



ALMANAC OF AMERICAN PRESIDENTS

FROM 1789 TO THE PRESENT

An Original Compendium Of
Facts And Anecdotes About
Politics And The Presidency In
The United States Of America

EDITED BY THOMAS L. CONNELLY
AND MICHAEL D. SENECA

A Manly Book

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Almanac of American Presidents

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Military Careers of the Presidents

by PHILIP COCKRELL

From the time of our revolutionary beginnings, wars of varying magnitude have had a major impact on American life, and, accordingly, twenty-nine of the forty U.S. presidents have also served in the armed forces—twenty-three in the army (one in the U.S. Army Air Forces) and six in the navy. All of the twenty-two who have served in army ground forces won election to the presidency before 1960; all of the navy men have been elected since then.

Most of the military presidents spent their years of service in citizen volunteer forces, militia, or reserves. Only George Washington, William Henry Harrison, Zachary Taylor, Ulysses S. Grant, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and Jimmy Carter can be considered “professional” soldiers. Only two presidents, Ulysses S. Grant and Dwight D. Eisenhower, graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, and only Jimmy Carter has earned a Naval Academy ring.

Of the eight presidents who have seen military service since the invention of the airplane, only one, Ronald Reagan, has served in the air force. Reagan’s duties in the U.S. Army Air Force during World War II did not involve flying, however. Reagan’s vice-president, George Bush, the only aviator to become president, served in the navy.

Twelve presidents have risen to the ranks of general. Dwight D. Eisenhower is the only president to have held the nation’s highest military rank, five-star general of the army, and Ulysses S. Grant rose to the rank of four-star general (at the time the highest rank attainable). George Washington is the only president to have resigned from service with the rank of three-star lieutenant general. Six presidents, Andrew Jackson, William Henry Harrison, Zachary Taylor, Andrew Johnson, Rutherford B. Hayes, and James A. Garfield, held the rank of two-star major general. Three presidents, Franklin Pierce, Chester A. Arthur, and Benjamin Harrison, served as one-star brigadier generals.

George Washington and Dwight D. Eisenhower are the only presidents who have commanded allied as well as American forces. Washington commanded French troops that fought in conjunction with the Continental army during the American Revolution, and Eisenhower directed troops of many nations as commander in chief of Allied Expeditionary Forces in Europe in World War II and later as supreme commander of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

WASHINGTON: SYMBOL FOR A NATION

The first president possessed a truly commanding presence. George Washington was elected president because of his service as commander in chief of the Continental army during the American Revolution. His military career began years earlier, when his home state, Virginia, was still a colony. He became a

major in the Virginia militia in 1752 and resigned in 1755 over what he considered to be the insubordination of lesser-ranked British regulars in his command. Later that year, however, he accepted a position as aide-de-camp to British general Edward Braddock, leading a heroic retreat of colonial forces during a campaign against French and



George Washington
 Mezzotint by Charles Willson Peale, 1780

Mezzotint of a portrait of Gen. George Washington by Charles Willson Peale, 1780

Indians in which Braddock was killed.

Washington's service in the Continental army was extensive though not often tactically successful. His first year of campaigning saw one disaster after another. His ragtag army simply could not fight toe-to-toe with the British and win. The only American victory in 1776 came on Christmas night, when Washington's forces crossed the ice-laden Delaware River under cover of darkness and surprised a Hessian garrison in the town of Trenton, New Jersey.

The long privation of the winter at Valley Forge in 1777-1778 nearly wiped out the memory of success for Washington's soldiers. Those who survived that horrible camp emerged tougher and better trained. Still, final victory was years away.

The Battle of Yorktown finally secured the liberty of the American colonies from Great Britain in October 1781. Cornwallis, the British general, could not face his defeat and left his second in command to surrender his

sword. That officer attempted to surrender to French general Rochambeau, but Rochambeau respectfully refused to accept the sword and pointed to Washington, indicating the victory belonged to the Americans. While Washington had seldom displayed tactical genius or inspiring battlefield command, he did supply something irreplaceable to the American cause. The infant nation possessed few symbols to which an army and a people could express loyalty. Washington provided an unflinching symbol of American liberty to which all Americans could flock in difficult times. While others faded from the scene, Washington remained steady. His constant devotion to the Revolution did much to keep the army and the nation together.

The army as usual is without pay and a great part of the soldiery without shirts; and the patience of them is equally threadbare—it seems to be a matter of small consequence to those at a distance. In truth if one were to hazard an opinion for them on this subject, it would be that, the army having contracted a habit of living without money, it would be injurious to it to introduce other customs.

—Letter of Gen. George Washington to John Augustine Washington, January 16, 1783

Washington won few battlefield victories, but he was never totally defeated. His tenacity won independence for his country and made him its first president.

JOHN ADAMS: NO MILITARY MAN

By his own admission John Adams was no military man. He was content to let others do the fighting while he worked in the political and diplomatic arenas. The future second president did participate in his local Massachusetts militia during his college days, but he was not very faithful to the drills and left after a short time.

MADISON: WILLING, BUT NOT ABLE

During the early days of the American Revolution, James Madison assisted his father, a lieutenant colonel in the local Orange County, Virginia, militia, in procuring and distributing arms and supplies. The younger Madison was himself commissioned a militia colonel in October 1775, but due to poor health he saw no field service in the revolution.

MONROE: LOYAL SUBORDINATE

The future fifth president dropped out of college to join the Continental army in March 1776. In September 1775 he had commissioned a lieutenant under Col. Hugh Mercer in the 3d Virginia Regiment, which joined Gen. George Washington's headquarters, at the time located on the outskirts of New York City, in September. Monroe and the Third Virginia saw action in the battles of Harlem, White Plains, and Trenton. During the Christmas-night battle for Trenton, Monroe caught a bullet in the shoulder as he was leading troops in a charge down the town's main street. His bravery under fire earned him a promotion to the rank of captain.

Monroe hoped to gain a commission in the Continental army, but he remained assigned to Virginia militia units. He was attached to the staff of the Earl of Stirling during the campaigns of 1777-1778 and saw action at Brandywine, Germantown, and Monmouth. Late in 1778 he resigned his militia commission, but back home he was unable to raise the necessary men to form the Continental army regiment he had hoped to lead.

Under those strange circumstances Monroe found himself out of the fight, so he returned to law school. When British troops threatened Virginia in 1781, Gov. Thomas Jefferson appointed him military commissioner of Virginia with the rank of lieutenant colonel. He gathered intelligence on Cornwallis's forces and also explored the possibility of forming a southern army to fight the British general. The American victory

over Cornwallis at Yorktown signaled the end of Monroe's military career. He again returned to law school, and this time he finished his studies.

JACKSON: FRONTIER SOLDIER

"Old Hickory" was thirteen when he joined the Continental army in July 1789 as a messenger boy. He was present at the Battle of Hanging Rock, South Carolina, in which a British regiment was destroyed by guerrillas commanded by Thomas Sumter. In reprisal for that defeat British troops began raiding frontier homes in an effort to capture the partisans. In one of those raids young Jackson was taken prisoner. The treatment he claimed to have received in captivity earned the British his lifelong enmity.

