



## **Thank you, Mr. President**

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**By JAY WEBBER**

At Liberty State Park on Sept. 1, 1980, with his bride Nancy at his side and surrounded by supporters from the Garden State, Ronald Reagan began his fall campaign for the presidency.

More than 25 years after that historic election changed the world, and after President Reagan's vision, courage and leadership charted a course of unparalleled prosperity and security for our nation, New Jerseyans are gathering again to honor "The Gipper."

Today is New Jersey Reagan Day, an annual tribute to our former president's life, leadership and legacy, a day on which we bring together a broad array of everyday citizens and political leaders.

Now in its 4th year and held every year around his birthday (Feb. 6), the event features speeches, displays of classic Reagan memorabilia, video tributes and even a jelly-bean guessing contest to recall the president's favorite snack.

New Jersey Reagan Day celebrates the president's accomplishments. He won victory in the Cold War and relieved us of the threat of global nuclear destruction. He brought fairness and sanity to the American tax code and regulatory regime, and began an economic boom that resounds even today.

But Reagan's greatest attributes are the most difficult to put on paper. It is not so much the number of tanks he built, nuclear warheads he dismantled, or points on the gross national product he added. Americans loved Reagan because he had a deep faith in the essential goodness and wisdom of the American people.

He saw and appreciated what is best about us, and, like a lighthouse beacon reaching every corner of the globe, he projected our nation's greatness to the rest of the world.

In appreciation of those efforts, the world is beginning to honor Reagan. In Budapest, Hungarians have raised a monument to Reagan in the town square. Leaders in Poland are committed to erecting a statue of him in Warsaw, and to replace a monument to Soviet troops with "Ronald Reagan Freedom Square" in the city of Katowice.

The monuments rising across the globe pay homage to a great man. But they also pay homage to us. For to honor Reagan is to honor the idea that is America.

In his modesty, Reagan said, "I never thought of myself as a great man, just a man committed to great ideas." Those great ideas are our national treasure. And the most important of those ideas is the authoritative proposition of our Declaration of Independence: We are a nation that recognizes that all people are endowed with certain inalienable rights, which no government can take away.

President Reagan not only believed deeply in the power of that idea, but also that its truth did not end at our nation's shores. He was – as we are – compelled to proclaim it to the world. As Reagan said, "The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of these United States are covenants we have made not only with ourselves, but with all mankind. Our founding documents proclaim to the world that freedom is not the sole prerogative of a chosen few. It is the universal right of all God's children."

When the citizens of the world celebrate Reagan, they are thanking us, through him, for our commitment to human freedom. If the former communists in Hungary and Poland can find ways to honor Reagan for his vision and strength in promoting human liberty, certainly we in New Jersey can do the same.

On New Jersey Reagan Day, we believe we owe it to Reagan and to the hundreds of millions men, women and children whom he protected and liberated, to say thank you.

Jay Webber of Morris County founded New Jersey Reagan Day in 2004. He is a candidate for the state Assembly in District 26. Contact him at [njreaganday@yahoo.com](mailto:njreaganday@yahoo.com).

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