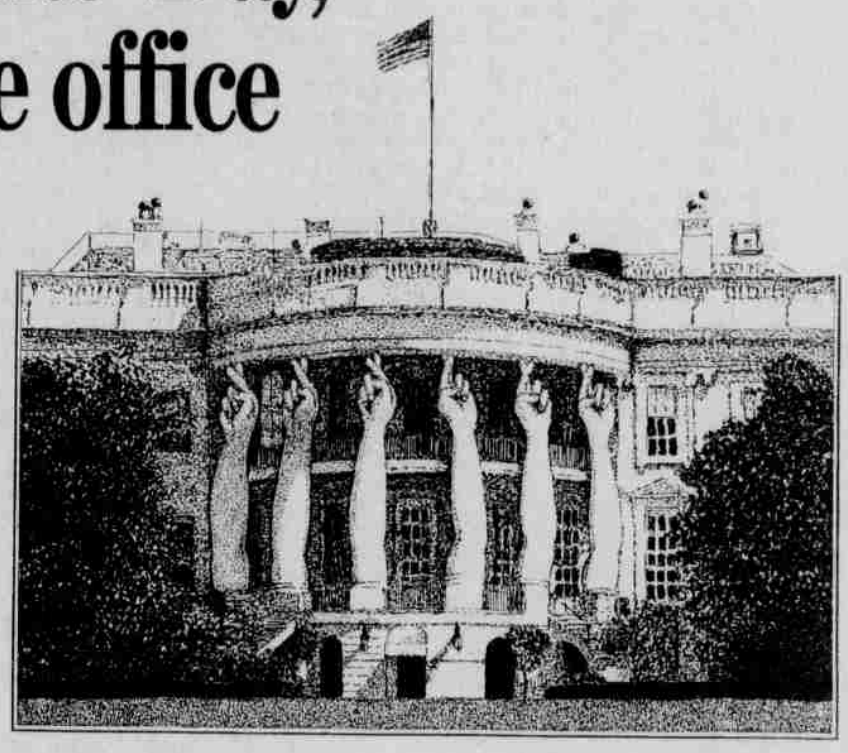
On Presidents' Day, a look at the office

By Alvin S. Felzenberg



During the last 100 years, "activist" presidents transformed the United States into an economic, military and political superpower. They guided it through two world wars, put a man on the moon and won the Cold War.

They also created the welfare state, ended segregation and brought under federal control responsibilities that had been the preserve of the states.

From Theodore Roosevelt's Square Deal and Woodow Wilson's New Freedom to Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, Harry Truman's Fair Deal, John F. Kennedy's New Frontier and Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, each tried to surpass the record of the last.

Rather than roll back the size and scale of government, less activist, "conservative" presidents consolidated and funded programs enacted under their predecessors. Warren Harding and Calvin Coolidge, though they cut taxes four times, financed what remained of "progressivism." Dwight Eisenhower's "modern Republicanism" — to much of his party's chagrin — accepted and expanded New Deal initiatives.

Entitlements passed under LBJ grew under Richard Nixon, who bequeathed enough government of his own (OSHA, EPA, affirmative action, price controls) to qualify more as an activist than as a conservative.

Most of Ronald Reagan's battles with liberal Democrats were over the amounts government spending would increase. Doing any more would have required a degree of activism unprecedented even in modern times. This Reagan had. He chose to unleash it against an even greater enemy, "the evil empire."

Historians and political scientists taught generations of students not only that government activism was a good thing, but also that activist presidencies were the norm.

Such was not always so. For most of the 19th century, Congress was the dominant branch of the federal government. Legislators such as Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun, Thaddeus Stevens, Charles Sumner and James G. Blaine exceeded Presidents John Tyler, Franklin Pierce, Rutherford B. Hayes and Benjamin Harrison in influence and impact. Activism where it arose, as in the cases of homesteading, land-grant colleges, and "rights of way" for railroads, originated in Congress.

Presidents went along. Rare were the exceptions who did not. James Monroe, Andrew Jackson, Pierce and Grover Cleveland used the veto to check congressional spending and protect states' prerogatives. Andrew Johnson was impeached for obstructing congressional Reconstruction.

Usually presidents confined themselves to conducting foreign policy and maintaining order. Actions of two were exceptional enough as to have established a norm against presidential activism. Thomas Jefferson shocked his congressional allies and even himself when he purchased the Louisiana territory on his own volition without legislative or constitutional authorization. (He saw himself as a "strict constructionist.")

