

Remembering Reagan

Our nation mourned the passing of former President Ronald Reagan this week. President Bush declared Friday a national day of mourning, and tens of thousands of Americans paid their respects to the fallen president in the Capital Rotunda throughout the week.

As our nation remembers this fallen leader, Democrats and Republicans alike have praised President Reagan's achievements in office, most notably the collapse of the Soviet Union and the sense of national pride that he helped restore. In addition, nearly everyone has recognized the uncommon dignity, grace and sense of humor that Reagan brought to our nation's highest office.

It was enlightening this week to read stories in The Shelbyville News recounting ways in which Ronald Reagan touched Shelby County residents. President Reagan's visits to Indiana had significant meaning to people he encountered all over the state. From touring the Corn Festival in Shelbyville in the 1950s to sandbagging in Fort Wayne and speaking at Notre Dame's commencement in the 1980s, Ronald Reagan made people feel special everywhere he went.

I was 12 years old when Ronald Reagan was first elected President in 1980. To me, he was not just the president; he was the presidency. He was the first president that I was old enough to really follow. He was not perfect, but to a young boy in central Indiana, he was a real American hero.

It is a rare leader who changes



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faced in 1980. The Cold War was still in high gear, and communism was a deadly threat all over the world. American hostages had been held captive for months in Iran. Inflation was in the double digits, and interest rates were soaring. Job loss was rampant, with some communities experiencing 10 percent, 15 percent or even 20 percent unemployment. An energy crisis gripped our country as well.

Any one of these problems would have been cause for alarm, but the collision of all these events caused many Americans to lose faith in our country. Ronald Reagan changed all that. He had a positive vision and sense of pride in America's future. By communicating that vision, he made us all proud to be Americans again.

Yet, Reagan was much more than a cheerleader. He brought real results. President Reagan cut taxes, reduced interest rates, eliminated double-digit inflation and high unemployment, and put our country on a path to tremendous economic growth. He brought the hostages home from

everything — who makes us all look at the world in a slightly different light. Ronald Reagan was that kind of leader.

Today, I think many Americans have almost forgotten the problems our nation

Iran. His leadership rebuilt the American military, won the Cold War, and ushered in a new era of prosperity for America.

These results were not accidents. They were the direct consequences of bold policy initiatives that were initially disparaged by liberal critics and later broadly praised for their ultimate success.

When I think of Ronald Reagan, I am reminded of an old Mark Twain line that goes something like this: "When I was 14, I could not believe how incredibly stupid my parents could be. And when I turned 21, I was amazed at how much my parents had learned in the last seven years."

In many ways, Ronald Reagan was like our parent or grandparent. He had a wisdom that can only come with the experience of time. And recent history has shown Reagan was a much wiser president than many of his contemporary critics believed.

Those who worked most closely with Ronald Reagan say that he never cared much about who got credit. He never spoke of what his legacy might be. Instead, he was just focused on getting the job done.

Well, Ronald Reagan got the job done for all Americans, and our country is better for the time he spent as our leader. May God bless Ronald Reagan, his family and friends, and all those who knew and cared for him. May this remarkable man continue to serve as an example to us all.

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