

12-2-2004

Who was a King before he was a President?

Gleaves Whitney
Grand Valley State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/ask_gleaves

ScholarWorks Citation

Whitney, Gleaves, "Who was a King before he was a President?" (2004). *Ask Gleaves*. 36.
https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/ask_gleaves/36

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Hauenstein Center for Presidential Studies at ScholarWorks@GVSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Ask Gleaves by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@GVSU. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gvsu.edu.

Who was a King before he was a President?

Let me ask you a riddle. Who is the only American who was a King before he was a President?

That's a riddle that originates in Grand Rapids, Michigan, since the answer has to do with one of its own.

The story starts with a man named Leslie Lynch King, a wool merchant in Omaha, Nebraska. In 1912 he married Dorothy Gardner. It was an unhappy marriage, and Dorothy was physically abused. Despite the miserable relationship, the couple had a son on July 14, 1913, whom they named Leslie Lynch King Jr.

Fed up with her abusive husband, Dorothy escaped from Omaha with her infant son and found refuge in her parents' home in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She got a divorce in 1915 and met a kind man who owned a paint store in town. His name was Gerald Rudolf Ford Sr. -- and now you know the rest of the story: Dorothy and Gerald got married in 1916. He adopted her only child and renamed the lad Gerald R. Ford Jr. Fifty-eight years later he would earn the distinction of being the only American who was a King before he was a President.

(Question from A Rotarian in Grand Rapids, MI)

