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Leadership to Aspire to

by James M. Decker

On this week last year, I devoted my essay to Presidents' Day and especially to the one for whom the holiday was originally designated to celebrate, George Washington. Today, I'm thinking about the presidency in general. I'm thinking of the men who held the office, the men and women who will hold it in the future, and what we can learn from their leadership.

It is impossible to create a definitive ranking of Presidents. Rankings are colored by political views and may shift wildly with time. For example, Harry Truman left office with very poor approval ratings, but is highly regarded today, often as one of our ten best Presidents. In general, though, the best and worst are obvious. Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt are universally praised (there's a reason why their faces are on Mount Rushmore) and the bottom of every ranking includes the likes of Buchanan, Andrew Johnson, and Harding.

But what do their stories tell us? Some lessons are simple. Our worst Presidents rank so poorly due to corruption or their inability to lead and make firm decisions in times of crisis. But our highly regarded Presidents came from all backgrounds and led in very

different ways.

Washington was born into the Virginia aristocracy and was a wealthy entrepreneur. Jefferson's father died at a young age, thrusting him into land ownership, but he had a true passion for science and philosophy. Lincoln became a lawyer and worked his way from frontier poverty into respectability and political influence. Theodore Roosevelt was a wealthy but sickly child who became an extraordinary outdoorsman, writer, and amateur naturalist. Andrew Jackson rose to power despite a career in land speculation, a history of dueling, and a controversial personal life. Harry Truman owned a clothing store and is the last President who did not have a college degree.

The image of a President is as an excellent orator. That's not always true, but Presidents who lead well in times of crisis exemplify that image. Lincoln gave some of our country's greatest speeches in its darkest hours. Franklin Roosevelt comforted a frightened public during economic depression and enemy attack. On the other hand, Washington's second inaugural address was a mere 134 words (roughly the length of the two paragraphs preceding this one). Washington's words were usually powerful and always direct, but rarely ostentatious.

Can we just dispense with the

modern notion that someone must "look" presidential to be elected? We've not had a bald or balding President serve since Ford and we have not elected one since Eisenhower and LBJ. No President has had facial hair (except for two with sideburns) since Taft over a century ago. The idea of a presidential "look" maddens me. Abraham Lincoln was tall, ungainly, and sported a beard to hide a lantern jaw. James Madison was 5'4" and weighed 100 pounds, tops. Both were excellent Presidents, but from looks alone, neither would be electable today.

A good President need not look a certain way. A good President need not have a certain background or interests. We've elected nerds, athletes, farmers, lawyers, salesmen, and soldiers. Great speaking ability helps but isn't necessary (and sometimes it can mask other, much more important flaws). Above all else, good Presidents lead boldly. They are unafraid to make decisions and stand behind them. In fact, the inability to lead boldly is probably the most likely characteristic of a bad President.

Finally, good Presidents do what they say they'll do. That brings me to James K. Polk, perhaps our most underrated President. When nominated in 1844, Polk vowed to serve only one term and accomplish four primary goals: 1) re-establish an independent Treasury; 2) reduce tariffs; 3) acquire some or all of the Oregon region of the Pacific Northwest; and 3) acquire California and its valuable harbors. Polk accomplished all four goals in four years. Rather than ride high on success, he declined to seek re-election in 1848 and fulfilled his pledge to serve only one term.

On this Presidents' Day, may we look to the examples of the

men in this column who—no matter their background or their facial hair - led boldly and did what they said they would do. May we seek and demand those same qualities from our leaders today - men and women - at every single level of government.

James Decker is a lawyer, farmer, and mayor in Stamford, Texas, and the creator of the forthcoming "West of 98" podcast and website. He may be contacted through Facebook at facebook.com/james.decker.

Sheriff issues appeal to citizens

Responding to the increasing number of people wanting to assist law enforcement officials and build a stronger partnership in the fight against crime, Sheriff Wayne McCutchen announced recently that Coke County citizens are being invited to become Associate Members of the Sheriffs' Association of Texas.

Individuals choosing to join the voluntary program can do so for as little as \$25, while businesses can show their support beginning at a \$100 contribution level. The funding provides critically important technical resources, training, and legislative support on key criminal justice issues.

Contributions are tax-deductible, and unlike other organizations in our state, the Membership Program does not solicit membership by telephone.

"With government funding becoming increasingly difficult to secure, the membership drive has taken on greater importance than ever before," said Sheriff McCutchen. "The funding is vital to helping us carry out our mission of making our communities safer places to live, work, and play."

