incident: "I gave my enemies the sword for my destruction."

Who were the only two presidents to be impeached?**Disgrace and Dishonor?**

Andrew Johnson and Bill Clinton were both impeached by the House of Representatives. They were both acquitted by the Senate (Johnson by only one vote in the two-thirds that is needed for conviction).

In Johnson's case, Congress was attacking his policies of Reconstruction. Clinton was beset with a flood of charges of misconduct, impropriety, and corruption. According to one presidential historian, William A. DeGregorio in *The Complete Book of U.S. Presidents*, the number of scandals of the Clinton administration was unprecedented. "Not since Warren Harding has the office of the president been so disgraced."

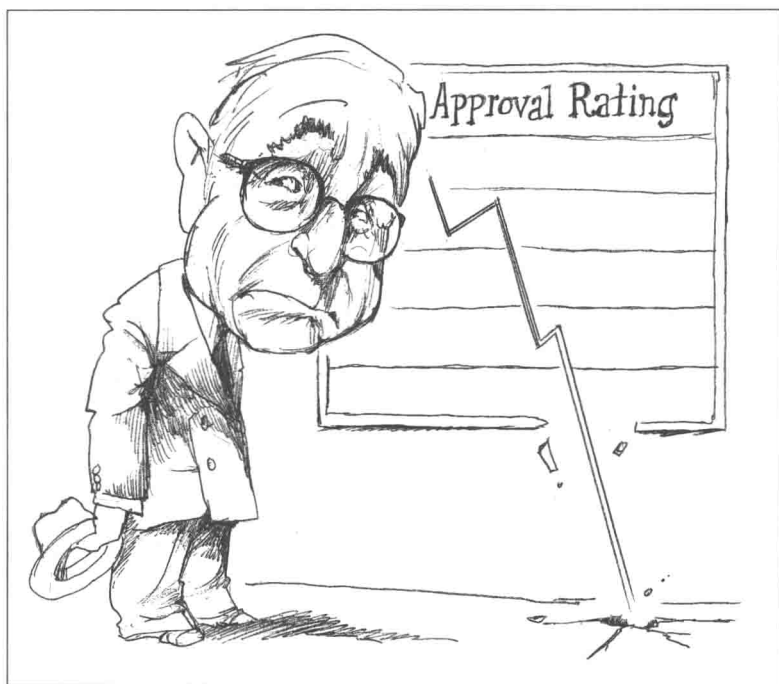
Who was the first president to recognize the Soviet Union?**Roosevelt and Russia**

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, in 1933. Woodrow Wilson had broken off relations in 1917 when Vladimir Lenin became the nation's head after the Russian Revolution. Roosevelt accepted the credentials of Soviet Ambassador Max Litinov.

Which president had the lowest approval rating of any president in the twentieth century?**Harry in Hot Water**

Harry Truman, in November 1951, according to the Gallup Poll, earned an approval rating at 22 percent. Nixon in July 1974, just before he resigned, was at 23 percent.

It's now generally forgotten, but in 1950 there was introduced in the House a bill of impeachment against Truman. Truman's attorney general, Howard McGrath, was indicted. Several high officials in the White House and Treasury were convicted for corruption. Truman's taking over



the steel mill (faced with a steel strike during the Korean War, he had seized mills to keep them operating), the war in Korea, and the firing of General Douglas MacArthur all contributed to his unpopularity. In 1952, the Republican Party's slogan for cleaning up the mess was "Corruption, Communism, and Korea."

Who was the first president to broadcast in a foreign language?

Mes Amis, Bonsoir

Franklin Delano Roosevelt. In November 1942, as American troops were poised to land in North Africa, Roosevelt delivered a speech in French. Vichy, France, Hitler's puppet French government, was in control of the

French colonial possessions in North Africa. The Americans were hoping to find little resistance. Roosevelt, with the years of French he learned at Groton, read the text prepared for him.

Which president signed a law forbidding “false malicious and scandalous writing” against his administration?

Gag Rule

John Adams in 1798 signed the controversial Alien and Sedition Act. The legislation was directed against the emerging Democrat-Republican Party led by Thomas Jefferson, which was pushing for America to take sides with revolutionary France against Britain.

Which president earmarked as public preserves acres of forests, mountains, lakes, and rivers equal to the whole eastern seaboard?

For Land’s Sake!

Theodore Roosevelt. In 1908, by executive order, he set aside hundreds of thousands of square miles of land for public use. The ban of private speculators from these tracts outraged some quarters of the business community. TR was the first conservation president.

Which president was the father of the interstate highway system?

Ike’s Interstate

Dwight D. Eisenhower, in 1955, signed the act beginning the interstate system. The idea first originated with him in 1919, when Major Eisenhower led a military convoy across America to the West Coast. The truck convoy followed what was then U.S. Route 30 for about 3,200 miles at an average of six miles an hour. He became convinced then that a better federal highway system was needed.

Who was the first president to receive a black head of state at the White House?

Haiti's Head

John Adams. He received President Toussaint of Haiti in 1798. His successor, Thomas Jefferson, discontinued the recognition of the first black nation.