Jackson next saw military service during the War of 1812. As soon as he heard of the breakout of hostilities with Britain he offered the services of his twenty-five-hundred-man Tennessee militia to federal authorities. Tennessee governor William Blount commissioned Jackson a major general of U.S. volunteers, and the new commander marched his force off to Mississippi.

Jackson had understood that he was to take his men to Natchez, where they would be mustered into federal service, but when they arrived Gen. James Wilkinson ordered Jackson to demobilize the unit and send the men back to Tennessee. Jackson bluntly refused and led the unit back to Nashville as a military force. The toughness, discipline, and spartan military values he displayed on the march home earned him the nickname "Old Hickory."

On September 24, 1813, Governor Blount requested Jackson's assistance in dealing with Britain's Creek Indian allies. The Indians had been encouraged by British success and had massacred 250 people (including women and children) at Fort Mims in the Mississippi Territory. Jackson took command of the volunteer forces at Fayetteville, Tennessee, on October 7, 1813, and set



"Old Hickory," 1819 portrait of Gen. Andrew Jackson by John Vanderlyn (New York City Hall)

off after the Indians.

Jackson's forces first attacked the Creeks at Talladega (later part of Alabama) and thoroughly defeated them. Jackson continued the campaign in January, but his volunteers fought poorly and were beaten at Emuckfaw, Enotachopoo Creek, and Calibee Creek. Jackson was not at all pleased and set about whipping his command into fighting shape. By March his methods had drastically improved the militia. Proof came on March 27, when Jackson defeated a combined Creek and Cherokee force at Horseshoe Bend, Alabama. That battle, which killed nearly 850 Indians, ended the Creek War.

In recognition of his efforts the federal government issued Jackson a commission as a brigadier general in the U.S. Army in May 1814. About two weeks later, following the resignation of William Henry Harrison, Jackson was promoted to major general and given command of the VII Military District consisting of western Tennessee, Louisi-

Never, my dear, have I seen such a crowd. . . . All the troops arriving to the strains of military music & of the cannons. . . . more than 12000 people of whom 8000 were armed. . . . Tomorrow they will crown the General; twelve young girls will strew his path with flowers. . . . They are practicing at Mme. Floriant's.

—Letter of Pierre Favrot, citizen of New Orleans, to his wife concerning the city's reception of Gen. Andrew Jackson, January 21, 1815

ana, and the Mississippi Territory.

Jackson assumed his new duties with zeal. He had learned he would be facing his old nemesis, the British, and he did not wait for the enemy to attack. Instead, he took a sizable force into Spain's Florida territory and laid siege to the British-garrisoned fortress at Pensacola (Spain and Great Britain were allies). Jackson had no orders to take offensive action in Spanish territory, but he deemed the operation of high military importance, so he marched. When Pensacola fell, the British lost a fort, but, more important, they lost the confidence of their Spanish and Indian allies in the region.

Jackson had little chance to savor his success at Pensacola. British plans to attack New Orleans forced Old Hickory to put his men on the march to defend the port city. On December 23, 1814, Jackson learned that British troops had landed two weeks earlier at Lake Borgne. He had not had time to organize his defenses but believed the British were not expecting much resistance. To hide the weakness of his defense Jackson decided to attack. His assault caught the British by surprise and forced them to halt their advance on New Orleans.

The British did not renou their attack until January 8, 1815. Jackson used the interlude to fortify positions along the Rodriguez Canal just outside the city. The defenses covered an open field



WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON
BATTLE OF TIPPECANOE

Carrier lithograph of Gen. William Henry Harrison, hero of the Battle of Tippecanoe, prepared for Harrison's presidential campaign in 1840 (Library of Congress)

approximately two hundred yards wide. The British marched out of the woods in good Continental order and Jackson's frontiersmen riddled their advance, giving the United States its most decisive victory in the war. The Battle of New Orleans made Jackson a national hero. Ironically, the battle was fought almost two weeks after the Treaty of Ghent officially ended the war.

Jackson continued his military service until 1821. In 1817-1818 he fought in the First Seminole War in Florida, then he served as Florida's military governor for a few months in 1821. He resigned from the army in October 1821 and entered politics.

WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON: INDIAN FIGHTER

William Henry Harrison began his military career in August 1791 when he left medical studies to join the 1st U.S. Regiment of Infantry. He was commissioned in Philadelphia as an ensign and left for

duty in the Ohio Valley.

Harrison arrived at Fort Washington on the Ohio River just as word reached the post that the expedition of Gen. Arthur St. Clair had been destroyed by Indians near the headwaters of the Wabash River. Harrison was not discouraged by the somber news and soon impressed his commanders with his businesslike attention to duty. He soon won promotion to lieutenant and was assigned as an aide-de-camp to Gen. "Mad" Anthony Wayne. His service during the Battle of Fallen Timbers in August 1794, in which Wayne's force decisively defeated a force of eight hundred Indians under Little Turtle, earned him a captaincy and the command of Fort Washington by the end of 1795.

Harrison soon discovered that peacetime army life was much less adventurous. He found himself attracted to the commercial life of the towns and villages of the Northwest Territory. On the first of June in 1798 he resigned his army commission, and later that month President John Adams appointed him territorial secretary.

GOOD LUCK-BAD LUCK

At the battlefield of Tippecanoe in 1811, Gen. William Henry Harrison benefited from the most fickle of battlefield fates—luck. Harrison's Indian foes, the Shawnee, knew that the general rode a light-colored gray mare. But in the violence of the predawn attack, Harrison's usual mount bolted in fear, forcing the general to take another horse, a black stallion. One of Harrison's lieutenants, Col. Abraham Owen of Kentucky, had the misfortune of owning a gray mare, on which he rode at Harrison's side. In the confusion the Shawnee mistook Owen for Harrison and killed the unlucky colonel.

After Harrison's stint as territorial secretary and as a nonvoting member of the U.S. Congress earned him a presidential appointment as governor of the Indiana Territory in May 1800. His attempts as governor to engineer good relations between Indians and white settlers earned Harrison the goodwill and trust of most of the Indian chiefs of the region. Agreements including the Sac and Fox Treaty of 1804 and the Treaty of Fort Wayne of 1809 also opened millions of acres of formerly Indian lands to white settlement. However, remote white settlements faced a constant threat of attack from Indian groups who refused to take part in the treaty process.

The Shawnee tribe, led by brothers named Tecumseh and the Prophet, most prominently opposed white settlement of the Northwest. The brothers stirred up discontent in other tribes and plagued the Harrison governorship for years. Harrison also had to weather threats from outside. British agents saw an advantage in creating havoc on the American frontier and supported the Shawnee brothers. The presence of British agents among the Indians and worsening relations between Great Britain and the United States, mostly over the issue of freedom of the seas, increased the possibility of Indian war in the Northwest. Fearing hostilities, Harrison called up the Indiana militia. But when no crisis developed in the territory, Harrison dismissed the volunteers and hoped for continuing peaceful relations with the Indians.

