

For a number of years I met for lunch with a group referred to as "the deers head group(for reasons too lengthy to explain here).There were no set membership requirements but the members were drawn heavily from a significant number of local business leaders.The group was formed originally by Luther Hill who sat both literally and figuratively at the head of the table.There were usually a dozen or more in attendance and conversation and debate was lively.Luther and I had our private debate about the rival schools Amherst and Williams where he(Williams) and I(Amherst) were the group's only graduates of those colleges..

The group ended in2014 upon Luther's demise.Its only remaining living regular attendees are myself, Tom Urban, and Fred Weitz curiously and coincidentally graduates of Harvard Business School.

I recall a 1989 conversation shortly after Ronald Reagan left office when David Kruidenier (then CEO of the Des Moines Register and the city's most significant and effective philanthropist} who knew of my link with Reagan, asked me if I thought Reagan was a great president.My answer which I knew did not address the question as I know we both understood it,was that he was certainly the best liked which brought laughter from the group including myself.

Since that time I have written (in 2003) a more serious and lengthy answer to the question which is attached ,but a warning: it is lengthy while many(not all) told me it is well done and often forwarded.

But also since that time I have reflected more on the matter of presidential likeability and have concluded that it is a highly important factor in presidential effectiveness and should not be dismissed..In 2012 I wrote:

"At the beginning of the Great Depression Hoover bumbled that it was necessary only to restore confidence; the nation laughed bitterly.When Roosevelt said,"The only thing we have to fear is fear itself" essentially the same half true idea, the nation was thrilled.Roosevelt was warm ,personal,concrete.So was Reagan.He brought a restorative function to the presidency that was sorely needed at the time after the debacles of Vietnam,Watergate,and the economic reversals of the 1970s.He justifiability received praise for his unembarrassed patriotism .Even those who disagreed with him were not immune to his graciousness and humor and unshakable optimism.

Clark Clifford( no Reagan fan) viewed him as an effective president and Roosevelt and Reagan as the "most presidential" of the 20th century.They were both well liked while not universally including by detractors.. Their likeability weighed heavily in their achievements. Reagan had "a gift for making his listeners feel good in his presence.Part of his political genius lay in his ability to persuade the broad public that he was somehow above politics"(NYT)

Reagan held the mantle of the GOP and continues as its patron saint despite his having defied basic tenets of the party's agenda notably successive and excessive budget deficits and the promotion of at least eleven tax increases.. That takes considerable likeability. He "crossed the aisle" frequently to reach compromise with "Tip" O'Neill and his group of Reagan detractors .Likeability earned achievement .His one-on-one relationship with Gorbachev was one where likeability became an important factor in ending the Cold War.

Looking for a candidate,especially here in Iowa where the election begins? Among his/her qualifications must be likeability if your hope is for achievement.

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