Abrham Lincoln set aside his "Whig" principles (submissive executive/assertive legislature) to preside single-handedly over the nation's greatest crisis. His benign approach to the South after the Civil War suggests that he, like George Washington, was willing to relinquish powers he had assumed once the emergency had passed. His insistence on a restored union without slavery revealed the strength of his resolve.

A handful of chief executives today are remembered as much for the qualities of their character as for their achievements. Posterity, if not all of their contemporaries, would dare call them role models. What links them is a set of core beliefs, self-discipline and devotion to duty.

Washington, Lincoln, both Roosevelts, Truman, Eisenhower and Reagan have made it into this club. How many more will gain admission in the 21st century?

They will find the going harder on two counts. Changes in communications will make it more different for presidents to command the attention of the entire public. It was easier when there were only three networks, all carrying President Kennedy's news conferences. In an increasingly globalized world, presidents may find themselves less able to act unilaterally.

How might the four serious contenders for the title of "first president of the 21st century" function in such an environment? They have provided a few clues:

Save for the sizes of their proposed tax cuts and their views on campaign-finance reform, George W. Bush and John McCain agree more than they disagree. Both seek a stronger military, want to reform education and Social Security and pledge to restore respect for the nation's highest office and its occupant. Bush offers his accomplishments as Texas governor as evidence of his ability to work with Congress. McCain points to his life history as proof of his ability to take on institutions and special interests.

The two Democrats also differ more in style than substance. Al Gore portends to bring more of the same: "war rooms," "spin" and focus-group-tested, bite-size programs. Bill Bradley likens himself to past citizen/politician presidents. Casting himself as a "Reagan of the left," he advocates a few "big ideas."

Several may have the chance to change the course of history — but only one may be the first president of the 21st century.

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Marriage to a millionaire? It's never been this simple

By Donna Britt

So Who Wants to Marry a Multi-Millionaire?

The real question is, "Who doesn't?"

My husband, disgusted by the premise of the TV show on everybody's lips, insisted that true love has nothing to do with finances — until I asked, "You're saying that all things being equal, you wouldn't prefer the woman you love to be filthy rich rather than dirt poor?" Rich is better. Yet Kevin and I — like millions of others who wouldn't have minded a wealthy mate — opted for spouses whom we loved, respected and had at least, well, *met*, unlike willowy emergency room nurse Darva Conger and San Diego real estate tycoon Rick Rockwell, who, the entire universe now knows, had barely said "Hi" before pledging to spend their lives together.

Note the operative word: *spend*. You had to see the infamous Fox TV program to believe it. Fifty female contestants vied for the "honor" of marrying a man they'd never seen. All they knew about him was this: He's really rich, and he's weird enough to wed a stranger whose only interest in him is monetary.

Viewers were assured that when the show ended, after the tycoon hidden behind a screen had seen his hand-picked finalists model swimsuits and bridal gowns, there would be an honest-to-goodness wedding.

I was riveted. Who wouldn't be, watching a pageant-like parade of contestants strut for the cameras? The stacked and the pudgy, the stammering and the confident, MBA students and a "floor plan auditor," all hoping to become, as host Jay Thomas put it, "Mrs. Multi-Millionaire." I'd say I was outraged, but hey — maybe the whole thing is a scam. Certainly it's great TV. Besides, my husband was outraged enough for us both, fuming, "They put this on *television*?"

I may be a *Titanic* romantic in a *Booty Call* world, but *Who Wants to Marry a Multi-Millionaire* didn't shock me. These days, squinty-eyed Donald Trump, with his snarky grin and laughable comb-over, is deemed a sex symbol, and Amazon.com offers at least three recent books on how to marry into wealth. Cuties who sing about rejecting "scrubs" — men too poor to own cars or have apartments — get multiple Grammy nominations. Like them, *Millionaire* reduces male-female relationships to their most primitive, stereotypical essence: Girls want a guy with money; boys want a looker for sex.

That's shocking?

Once the swimsuit competition and Q&A were dispensed with, it began to sink in that one of these normal-looking women might actually marry — and have sex with, and perhaps even get pregnant by — a total stranger with the tacit approval of a TV network and a rapt audience of 23 million.

So much made me queasy. Like my own mental images of bordello shows and slave auctions. Like watching Rockwell — a jut-jawed, Hugh Hefner type — gush about how "humbled" he was that so many women "went though all of this trouble for me." Not for his bank account, mind you, but for *him*. Like recalling how shaken Conger looked when Rockwell kneeled to ask for her, um, hand, and moments later hearing her promise to "love, cherish and honor" him always. Like their yucky first kiss.