For a few years the frontier was quiet, but after the 1809 ratification of the Treaty of Fort Wayne, in which friendly Indians ceded further territory to white settlement, the Shawnee, led by the Prophet and Tecumseh, began to agitate for war. A series of conferences between the Shawnee leaders and Harrison succeeded only in solidifying their resolve—Harrison for continued white settlement, the Shawnee for a return of all treaty lands to the Indians. Attacks

on white settlements increased, and Harrison again called up the militia, up to that time a military force in name only, and began serious training. After another unsuccessful conference between Harrison and Tecumseh in July 1811, the governor believed that conflict between the two sides was almost inevitable. In September he and the militia, numbering some 950 men, departed Vincennes, the Indiana capital, and established a military post, Fort Harrison, three miles north of Terre Haute, on the Wabash River about halfway between Prophetstown and Vincennes. Harrison's march was intended to give strength to the treaty and to dissuade the Prophet from further violence. Harrison was acting under congressional order to convince the Prophet to disperse and to cease violence. If that was unsuccessful, Harrison was ordered to disperse him.

I pray you to recollect that I was a soldier from my earliest youth; that there are principles recognized in that profession which everyone belonging to it is bound to defend, which he may not on any occasion surrender or abandon without dishonor. For his friend a true soldier will willingly part with his wealth; in his defense shed his blood or lose his life, but his right to command he will give up to no one. On such an issue "he will cavil for the ninth part of a hair."

—Letter of William Henry Harrison [campaigning for the presidency] published in Niles' Register, November 15, 1834

By the end of October the militia completed construction of Fort Harrison and were ready to march. The force arrived near Prophetstown on November 6, where Harrison met with a representative of the Prophet, Chief White Horse, and informed him that hostilities could be avoided if the Prophet met the known demands. White Horse proposed a council for the following day, to which Harrison

**PRESIDENTIAL MILITARY SERVICE
WAR BY WAR**

AMERICAN REVOLUTION

George Washington, James Madison, James Monroe, Andrew Jackson

WAR OF 1812

Andrew Jackson, William Henry Harrison, John Tyler, Zachary Taylor

MEXICAN WAR

Zachary Taylor, Millard Fillmore, Franklin Pierce, Ulysses S. Grant

CIVIL WAR

Andrew Johnson, Ulysses S. Grant, Rutherford B. Hayes, James A. Garfield,
Chester A. Arthur, Benjamin Harrison, William McKinley

SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

Theodore Roosevelt

WORLD WAR I

Harry S Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower

WORLD WAR II

Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson,
Richard M. Nixon, Gerald R. Ford, Ronald Reagan, George Bush

AMERICAN INDIAN CAMPAIGNS

George Washington, Andrew Jackson, William Henry Harrison,
Zachary Taylor, Abraham Lincoln

agreed. Harrison moved his force to the west of Prophetstown and laid out a camp on the banks of the Tippecanoe Creek. He ordered his men to sleep with their weapons at the ready. Just before dawn the Shawnee attacked. It was a wild and bloody fight, but with daylight the militia gained the upper hand and put the Indians to flight. Harrison moved his force into Prophetstown the day after the battle and found it deserted. His men searched the village and discovered a cache of British gunpowder and muskets, many still in their wrappings. The Americans torched the village and began their triumphant march back to Vincennes. Harrison had a new nickname—"Old Tippecanoe"—that subsequently served him well in the political arena.

Harrison's military career was far from over, however. Upon the U.S. declaration of war against Great Britain on June 18, 1812, he resigned his governorship. In September he received a commission as a brigadier general in the U.S. Army and took command of American forces in the Northwest. He was responsible for protecting the frontier against Indian attack while formulating a plan to recapture the fort at Detroit, which had been lost to the British by American general William Hull in the summer.

By late in the fall sixty-five hundred of a projected ten-thousand-man army had been collected, and Harrison, though doubtful about his chances for success in a winter campaign, set off for Detroit. He hoped frozen ground in the

swamps south of the city and a frozen Lake Erie would aid his advance while at the same time immobilizing the British forces and naval flotilla. After an abortive advance, Harrison retired to quarters at Forts Meigs and Stephenson and was instructed by the government in Washington to delay the attack on Detroit until American naval supremacy on Lake Erie could be established. In March, Harrison won promotion to major general. While encamped at Fort Meigs a portion of his army fought off two British assaults in May 1813. Then, in September, after American commodore Oliver Perry's spectacular victory over the British fleet on Lake Erie, Harrison successfully recaptured Detroit.

The objective accomplished, the Americans gave chase up the Thames River after the remaining British forces. They caught up with the enemy near Moraviantown after a few days' march. Harrison and his troops emerged completely victorious in the brief battle that followed. The victory also yielded unexpected results for Harrison. The British force at Moraviantown had contained Indian units commanded by Tecumseh, Harrison's old Shawnee nemesis. During the battle Tecumseh had led his warriors in a charge at the American line and had been shot down. Harrison's greatest threat to peace in the northwestern frontier had been removed.

At a peak of success, Harrison's military career came to an end. In November 1814 he resigned his commission and assumed membership on several U.S. government Indian commissions. The commissions negotiated a series of peace treaties with some of the Indian tribes remaining in the region. In 1816 he won election to the U.S. House of Representatives representing Ohio.

TYLER: LOYAL SOLDIER

John Tyler saw very little military service. During the War of 1812, to aid in the defense of Richmond, Virginia, he raised a militia company called the Charles City Rifles and served as its cap-

tain. When the British threat to Richmond faded in 1813 the Rifles disbanded, without seeing action.

TAYLOR: CAREER MAN

Zachary Taylor enjoyed a lengthy and mostly successful military career before he assumed the presidency in 1851. He got his first taste of the military life as he grew up in Louisville, Kentucky. His father, a Revolutionary War hero, often spun wartime tales around the family hearth.

Taylor's personal introduction to the military came as a result of the threefold increase in American manpower authorized by the U.S. Congress in response to the June 1807 impressment affair involving the HMS *Leopard* and the USS *Chesapeake*. He took advantage of the expansion, receiving a commission as a first lieutenant in the 7th Infantry Regiment in May 1808. He then settled into the grind of peacetime service, managing well enough to earn promotion to captain in November 1810. He still held that rank when war with Great Britain broke out in June 1812.

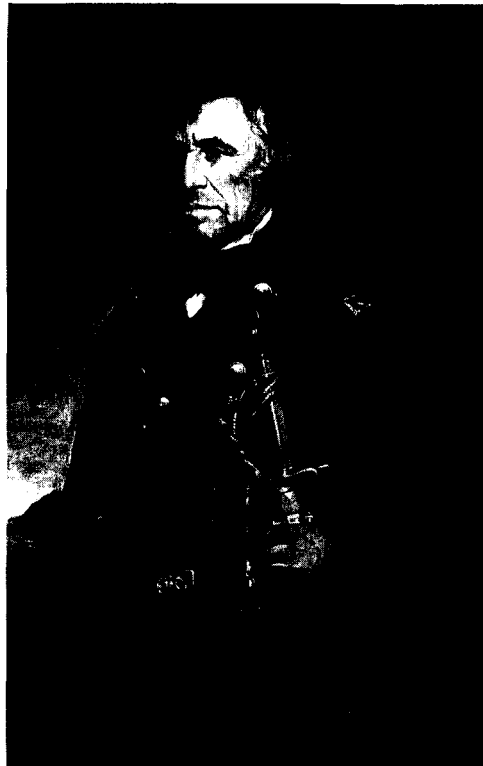
Taylor was assigned to defend Fort Harrison in the Indiana Territory, much of which was still hostile Indian country. Upon his arrival at the fort, Taylor was astonished to find it garrisoned by only fifty men. The majority of the local men had marched off with Gen. William Henry Harrison to retake Fort Detroit from the British. The Indians soon tested the small garrison's mettle. One night in September 1812 a large Indian force attacked Fort Harrison and managed to set part of it ablaze. Taylor and the garrison desperately fought off the Indians and saved the fort and the nearby town of Vincennes. For his part in directing the successful defense effort Taylor won promotion to the rank of brevet major.

