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## Hail to the Former Chiefs

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## Hail to the Former Chiefs

### Public Service After the White House

By Brian Flanagan

Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, U.S. Senator, U.S. Representative, Commander-in-chief of the American armed forces -- these are a few of the positions held by presidents *after* serving as America's chief executive. President John Quincy Adams forged perhaps the most impressive post-presidential career in history, and his pre-presidential career was equally impressive: beginning as one of America's greatest diplomats, Adams became a U.S. senator, secretary of state, author of the Monroe Doctrine, and finally president of the United States. But leaving the White House in 1829, much of Adams's service to his country was yet to come.

Of the 33 men who survived the glorious burden of the American presidency, a few, like Adams, truly distinguished themselves through continued public service.

#### **George Washington**, lieutenant general

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On July 4, 1798, George Washington was commissioned by President John Adams as lieutenant general and commander in chief of American armed forces. The XYZ Affair -- an attempt by the French Directory to receive bribes from the U.S. government in exchange for the commencement of diplomatic relations -- had raised the expectation for an all-out war with America's Revolutionary War ally. The Quasi War with France, though, turned out to be strictly a naval affair, and Washington's services were never required. He died a year and a half after receiving the commission.

#### + **Thomas Jefferson**, founder, educator, benefactor

This founding father founded another lasting institution after his retirement from the U.S. government. Late in his life, Jefferson spent much of his time planning, designing, and supervising the construction of the University of Virginia. He even picked the original UVA faculty and served as university rector.

In 1815, after the Capitol and the Library of Congress burned during the War of 1812, Jefferson sold his collection of books -- some 6,500 volumes -- to the United States government for \$23,950. This makes Jefferson the Library of Congress's greatest benefactor. (It also helped Jefferson greatly in his effort to get out of debt.)

#### + **James Madison**, educator, politician

After his retirement in March, 1817, Madison followed Jefferson to the University of Virginia, serving on the board of regents and succeeding him as rector in 1826. He also participated in the Virginia Constitutional Convention, representing Orange County. He used this final moment in the spot light to voice his views, repudiating nullification and secession (for which Jefferson and Madison's Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions had been cited as precedents) as "twin heresies," and supporting a movement for gradual abolition of slavery and colonization of free black in Africa.

#### + **James Monroe**, educator, politician, writer

Monroe also served on the University of Virginia board of regents. He represented the Loudoun-Fairfax region and presided over the Virginia Constitutional Convention. He also tried his hand at writing an American history (never completed) comparing the nation he helped found to ancient Greece and Rome.

#### + **John Quincy Adams**, U.S. Representative, lawyer

52-years after beginning his career, as a 27 year-old minister to the Netherlands, John Quincy Adams completed perhaps the most impressive post-presidential career retiring from the House of Representatives. The only former president ever elected to the House, Adams served 17 years. (Andrew Johnson is the only other former president ever elected to Congress; he died less than a year after taking his seat in the Senate.) In the House, Adams fought successfully to end the gag rule prohibiting debate in the House of antislavery petitions, and unsuccessfully for the Bank of the United States and against the annexation of Texas and war with Mexico.

Adams also argued one more great case before the U.S. Supreme Court, winning freedom for slave mutineers who had overtaken a Spanish ship before its capture by the U.S. Navy. The case is the subject of Steven Spielberg's 1997 feature film *Amistad*.

Finally, Adams helped fulfill the last will and testament of James Smithson of England, fighting to use his fortune to found the Smithsonian Institution.

#### + **John Tyler**, educator, Confederate politician

In addition to fathering seven more children after leaving the White House, Tyler continued an active career. He served as chancellor of the College of William and Mary, chairman of a convention attempting to find a compromise between North and South before the Civil War, and a member of the Provisional Congress of the Confederacy when compromise failed.

He was elected to the Confederate House of Representatives but he died in January, 1862, before taking his seat.

#### + **Grover Cleveland**, educator, university board chairman

After his non-consecutive terms in the White House, Cleveland retired to become Henry Stafford Little Lecturer in Public Affairs at Princeton University. He later served on Princeton's board of trustees and chairman of the board, where he frequently clashed with University President Woodrow Wilson. Cleveland also served as a consultant for a life insurance society, and presided over an association for life insurance companies.

#### + **William Howard Taft**, law professor, Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court

The only incumbent president ever to come in third in a presidential election (losing to Woodrow Wilson and former President Theodore Roosevelt), Taft was appointed Kent professor of law at Yale University, where he served for 8 years.

In 1921, President Warren G. Harding appointed Taft chief justice of the United States Supreme Court. The Supreme Court was, after all,

Taft's lifelong ambition -- not the U.S. presidency. Taft wrote 253 opinions during his 9 years as chief justice.

+ **Herbert Hoover**, relief administrator, government reformer

After losing to FDR in the 1933 presidential election, Hoover spoke out in opposition to the Democratic administration before chairing Polish, Finnish, and Belgian relief organizations during World War II. Recommended by his highly-efficient and effective relief work following the First World War, Hoover was appointed coordinator of the Food Supply for World Famine by Truman in 1946.

During the Eisenhower administration, Hoover chaired commissions on the organization of the U.S. executive branch and government operations (known as the Hoover Commission and the second Hoover Commission). The two commissions recommended almost 700 measures, the majority of which were adopted by the government. Out of Hoover's recommendations came the U.S. Department of Defense and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Hoover wrote 13 books after leaving the oval office, including a 3-volume memoir.

+ **Gerald Ford**, author, lecturer

President Ford wrote his memoirs, *A Time to Heal*, in the year following his loss to Jimmy Carter. In 1987 he published a second book, *Humor and the Presidency*.

In 1982 he established the AEI World Forum -- which hosts former and current world leaders, and business executives annually to discuss political and business issues.

He has lectured at 179 colleges and universities since leaving the White House, speaking out on important political issues. He served on several corporate boards and co-chaired People for the American Way.

+ **Jimmy Carter**, educator, conflict mediator, author, volunteer

President Carter has maintained an extremely active lifestyle since leaving the Oval Office in 1981. He established the Carter Center, dedicated to "advancing human rights and alleviating unnecessary human suffering." Carter and the Center have mediated in conflicts in Ethiopia and Eritrea, North Korea, Liberia, Haiti, Bosnia, Sudan and Uganda, and Venezuela, and have monitored elections in the Americas, Africa, and Asia.

Carter is also active in Habitat for Humanity and has helped build homes for the poor across the country. He was a lecturer in political science at Emory University in Atlanta for several years.

President Carter has written 16 books since leaving the White House, including his memoirs, a book of poetry, a children's book, and a novel.

+ **George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton**, tsunami and Katrina relief

Two years ago, Presidents George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton teamed-up to create the Bush-Clinton Houston Tsunami Fund. The two former presidents raised funds for reconstructions projects in Indonesia, the Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Thailand after a tsunami hit the Pacific, killing more than 240,000 people. George W. Bush enlisted the two to perform a similar service following last year's Hurricane Katrina. They raised more than \$100 million for relief efforts in the American Gulf Coast.