

Lyndon B. Johnson

The Rawhide Kid

Thirty-Sixth, 1963-1969



Nicknames: "Landslide Lyndon", "King Lyndon", "Uncle Cornpone", "The Great Guided Missile"

Birth: August 27th, 1908, Stonewall, Texas

Death: January 22nd, 1973, Johnson City, Texas

Significant Events During Johnson's Terms: Zip Codes Introduced ... Birmingham Bombing ... Civil Rights Act ... Vietnam War Escalates ... My Lai Massacre ... Malcolm X Killed ... Watts Riots ... First Super Bowl ... The "Summer of Love" ... Martin Luther King, Jr. Assassinated ... Robert F. Kennedy Assassinated

Quotes: *"All I have I would have given gladly not to be standing here today."*

-- LBJ (Lyndon B. Johnson), on becoming President following Kennedy's assassination

"I will do my best. That is all I can do. I ask your help, and God's." -- LBJ

"I do not believe that the Great Society is the ordered, changeless and sterile battalion of the ants. It is the excitement of becoming – always becoming, trying, probing, falling, resting and trying again – but always trying and always gaining. In each generation – with toil and tears – we have had to earn our heritage again." -- LBJ, 1965 inaugural address

"He can be as gentle and solicitous as a nurse, but as ruthless and deceptive as a riverboat gambler."

-- Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, speaking of LBJ

"Not only did Johnson get somewhat separated from reality, he had a fantastic faculty for disorienting everybody around him as to what reality was." -- George Reedy

"He tells so many lies that he convinces himself after a while he's telling the truth. He just doesn't recognize truth or falsehood." -- Robert F. Kennedy

"As President, his brilliant leadership on the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 has earned him a place in the history of civil rights alongside Abraham Lincoln."

-- Senator Edward Kennedy

"The inspiration and commitment of the Great Society have disappeared. In concrete terms, the President simply cannot think about implementing the Great Society at home while he is supervising bombing missions over North Vietnam. There is a kind of madness in the facile assumption that we can raise the many billions of dollars necessary to rebuild our schools and cities and public transport and eliminate the pollution of air and water while also spending tens of billions to finance an 'open-ended' war in Asia." -- Senator William J. Fulbright

"LBJ, LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?" -- Vietnam Era Anti-War Chant

"He was a warm and mellow man in so many ways, gentle, extremely loving. But he was not eager to get up in front of thousands or millions of people and act that way. He was that way with his neighbors, his friends and in his home." -- First Lady Claudia Alta "Lady Bird" Johnson, 1973

How his term ended: Johnson was not renominated by his party. Instead, Hubert Humphrey ran against Richard Nixon and lost.

Other Professions: Shoe Shine Boy, Itinerant Farm Laborer, Dishwasher, Road Gang Worker, Janitor, School Teacher, Soldier

Worst Mistakes: Johnson lied about the Gulf of Tonkin incident, which was a falsified report about American ships being attacked by the North Vietnamese.

In Johnson's defense, he apparently actually did believe the phony accounts of the incident

when they were first reported to him (meaning somebody was lying to *him*, the President of the United States and Commander-in-Chief of its military forces, certainly a treasonous act). Unfortunately, though, when Johnson later realized he had been duped, he kept this new twist on the matter secret from the people.

In connection with the foregoing, Johnson escalated the war in Vietnam, which accomplished zilch, unless you view the killing of tens of thousands of Americans and even more Vietnamese some sort of accomplishment.

The Pentagon Papers (made public during Nixon's White House years, but containing information that was known to Johnson) revealed that the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution (proposing that the U.S. go on the offensive in Vietnam) had been drafted months in advance of the supposed attack on U.S. ships in the Gulf of Tonkin by the North Vietnamese.

Saving Graces: Johnson took a year off from college and accepted a job as a teacher of Mexican children, spending a good portion of his meager pay on playground equipment for his impoverished students.

Johnson had already been a pro-Civil Rights man, and wanted to pick up where Kennedy had stated he wanted to go on that front. Johnson requested quick passage of new Civil Rights bills “to eliminate from this nation every trace of discrimination and oppression that is based upon race or color.”

Under Johnson's guidance, many beneficial programs were initiated, among them the Job Corps, Head Start, and Upward Bound, as well as the Medicare and Medicaid programs.

Notes: While a Congressman, Johnson voted *against* an anti-lynching bill, integration of the military, and an end to the poll tax. Seemingly antithetically, the Civil Rights Acts that Johnson helped pass in 1957 and 1960 as a Senator were the first in a century, since the time of Reconstruction.

Johnson was the first member of Congress to go on active military duty during World War II, requesting such as soon as he heard about the bombing of Pearl Harbor. While on duty in the South Pacific, Johnson's plane was shot up by Japanese pilots. He was later on another plane that was shot down, crash-landing in Australia.

After the assassination of Kennedy, Johnson was sworn in by Federal Judge Sarah T. Hughes; this was the first time a woman had ever sworn in a President.

LBJ called his ideas for social change “The Great Society.”

Perhaps not wanting a blotch on his record like Eisenhower's “allowance” of communism into China on his watch, LBJ was determined to prevent Vietnam from falling to Communism, fearing the domino effect Eisenhower had warned about. The Vietnam quagmire was certainly not all LBJ's fault, though. Truman (#33), Eisenhower (#34), and

Kennedy (#35) had all played a role in the gradual buildup of the American military presence there. Under Johnson it came to a head, though, and that's why he, more than any other American President, is the "face" of America's involvement in that bloody exercise in futility.

It has been alleged that LBJ carried on an affair with a certain Alice Glass from the 1930s to the 1960s, and that she only broke it off then because of her opposition to the Vietnam War.

Both of LBJ's grandfathers were Confederate veterans of the Civil War. His paternal grandfather, Sam Johnson, founded Johnson City, Texas, the town where LBJ died. That grandfather and his father had been, like himself, Texas politicians.