The future twelfth president spent much of the rest of the War of 1812 protecting settlers from Indians and assisting regular army units when needed, but he saw almost no further fighting.

The years of peace that followed the war found Taylor moving from one distant army post to another. Gradually he rose in rank until he made it to colonel shortly before the start of the Black Hawk War in the Illinois Territory in April 1832. He saw only limited action in that conflict, which culminated in the Battle of the Bad Axe in Wisconsin in August, but he was successful enough to broaden his reputation as an Indian campaigner.

Following the Black Hawk War Taylor served in Kentucky and Missouri until November 1837, when he was sent to Florida to pacify the Seminole Indians. In what became known as the Second Seminole War, Taylor and a mixed force of regulars and volunteers moved against the Indians, who had retreated into the interior of the territory and constructed defenses on the banks of Lake Okeechobee. Taylor pushed his force, numbering slightly more than a thousand, through swamps toward the Indian encampment, hoping that a show of force would compel the Seminoles to surrender without a fight. That stratagem only hardened the Indians' resolve. The Americans reached the Seminole camp on Christmas day 1837 only to find it abandoned, but with the campfires still burning. Taylor's scouts did not have to look far to find the Seminoles, who were holding a strong position about a mile from the camp.

Though some of his advisers warned against it, Colonel Taylor determined to take the Indian position in a frontal attack. The battle cost both sides dearly, but it forced the badly battered Seminoles into a retreat and went a long way toward establishing American supremacy in Florida, a task never quite accomplished during Taylor's tenure. Though he was severely criticized by some for his handling of the Battle of Okeechobee, the political power of Taylor's Washington friends soon silenced his detractors. In May 1838 Taylor, then a brevet brigadier general, took command of all U.S. forces in Florida, a post he held until



Portrait of "Old Rough and Ready," Gen. Zachary Taylor, by Joseph H. Bush (the White House)

May 1840. After an extensive leisure tour of the eastern United States he took command of the army's Second Department, Western Division, based at Fort Smith, Arkansas; and in June 1844 he accepted command of the First Department, Western Division, based at Fort Jesup, Louisiana.

Events in Texas soon started to influence Taylor's orders. On June 15, 1845, he received orders to occupy a position "on or near the Rio Grande." The orders went on to say that Taylor was to limit his action to the defense of Texas unless war broke out with Mexico. He was somewhat taken aback since Mexico claimed the Rio Grande, but army commander Winfield Scott designed the order to strengthen the American claim to the northern shore of the river.

Taylor broadly interpreted his orders and set up camp in undisputed territory north of the Neuces River. Diplomatic efforts to settle the controversy over the

U.S. boundary with Mexico proved fruitless, and on January 13, 1846, President James K. Polk ordered Taylor to cross the Neuces and proceed to the Rio Grande. Sooner or later an incident was bound to take place, but it occurred much later than Polk or Taylor expected. In part, Taylor's efforts to appear nonthreatening to Mexican forces encamped on the southern shore of the river caused the delay in action. Nevertheless, on April 25, 1846, a Mexican patrol crossed the river and attacked one of Taylor's patrols. That inconclusive skirmish precipitated the Mexican War and the greatest American territorial acquisition since the Louisiana Purchase.

Taylor took his force into Mexico and early in May quickly won two battles, Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma. On June 29 he was breveted to major general. He then began extensive operations against the Mexican forces, winning a decisive battle at Monterrey in September. Not all of Taylor's military decisions were politically popular. His decision to allow Gen. Pedro de Ampudia's Mexican force to retreat for a period of eight weeks brought Taylor much criticism in Washington. In November, President James K. Polk ordered Gen. Winfield Scott to Mexico, where he took command of much of Taylor's army. Scott would go on to strike against Veracruz and Mexico City while Taylor was supposed to remain in a defensive position. Disobeying orders, in February 1847 Taylor took an exposed position at Buena Vista and met the attack of twenty thousand Mexican soldiers under Gen. Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna. The Mexicans outnumbered the Americans four to one, but Taylor's superior artillery won the battle. After that victory he took command of all American forces in northern Mexico until November 1847, when he left the country, ostensibly to go into retirement in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. In June 1848 he won the Whig nomination for president.

FILLMORE: STAYED HOME

Millard Fillmore's military career was briefer and more inconspicuous than his presidency. During the Mexican War he commanded a corps of the New York Home Guard, a collection of men who filled the places of the active New York militia units that went to fight in Mexico. Fillmore's service in the Home Guard lasted a few months.

PIERCE: BRAVE, BUT UNLUCKY

Motivated by news of the U.S. declaration of war against Mexico, Franklin Pierce began his military service as a private in the Concord, New Hampshire, militia in May 1846. Political considerations nearly ended his military career before it began. In September, President James K. Polk offered Private Pierce, also the U.S. district attorney for New Hampshire and a prominent state politician, the position of U.S. attorney general, but Pierce declined the nomination and prepared to go to war.

He remained in New Hampshire as an enlisted man through 1846, then in February 1847 took a commission as a colonel of infantry in the U.S. Army, assigned to recruit a New England regiment to go to Mexico. That job took less than a month and earned the new soldier a further promotion, to brigadier general.

Training the new command, the 9th Regiment of Infantry, took up the month of April 1847. Then the force sailed for Mexico, a voyage taking the better part of two months. In Mexico, a shortage of mules kept Pierce from moving to the front until the Battle of Contreras on August 19. During the battle Pierce injured his knee when his horse threw him. He refused to leave the battle and continued to lead his troops until the fight was finished. He reinjured the knee the following day at Churubusco but again refused to leave his men.

Mexican general Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna asked for an armistice as a

result of the American victories in those battles. American general Winfield Scott appointed Pierce to the armistice commission as the general's representative, but the commission was unable to secure a lasting peace. Hostilities resumed on September 7.

General Scott began the campaign to take Mexico City. Pierce hoped to participate in the campaign, but the age-old Mexican ally, "Montezuma's revenge," laid him low. The end of the fighting in Mexico also brought the end of Pierce's military career. He sailed for home in December 1847 and arrived in Concord to a hero's welcome. His Mexican service gained Pierce considerable support in the presidential campaign of 1852, in which he was commonly referred to as "the general."

BUCHANAN: PRIVATE VOLUNTEER

The fifteenth president holds the distinction of being the last president to have served in the War of 1812—which is the only fact that makes his service significant. Buchanan was a young man of twenty-three when he volunteered his service to the Shippen's Company of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, in August 1814. The company was neither a regular U.S. force nor an arm of the state militia. Instead, it was a small group of men who privately responded to the British burning of Washington by taking up arms. The company marched to Baltimore and offered its services to Maj. Charles Sterret Ridgley of the Third U.S. Cavalry. The major had no serious use for the untrained group, but seized the opportunity to take what advantage he could of their willingness to serve by asking for volunteers to undertake a secret mission—rounding up horses for his regular cavalry troops. Buchanan was one of ten volunteers; but before the would-be horse thieves departed, the British threat dissipated, and the Shippen's Company returned to Lancaster.