The Program is committed to its "No Telemarketing" policy and only sends invitations to citizens to become members by mail. Individuals that do not receive a membership appeal and would like more information can do so by contacting the Sheriffs' Association of Texas, 1601 S. Interstate 35, Austin, Texas 78741-2503; Phone: 512-445-5888. Information is also available online at www.txsheriffs.org.

The membership program was formed to provide citizens with an opportunity to lend their support to more effective law enforcement and to help local law enforcement officers protect the lives and property of citizens.

"As the need for building stronger public-private law enforcement partnerships in this country continues to escalate, programs such as this continue to grow in importance," said Sheriff McCutchen. "I encourage everyone receiving a membership appeal to consider joining forces with us by becoming an Associate Member. It is a valuable investment in the future."

Area Churches

Invite You to Worship

Bronte

Bronte Church of Christ

PO Box 346
118 S. Jefferson • Bronte
Sun. 10 am & 6 pm, Wed. 7 pm

Central Baptist Church

324 S. Franklin • Bronte
(325) 473-4811
Dale Patterson, Pastor
Sun. 10 am Sunday School
11 am & 5 pm Worship

First Baptist Church

424 S. Washington • Bronte
(325) 473-2331 • Pastor George Cooper
Sunday 9:45 am Sunday School,
10:55 am Worship, 6 pm Bible
Study & Worship

First United Methodist Church

Corner of Washington & Holmes
Bronte
(325) 473-3281
Rev. Stacy Sprinkle, Pastor
Sun. 10:00 am Sunday School
11:00 am Worship

Forgiven Ministries

117 W. Main, Bronte
Russ Frasier, Pastor
Sun. 10 am

St. James Catholic Church

215 N. Washington, Bronte
(325) 365-2687
Rev. Yesu Mulakaleti, Jr., Pastor
Sunday Bilingual Mass 8 am

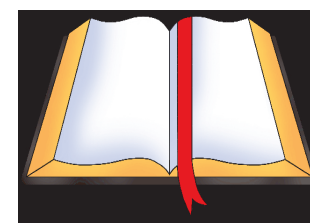
4C Cowboy Church

Texas Theater, Downtown Bronte
Interim Pastor Robert Lemmond
Sunday, 10:30 am

Coke County

Pecan Baptist

PO Box 542 • 12 miles West of
Robert Lee on Sterling City Hwy
(325) 453-2065, Bill Hood, Pastor
www.pecanbaptistchurchrl.com
Sun. 10 am, Sunday School
11 am & 7 pm, Worship



Robert Lee

Bible Baptist Church

PO Box 938 • 9th & Austin
Robert Lee
Sunday 10 am Sunday School, 11 am and
5 pm Worship, Wed 5 pm Bible Study

Emmanuel Pentecostal

PO Box 683 • 1019 Colorado City Hwy
Pastor Kevin Millstid 453-2360
Sundays 10 am, Wednesdays 7 pm

First United Methodist Church

PO Box 144 • 9th & Chadbourne
Robert Lee • (325) 453-2417
Cyndi Weidner, Pastor
Sun. 10 am Sunday School
11 am Worship, 5 pm Choir Practice

Iglesia Bautista Betel

101 Houston • Robert Lee
Sun. 9:45 am • Sunday School
11 am Service • Bible Study Wed. 6 pm

Southside Church of Christ

PO Box 698 • 8th & Houston
Robert Lee (325) 453-2176
Recardo Reyes, Preacher
Sun. 10 am, Sunday School
11 am & 6 pm, Worship

Northside Church of Christ

PO Box 508
9th & Chadbourne • Robert Lee
(325) 453-2685, (325) 763-2118 or
(325) 473-1053

Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church

601 W. 10th, Robert Lee
(325) 365-2687
Rev. Yesu Mulakaleti, Pastor
Saturday Vigil Mass 5 pm

Robert Lee Baptist Church

PO Box 493 • 22 W. 11th
(325) 453-2724
Chris Walls, Pastor
Sun. 9:45 am, Sunday School
11 am & 7 pm, Worship

Victory Assembly of God

(325) 453-2208, PO Box 638
6th & Houston, Robert Lee
Rev. Irving Smith, Pastor
Sun. 9:45 am, Sunday School
10:45 am & 6 pm, Worship

Tennyson

Tennyson Baptist Church
Hwy 277 • Tennyson
(325) 473-2040
Sun. 9:45 am, Sunday School
11:00 am & 6 pm, Worship

Worship

Wed. 6 pm, Bible Study

Worship

Wed. 6 pm, Prayer Meeting

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