Like noticing that despite everything that was clearly wrong, they looked ... *right* together.

Well, why not? We all know people who'll do anything for money. Prostitution is as alive and well as ever. But platinum-blond Conger seemed poised and sensible; Rockwell, an ex-actor and current motivational speaker, clearly could get women without such hoopla. Is she a grasping airhead or a complete naif? Is he a twisted romantic or the weirdest of control freaks?

Christine Dudde, a Germantown, Md., teacher, tuned in after her "outraged" mother complained about a man on Fox inspecting prospective brides "like he was buying a car." Glancing at the finalists, Dudde zeroed in on Conger: "He'll choose her — the Barbie doll." The way she saw it, "their common denominator is money — she likes it and he can make it." And the marriage?

Dudde laughed.

"It'll probably work."

Donna Britt is a columnist for the Washington Post.

Wit and melody elevated the form of Lerner and Loewe's musicals

By John Caroulis



Frederick Loewe (left) and Alan J. Lerner

Camelot, a musical that has come to symbolize both the 1960s and the Kennedy presidency, started with a song by Alan J. Lerner and Frederick "Fritz" Loewe:

Don't let it be forgot
That once there was a spot
For one brief shining moment
That was known as Camelot

President Kennedy often listened to those words before he slept.

All their shows had at least one hit song: "I Could Swear I was Falling in Love" from *Brigadoon*, "They Call the Wind Mariah" from *Paint Your Wagon*, "On the Street Where You Live" and several others from *My Fair Lady*, "Thank Heaven for Little Girls" from *Gigi*, "If Ever I Would Leave You" from *Camelot*.

While not as prolific or popular as Rodgers and Hammerstein, this pair outshone them in sophistication and wit. The pair claimed they created not musical comedies but musical plays; their characters never just burst into song (as in some other shows) but rather expressed their emotions and feelings through the words and music. Their modus operandi was methodical. First, Lerner would outline the story. Then, he and Loewe would talk endlessly about where melodies were needed and what character they should have. Loewe then would hammer out tunes on the piano (sometimes Lerner would cry out, "That's it!"). Only *then* came the lyrics.

Couples

Standout pairs who embody the 20th century.

Although Lerner and Loewe were from vastly different backgrounds, both were romantics at heart. All their works were based on a central theme: that love binds people in ways they never think possible.

The two met by accident in a nightclub. "You write lyrics, don't you?" asked Loewe. "I try," responded Lerner. After *Brigadoon* and *Paint Your Wagon* (both debuted in Philadelphia), they began adapting George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* as a musical. Many (including Rodgers and Hammerstein) had attempted to musicalize Shaw's play, but Lerner and Loewe pulled it off, creating what is arguably the best of all American musicals. They also gave Julie Andrews her big break, casting the 19-year old as Eliza. *My Fair Lady* ran nearly seven years on Broadway, and the film version won the best picture Oscar in 1964.

Gigi of 1958 is one of the most sophisticated musicals ever, perhaps the most sophisticated film musical, with Maurice Chavalier perfectly cast as an aging but still potent lothario who is also matchmaker for Louis Jordan and Leslie Caron. The film won nine Academy Awards, including best ficture.

In 1960 the duo presented *Camelot*, with Richard Burton as Arthur, Andrews as Guinevere and Robert Goulet as Lancelot. Though it doesn't rank with their best work, it has a beautiful score, including the title song.

The pair in real life never achieved the happy endings that came with most of their shows. Lerner married eight times — all but the last ending acrimoniously. He worked with many gifted composers after Loewe (including Leonard Bernstein) but never again had a big hit. After a professional falling out over *Camelot*, they remained friends, but it was clear something special between them was lost.

"There will never be another Fritz. Writing will never again be as much fun," Lerner wrote. "A collaboration as intense as ours inescapably had to be complex. But I loved him more than I understood or misunderstood him, and I know he loved me more than he understood or misunderstood me."

In 1985 they were honored with the Kennedy Award for Performing Arts. Lerner, ill with cancer, died six months later. Loewe died in 1988.

The Broadway musical, an American original, has changed much (probably too much) since its inception, with opera and spectacle replacing sophistication and melody. Lerner and Loewe made an indelible contribution to this art form, producing the distinctive combination of wit and romanticism we need when our Camelots are taken from us.

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Tomorrow: Acel Moore takes the "Urban Perspective"; "Alarms and Diversions" with David Boldt.



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