DO AS I SAY

In local militia companies of the antebellum period soldiers commonly elected their officers from among the ranks, often with the result that the responsibility of command was given to men unfamiliar with even the most common of army maneuvers. When Abraham Lincoln enlisted in the militia in 1832 to fight in the Black Hawk War, his colleagues made him captain. Lincoln had almost no knowledge of military routine and had to learn as he went along.

On maneuvers one day, his company encountered a fence running along its line of march. Lincoln had deployed his troops in "line-abreast" formation and would have to convert to single-column formation to move them through the narrow fence gate. As Lincoln remembered, "I could not for the life of me remember the proper word of command for getting my company endwise. Finally, as we came near I shouted 'This company is dismissed for two minutes, when it will fall in again on the other side of the gate.'"

LINCOLN: LOTS OF MARCHING

When the United States entered into one of its numerous Indian wars, this one against the Black Hawk tribe of the Illinois Territory in April 1832, Abraham Lincoln responded to the territorial governor's call for volunteers.

Lincoln was only one of many from his district to heed the government's call for volunteers. As was often the case in the nineteenth century, militia units elected their leaders, and the men with Lincoln elected him their captain. The company moved to join other troops, among them Col. Zachary Taylor's command, near the Rock River. There Lincoln and his men were sworn into federal service for a period of thirty days.

Lincoln saw only limited action against the Black Hawks. He also twice met with reprimand, once for failing to restrain his men from stealing army liquor and another time for discharging a weapon in camp. When the thirty-day term for federal service expired, he reenlisted as a private for an additional twenty days of service, then reenlisted for another thirty days. He participated in the unsuccessful effort to locate Chief Black Hawk in what became southern Wisconsin before he was mustered out in July without seeing action. Lincoln later recalled that his election as captain of his militia company brought him the most satisfying honor of his life. He also once joked that the only blood he shed for his country was to mosquitoes.

**ANDREW JOHNSON:
SOUTHERN UNIONIST**

Andrew Johnson saw limited military service during the Civil War. A U.S. senator from Tennessee at the outbreak of the war, Johnson remained in the senate when his home state seceded from the Union. He was the only senator from a seceded state to do so. Johnson's loyalty was repaid in early 1862, when most of Tennessee fell to the Union. On March 4 Johnson was given the rank of brigadier general of U.S. Volunteers and appointed military governor of the state.

In that role he formed a provisional state government loyal to the Union and raised many troops for federal service. Throughout the next two years he actively pursued the cause of the Union, resigning his commission and the military governorship only after his election to the vice-presidency in 1864. (See chapter 15: Presidents and the Civil War.)

**GRANT: FROM WEST POINT
TO THE WHITE HOUSE**

Ulysses S. Grant has the distinction of being the first West Point graduate elected to the presidency. He graduated in July 1843, three years before he was called upon to apply his training in the

My inclination is to whip the rebellion into submission, preserving all constitutional rights. If it cannot be whipped in any other way than through a war against slavery, let it come to that legitimately. If it is necessary that slavery should fall that the Republic may continue its existence, let slavery go. But that portion of the press that advocates the beginning of such a war now, are as great enemies to their country as if they were open and avowed secessionists.

—Letter of Gen. Ulysses S. Grant to Jesse Grant, his brother, November 27, 1861

Mexican War. A second lieutenant, he was attached to Gen. Zachary Taylor's force when the May 1846 incident on the Rio Grande occurred, precipitating the conflict. Taylor had left Lieutenant Grant's regiment in quarters on the Neuces River before marching to the Rio Grande; Grant's regiment followed after the outbreak of hostilities.

Grant saw extensive action during the Mexican conflict. He served with Taylor's troops throughout 1846 and assisted in the capture of Monterrey in September. He was transferred, along with most of Taylor's troops, to Gen. Winfield Scott's command in early 1847. Scott had been chosen to lead the assault on Mexico City via Veracruz. Grant landed at Veracruz on March 29 and fought bravely in the battles that captured the city.

The future Union army commander continued to serve in the front lines in Mexico, taking part in the Battles of Cerro Cordo, Churubusco, and Molino del Rey. His bravery under fire and his inspirational leadership earned him a promotion to brevet first lieutenant shortly before the Battle of Chapultepec.

The Battle of Chapultepec, fought on September 13, decided the fate of Mexico City. It was one of the fiercest battles of the war, and again Grant distinguished himself. The following day

Mexico City surrendered. Random skirmishing still occurred from time to time, but for the most part the heavy fighting was done. Grant remained in Mexico until July 1848, when he was transferred to Pascagoula, Mississippi.

The rigors of peacetime service took a heavy toll on Grant. By then a captain, he soon became tired of the long periods of separation from his wife and children and the poor army pay. During this period he began to drink excessively. In August 1854, during one of Grant's binges, Col. Robert C. Buchanan, Grant's commander, found him drunk in public. Grant either had to resign his commission or face court martial; he chose the former.

The coming of the Civil War spurred Grant to reapply for his commission. During the course of the war he rose from the rank of colonel in the 21st Illinois Infantry to the command of all Union armies, in the process making a fundamental contribution to the preservation of the Union and establishing for himself a prominent place in his nation's history. (See chapter 15: Presidents and the Civil War.)

HAYES: BUCKEYE SOLDIER

Rutherford B. Hayes served with the 23d Ohio Volunteer Infantry during the Civil War, rising from the rank of major in June 1861 to the rank of brevet major general by the time he resigned the service on June 8, 1865. (See chapter 15: Presidents and the Civil War.)

GARFIELD: STAFF OFFICER

During the Civil War, James A. Garfield served in the 42d Regiment of the Ohio Volunteers as a lieutenant colonel and then a colonel from August to November 1861. In December he was given command of the Eighteenth Brigade of the Army of Ohio, winning promotion to brigadier general in January 1862. He served as chief of staff under Maj. Gen. William Rosecrans, commander of the Army of the Cumberland, and gained the rank of major general. Gar-

field resigned his commission to take a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives in December 1863. (See chapter 15: Presidents and the Civil War.)

ARTHUR: POLITICIAN-SOLDIER

Chester A. Arthur served in the New York state militia from February 1858 to December 1862, serving first as brigade judge advocate and later as state quartermaster general. He resigned his commission to resume his law practice in New York City. (See chapter 15: Presidents and the Civil War.)

CLEVELAND: DRAFT EVADER

Drafted into Union service in 1863, Grover Cleveland hired a substitute under the terms of the federal Conscription Act of that year.

BENJAMIN HARRISON: HOOSIER SOLDIER

The grandson of war hero and president William Henry Harrison saw Civil War action with the 70th Indiana Infantry Regiment from July 1862 to June 1865, rising meteorically from second lieutenant to brigadier general. (See chapter 15: Presidents and the Civil War.)

MCKINLEY: ROSE THROUGH THE RANKS

During the Civil War, William McKinley served with the 23d Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment from June 1861 to July 1865, rising from the rank of private to brevet major by the time he was mustered out. (See chapter 15: Presidents and the Civil War.)

ROOSEVELT: ROUGH RIDER

"Teddy" Roosevelt believed strongly in the manly virtues. He had grown up admiring members of his father's family who had fought for the Union in the Civil War, and his mother instructed young Theodore in the cavalier traditions of her southern relatives. Roosevelt loved hunting and the strenuous outdoor life. When his wife and mother



The "Rough Rider," Lt. Col. Theodore Roosevelt, posing with troops after the Battle of San Juan Hill, Cuba, July 1898 (Library of Congress)

died on the same day in 1884, he left his native New York for life as a Dakota rancher. Although something of a "dude" rancher, his full-steam-ahead approach soon earned him the admiration of his cattle hands.

When war broke out between the United States and Spain in April 1898, he resigned his position as assistant secretary of the navy and went west to recruit cattle-ranching friends for the war effort and volunteered the new unit's services to the U.S. government. It was mustered into the army as the First Volunteer Cavalry Regiment, but it quickly became known as the "Rough Riders." Roosevelt was commissioned a lieutenant colonel, second in command of his unit. The regiment trained in San Antonio, Texas, and moved to Tampa, Florida, to prepare for invasion of Cuba. Roosevelt was promoted to full colonel and led the troopers onshore on June 22, 1898.

Roosevelt went to Cuba to get a taste of combat, and he got just that on July 1, on the day American troops encoun-

tered the only real Spanish resistance of the entire war when they advanced on a series of blockhouses on San Juan Hill. Contrary to the legend, Roosevelt and the Rough Riders did not actually charge up the hill. Instead, the unit advanced up Kettle Hill (adjacent to San Juan Hill) on foot. Later, for the photographers, they rode their horses to the top. Still, in later life Roosevelt considered his battle experience one of his proudest moments.

During World War I, Roosevelt offered to raise another volunteer force, but President Woodrow Wilson denied his request.

TRUMAN: TOUGH OLD CUSS

Harry S Truman's military experience began when he joined Battery B of the Missouri National Guard in June 1905. He was one of the unit's charter members, and the artillery training he received with the battery proved useful later. Truman left the service of the National Guard in 1911, but when the United States entered World War I, he returned to the Guard and was made a first lieutenant in Battery F of the Second Missouri Field Artillery. His unit was federalized on August 5, 1917, and became the 129th Field Artillery of the 35th Infantry Division. Truman and his men were sent to the artillery school at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, for training.

Six months later the 129th was on the troopship *George Washington* headed for France. En route Truman learned of his promotion to captain, and upon arrival he took command of Battery D, of the 129th. Truman first saw combat on September 6, 1918, in the Vosges Mountains in France. Two weeks later the U.S. Army launched the Battle of St. Mihiel, and Battery D was in the thick of the fight, pounding German positions around the clock and opening gaps in the German lines for the American infantry.

Truman continued to find himself near the action. Pausing just long enough to regroup, the Americans

THE MEMORY OF BATTLE

Theodore Roosevelt never forgot his baptism under fire at the Battles of Kettle Hill and San Juan Hill during the Spanish-American War. "I would rather have led that charge [up San Juan Hill] and earned my colonelcy than served three terms in the United States Senate," he said afterward. "It makes me feel as though I could now leave something to my children which will serve as an apology for having existed."

Some of Roosevelt's stories, however, such as his lurid descriptions of dead Spanish in their trenches, were received with skepticism. Although Roosevelt had indeed acted bravely during the conflict, observers had difficulty believing he was as much of a hero as he claimed to be. "It is astonishing," he commented, "what a limited area of vision and experience one has in the hurly-burly of battle."

Roosevelt also provided a convincing explanation of the disparate numbers of American to Spanish casualties during the Battle for San Juan Hill. (The Americans lost 1,385 soldiers to only 215 for the Spanish.) "It would have been very extraordinary if the reverse were the case, for we did the charging; and to carry earthworks on foot with dismounted cavalry, when these earth works are held by unbroken infantry armed with the best modern rifles, is a serious task."

launched the Meuse-Argonne Offensive on September 26. Truman's guns were among those that sounded the beginning of the attack, and as before, the artillery supported the infantry throughout the battle. After the Meuse-Argonne Offensive only the coming of the Armistice halted the American advance. Reputedly Truman's guns fired the last shots of the war, at 10:45 A.M. on November 11, fifteen minutes before the Armistice went into effect.

As was the case with many American soldiers, Truman did not return to the United States until well after the conclusion of hostilities. The future president was mustered out of service as a major of artillery in May 1919.

EISENHOWER: SOLDIER-PRESIDENT

Dwight D. Eisenhower was one of the few professional soldiers to become president.

The future thirty-fourth president entered the United States Military Academy in 1911. His class was later called "the class the stars fell on" because so many of its members rose to generalships.

Eisenhower graduated in 1915 in the middle of his class, was commissioned a second lieutenant, and took his first assignment with the 19th Infantry Regiment at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. He became a first lieutenant in July 1916 and a captain in May 1917. As with most career officers, his early years in the service presented an array of out-of-the-way posts and days filled with paperwork. World War I seemed to promise salvation, but Eisenhower never made it to France. He repeatedly requested combat duty but the War Department assigned him the task of training others to fight. He first went to Oglethorpe, Georgia, and then to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to instruct officer candidates. While at Leavenworth he took time to learn about tanks in the army's first tank school. His next orders sent him to Camp Meade, Maryland, where he was attached to the 65th Engineer Battalion, from which the army created the 301st Tank Battalion, Heavy. Eisenhower thought he might see combat with his new unit, but the army admired his organizational skills more than his fighting spirit and made him Commander of the

Tank Corps Training Center at Camp Colt, Pennsylvania. Tanks were an invention of World War I, and though they were unpopular with many of the older soldiers, the young officers, among them George S. Patton and Eisenhower, saw that the armored monsters would fundamentally change battle tactics. Both published articles on the future use of tanks that contradicted standard Army doctrine. Both were sternly warned to stop publishing and conform. Eisenhower did as he was told but still quietly disagreed.

After temporary wartime promotions, Eisenhower reassumed his captain's rank on June 30, 1920. A few days later he was promoted to major, the rank he would hold for the next sixteen years. Though lacking sympathy for official Army tank doctrine, Eisenhower



Harry S Truman during World War I (Library of Congress)

EARLY HELL

One of the lesser-known battles of World War I, the "Battle of Who Run," involved Harry Truman's Battery D. Truman's boys had fired hundreds of poison-gas shells at their German enemy, but the unperturbed Germans sighted the guns of Battery D and commenced a highly accurate and devastating counter-battery fire. Truman's first sergeant, believing the battle was lost, gave the order to abandon the guns. Out of nowhere it seemed, Truman appeared, flailing his arms, giving orders, swearing as only he could. He used all of his powerful presence to rally his men and save the guns. The regimental chaplain later recalled that Truman's verbosity seemed much more fearful than the German shells: "It took the skin right off the ears of those boys." Chastened, Truman's soldiers limbered their guns, and moved them out of the way of the German fire.

remained an instructor at the Infantry Tank School at Camp Meade until 1922. He was then transferred to Camp Gailard in the Panama Canal Zone to serve as executive officer for Gen. Fox Conner in the 20th Infantry Brigade. In fall 1924 he went back to Fort Meade to coach its football team. He was unhappy in that duty, but he was even more disturbed by his next assignment as a recruiter in Colorado. That duty was cut short in August 1925 when Ike reported to the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, in 1925. Much of the curriculum was tedious, but Eisenhower mastered the material anyway and graduated at the top of his class of 245. That ranking earned him an appointment to the Army War College in 1928. Again he excelled in his studies, and he drew the notice of many of his instructors, most of whom were professionals of command rank.

With excellent recommendations from both the Command and General Staff School and the Army War College on his record, Eisenhower then accepted a series of postings to command staffs. In 1929 he went to Washington

to serve as special assistant to the assistant secretary of war, a post he held until 1932. Then he served on the staff of the army chief-of-staff, Douglas MacArthur, from 1932 to 1934. When MacArthur left for the Philippines in 1934 he took Major Eisenhower with him. Eisenhower served as MacArthur's senior military assistant in the Philippines until 1939. In 1936 he was promoted to lieutenant colonel. Eisenhower's years in the Philippines were unpleasant, but he gained valuable experience in budget cutting and other governmental operations. War broke out in Europe just as his Pacific tour was ending, and he returned to the States as executive officer of the 15th Regiment of the 3d Infantry Division, based at Fort Lewis, Washington. In November 1940 he became chief of staff to infantry commander Gen. Charles Thompson at Fort Lewis. Ike's advancements continued. In March 1941 there was a promotion to colonel and reassignment as chief of staff for Gen. Kenyan A. Joyce, commander of the IX Army Corps. In June came a transfer to Fort Sam Houston, Texas, and assignment as chief of staff to III Corps commander Gen. Walter Krueger. In September he got his coveted first star.

On December 7, 1941, Japanese forces attacked the U.S. base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and brought the Americans into World War II. The U.S. Army quickly mobilized for war, and soon Eisenhower found himself in the middle of it. He was summoned to Washington by army chief of staff Gen. George Marshall to coordinate planning for the defense of the Southwest Pacific. In February 1942 Eisenhower was made head of the War Plans Division in the War Department. Slightly more than a month later he was promoted to major general and given the job of chief of the Operations Division of the War Department General Staff. He held that post for only a short time, however, leaving for London in June to assume the duties of commanding officer of the European

SMALL CONSOLATION

In early 1943 Dwight D. Eisenhower received promotion to four-star full general just as the Battle of Kasserine Pass, one of the first between U.S. forces and the German army, was getting underway. In that battle Americans took a bloody beating before driving the Germans back. Almost two years later, in December 1944, Eisenhower received his fifth star and promotion to America's highest military rank, general of the army. That promotion also occurred at the same time as a major German attack, the Battle of the Bulge. Again American troops took a beating before they were able to stabilize their lines and launch a successful counterattack. Reflecting on the circumstances of his promotions years later, Eisenhower said, "I came to feel it was fortunate that no higher rank could be conferred. There was no promotion worth such battles."

Theater. In July he was made a lieutenant general.

Less than six months after the European posting, Eisenhower helped plan and execute the Allied invasion of North Africa. That mission culminated in the surrender of all Axis forces in Africa, a feat that earned the admiration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British prime minister Winston Churchill. In February 1943 Ike was made a full general, at the time the highest rank in the U.S. Army and one usually reserved for the chief of staff. In December he was made supreme commander of Allied Expeditionary Forces. That job put all the armies of the western allies under his personal command.

The new commander had no time to stop and ponder the significance of his office. He had orders to carry out, issued by the combined chiefs of staff.



Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, supreme commander of Allied Expeditionary Forces, with U.S. paratroopers preparing for the D day invasion of France, June 6, 1944

The orders were simple and direct: "You will enter the continent of Europe and, in conjunction with the other United Nations, undertake operations aimed at the heart of Germany and the destruction of her armed forces."

A full year of planning, training, and preparatory actions went into the Allied invasion of Normandy on D day, June 6, 1944, a day on which the free world held its breath. If the landings in northern France were thrown back, Europe might forever remain under the Nazi boot. The invasion, code-named Operation Overlord, was the largest amphibious military operation ever undertaken. Eisenhower commanded some 3 million troops, 1,750,000 of them Americans. On D day 175,000 troops landed on five French beaches along a sixty-mile stretch. On four beaches the forces quickly overcame initial resistance, but

on Omaha Beach the German defenders came very close to wrecking the plan. As late as mid morning the assault troops were still pinned on the beach. Individual acts of courage overcame the stubborn defense, and by nightfall all the landing areas were cleared of resistance and the armies were moving inland. Eisenhower could announce to a waiting world that the Allies had returned to Europe.

The next month saw heavy fighting, but slowly the Allied advantage in men and materiel began to tell on the Germans. In late July, Eisenhower and the American army launched Operation Cobra and the British opened Operation Goodwood. The combined operation broke the back of the German army in France, and the Germans began a retreat toward their own border. By the end of August the Allies had liberated

Paris, and by December they stood on the German frontier.

A week before Christmas 1944, Hitler began a last-ditch offensive that he hoped would bring about a negotiated peace. Initially successful, the Battle of the Bulge ended in a crushing German defeat and opened the way into the heart of the Nazi nation. The coming of spring in 1945 brought the death knell of Nazism. With Russian tanks sweeping down the streets of Berlin, Germany surrendered on May 7.

Eisenhower's stellar service in World War II made him an international hero. Following the war he accepted the post of U.S. Army chief of staff, which he resigned in 1948 to assume the presidency of Columbia University. Beginning in 1950 he served as supreme commander to the new North Atlantic Treaty Organization. He resigned that post to accept the Republican party nomination for president in July 1952.

KENNEDY: NAVY MAN

John F. Kennedy was commissioned an ensign in the U.S. Navy in October 1941. He received training as a patrol-torpedo (PT) boat commander. The PT boats were made mostly of plywood, and besides the torpedos they carried light anti-aircraft guns. They were very fast but also quite vulnerable to enemy fire.

In March 1943 Kennedy received orders to command a PT boat in the South Pacific. He was promoted to lieutenant (junior grade) and assigned the boat PT-109. After several months of relatively uneventful patrols, Kennedy and his crew became casualties of war. On the night of August 3, PT-109 was rammed and sunk by the Japanese destroyer *Amagiri*.

Kennedy gathered the survivors onto the floating forward part of the boat, where they remained until it too began to sink. He then led his crew on a four-hour swim to a nearby island. One of the crew members was too gravely wounded to swim on his own, so Ken-

I learned that there is a priority of procedure in preparing for and carrying forward great tasks that the leader ignores at his peril. People close to a respected or liked commander fear he is losing his stature and urge the "squelching" of a Montgomery or a Bradley or a Patton; the seizing of the limelight in order to personalize the whole campaign for the troops and the public. But obviously in the hurly-burly of a military campaign—or a political effort—loyal, effective subordinates are mandatory.

—Letter of President Dwight D. Eisenhower to speechwriter Emmet John Hughes, December 10, 1953

nedy towed him to the island. During the next few days the crew moved from one island to another until they were discovered by friendly natives, who took a message carved on a coconut shell from Kennedy to U.S. personnel. Shortly thereafter came rescue. Kennedy was awarded the Purple Heart, the Marine Medal, and the Navy Medal for his actions. He returned to the United States with malaria and back injuries suffered during the ordeal. He saw no more combat before his discharge in April 1945.

JOHNSON: OPPORTUNIST

Lyndon B. Johnson's naval service during World War II was, to say the least, extremely limited, yet it earned him a Silver Star for gallantry.

Two days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Johnson, a U.S. representative from Texas, took a commission as a lieutenant commander in the navy. His motivation for doing so had as much to do with politics as it did with patriotism. Johnson's rank made him eligible for command, but his health disqualified him. Disturbed by the inequity, he went to a friend for help. The friend happened to be the president of the United States, and, as happened to many who entered the service but were



Lt. (jg) Richard M. Nixon (third from left), South Pacific, circa 1943

not fit for duty, Franklin Roosevelt gave Johnson a mission to the South Pacific as a "presidential inspector."

Johnson's arrival in Australia alerted politically sensitive Douglas MacArthur, commander of the Allied effort in the South Pacific. MacArthur believed that if he showed Johnson proper courtesy, the congressman might prove sympathetic to the general's concerns once he returned to the states.

In the meantime, Johnson found himself frustrated by the Japanese. They had run rampant in the South Pacific, leaving the Allies in control of only the southern part of New Guinea, Australia, New Zealand, and a few scattered islands. There was precious little for Johnson to inspect that lay outside the realm of comfortable Australia. But when Johnson got wind of a bombing mission directed at Lae, an island held by the Japanese, he persuaded MacArthur to arrange a place on one of the bombers for him. What happened next is not clear. According to some, Johnson's plane was ambushed by Japanese fighters; in the subsequent firefight

the American plane lost an engine and had its fuselage holed and several crewmen wounded. This version goes on to relate how Johnson leapt to an abandoned gun and took part in the defense of the damaged bomber until it returned home. Other, less glamorous accounts indicate that the plane aborted its mission because of engine trouble before even seeing the enemy. The truth probably lies somewhere in between. In any case, MacArthur heard both versions and believed the former, reasoning that decorating the congressman should pay dividends. In later years MacArthur claimed that had he known Johnson would one day become president, he would have awarded him the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Johnson's days in the South Pacific were numbered. Shortly after his adventure President Roosevelt ordered all congressmen in the services to return to their duties in Washington. Much in the manner of Theodore Roosevelt, Johnson had seen his combat. He returned to Washington destined never to wear a military uniform again.

NIXON: REAR AREA SAILOR

A minority of those who served in World War II actually saw combat. Richard M. Nixon's service was therefore typical. On June 15, 1942, Nixon received a commission as a lieutenant (junior grade) in the naval reserve. He trained for service in naval aviation, not as a flyer, but as a staff officer. During the course of the war he performed valuable staff service in rear areas, overseeing military air transport. He held posts in the United States and overseas. His only combat assignment occurred in the Solomon Islands in June 1943, where he was attached to the headquarters squadron of Marine Air Group 25.

Nixon remained in the South Pacific for a year, returning to the United States in 1944 to take a position with the Bureau of Aeronautics, Navy Department. In that job he worked as a liaison officer between the navy and civilian contractors. Unlike most other presidential veterans, Nixon's military service outlasted the war. He was promoted to lieutenant commander in October 1945 and discharged in March 1946.

FORD: NAVY VOLUNTEER

The thirty-eighth president was a navy veteran of World War II. He joined the service as an ensign shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. He did not spend much time in the States, serving on the aircraft carrier USS *Monterey* for much of his forty-seven months of duty. Ford served as assistant navigator, gunnery division officer, and athletic director on the carrier. He never personally took the fight to the enemy, but the *Monterey* took part in enough campaigning to earn him ten battle stars. Ford left the navy at the end of the war with the rank of lieutenant commander.

CARTER: SUBMARINER

Jimmy Carter's military service began in 1943 when he was appointed to the United States Naval Academy at Annapolis. He is the only president to have

THE MOST DANGEROUS SLIP

During his presidency Gerald Ford had the embarrassing misfortune of occasionally losing his footing in public places. He acquired a reputation for clumsiness—physical and verbal—that probably contributed to his defeat in the 1976 presidential race against Jimmy Carter. In his memoirs, however, Ford recalled a much more dangerous slip than any that occurred while he was president.

In the navy during World War II, Ford was assigned to the light aircraft carrier the U.S.S. *Monterey* during 1944. In December of that year the *Monterey* weathered a severe typhoon in the area of the Philippine Islands. During the storm Ford ventured out on the flight deck to investigate the smell of smoke. He lost his footing and began rolling down the heaving deck toward the edge and the frothy sea beyond. Just as he rolled over the lip of the deck he managed to twist his body and land on a catwalk just below. Had his desperate maneuver been unsuccessful, Ford would have been spared later embarrassment.

graduated from the Naval Academy and is one of the few presidents whose military service occurred mostly in peacetime.

Carter graduated in the top ten percent of the class of 1946 and was first assigned to work in battleships. He wanted to serve in submarines, however, and he got his wish in 1948 aboard the U.S.S. *Pomfret*. Carter's service during the next few years involved cruises and training missions until word of the navy's infant nuclear submarine program attracted the highly competitive officer. His good service record, excellent academic background, and ambi-

tion had been duly noted, and Carter won assignment to the elite program in 1952. He served as senior officer during the precommission service of the U.S.S. *Sea Wolf*, the second American nuclear sub. Then the navy sent him to Union College to do graduate work in engineering and physics.

At that point tragedy struck. Carter's father died in July 1953, and the young officer decided that his duty to his family outweighed his duty to the navy. He resigned his commission and returned to his hometown of Plains, Georgia, to work in the family peanut business.

REAGAN: STARRING ROLE

When World War II broke out, American industry quickly mobilized. Hollywood was no exception, and like many other Americans, actor Ronald Reagan offered his know-how to the country. He was one of many film stars who joined the military during the conflict. The War Department recognized that war propaganda made by the stars could have a morale-boosting effect on the nation. Reagan joined the U.S. Army Air Force's motion picture unit and worked on many propaganda films, including *Memphis Belle*, *Target Zero*, *This Is the Army*, and *Japanese Zero*.

BUSH: COMBAT PILOT

George Bush began his military career in Boston on his eighteenth birthday in June 1942. He was assigned to naval aviation training in North Carolina and received his pilot's wings before his nineteenth birthday. He went on to advanced pilot training in 1943 and learned to fly Grumman TBF Avenger torpedo bombers from aircraft carriers. After training he was attached to the air wing of the U.S.S. *San Jacinto* and went to the Pacific.

Bush saw action almost immediately upon arriving in the combat theater. Then his war took a turn for the worse. His craft was hit by antiaircraft fire during a bombing run on September 2, 1944. He held the faltering plane on course until the run was completed, ordered the crew to bail out, and abandoned the aircraft. He was rescued by an American submarine, but none of the other crew survived. For his efforts he earned the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Bush returned to his ship and continued to fly. He went home after completing fifty-eight combat missions and remained in the service until the end of the war.