

University historian's poll rates past presidents

By CHRIS NOOMAN
Collegian Staff Writer

With a penny, a dime, a dollar and a nickel in your pocket, you have the greatest presidents of the United States in the palm of your hand.

According to the results of a recent poll of historians conducted by Robert K. Murray, University professor of American history, those pieces of U.S. currency feature the faces of the four greatest presidents in American history.

Historians agree that Abraham Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, in that order, can be classified as great.

Ironically though, one of the greatest failures to occupy the Oval Office is valued higher than any of the great successes—you can find the bearded visage of Ulysses S. Grant on any \$50 bill.

The greatest presidential failures in history were Warren G. Harding and Ulysses S. Grant, whose administrations were riddled with corruption; Richard Nixon, the only president ever to resign; James Buchanan,

the only president from Pennsylvania, failed to prevent the Civil War; and Andrew Johnson, who took office after Lincoln's assassination and was almost impeached.

Surveys asking historians to simply classify presidents in categories ranging from great, near great, above average, average, below average to failure have been around since 1948, Murray said.

Through the years, rankings of the best and worst presidents have been much the same as above—Lincoln is consistently the best—except that FDR has moved ahead of Washington, he said.

That bothers some people, Murray said. Since an article on the rankings was published in Parade Magazine last month, Murray has received an average of 75 letters a day from as far away as Taiwan and West Germany.

"Some people were incensed that Washington was not first, figuring that because he's the father of our country, the children can't come before the father," Murray said.

"There's a lumatic fringe of Americans who immediately want to make contact with people."

The list of the near great presidents—Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Andrew Jackson and Harry Truman—was a little surprising, Murray said.

"It's surprising that Harry Truman is in the near great category, despite the fact that he was much maligned during his presidency and was considered to be a mediocre president after leaving office," Murray said.

With time, history and historians tend to be kinder to recent presidents, Murray said. Of the 36 presidents included in the survey, Eisenhower was ranked 11th; he was 22nd after he left office in 1960. Lyndon Johnson is ranked 10th, despite the Vietnam controversy.

But John F. Kennedy, ranked 13th, is dropping in the above average category, Murray said. As contemporary historians seem less affected by the shock of the assassination, they are able to more objectively judge his two and a half years in office.

Even Nixon's ranking has improved. After resigning his ranking dropped, Murray said, but now he has risen above Johnson and Buchanan in the failure category. As his resignation becomes less of a factor he might

move up even more, Murray said.

And contrary to popular opinion, the modern era has produced some great presidents, he said.

"No other 50-year period save that of the Founding Fathers has produced so many highly-ranked presidents," he said. "One failing president for every nine is par for the course."

The survey questionnaire was sent to 1,997 American history professors with doctorates. Each was at least an assistant professor at an American university. Past polls surveyed only 55 professors. Murray was surprised to receive 970 replies, about 50 percent of those sent, because usually only about 10 to 15 percent of mail surveys are returned.

But unlike past polls, this survey—sponsored by the University's Institute for the Arts and Humanities Studies directed by Stanley Weintraub—is more than a simple ranking of presidents.

Murray, who is a Humanities Institute Senior Research Fellow, and his assistant Tim Blessing, a computer specialist who has worked for professional pollsters, are using

the University computer to compile and correlate the results of the 19-page questionnaire.

Murray said he does not want to simply rank the presidents, but wants to find why historians agree that certain presidents are great and others failures.

The ranking question is only a small part of the survey, and is one of the few sections that has been completely fed into the computer. The results of the rest of the survey will not be published until this spring.

The detailed questions are designed to determine what factors historians consider important to a president's greatness—his administration's accomplishments, personality traits, physical characteristics, style, what degree of honesty and integrity, moral and ethical considerations, aggressiveness or passiveness in relation to events, ability to mold public opinion, and the temper of the times in which he presided.

Murray said he hopes that the answers to the 155 questions can help him learn what no one has been able to pinpoint before—exactly what it is that makes a president great.

collegian notes

- The Nutrition Peer Education Program and Free University will sponsor a workshop on "Supermarket Survival and Nutrition Snacks" at 7:30 tonight in 111 Sackett.
- The Centre County Women's Resource Center will offer free training in phone counseling skills. Applications are available now at the Centre County Women's Resource Center, 111 Sowers St., Suite 210. The deadline for completed applications is Wednesday.
- The Office of Student Activities will present a discussion of cancer in young adults at 8 tonight in the HUB main lounge.
- The National Student Speech and Language Hearing Association will meet at 7 tonight in 301 Agricultural Administration Building.
- The Collegiate 4-H Club will meet at 7 tonight in 301 Agricultural Administration Building.
- The College of Science Student Council will hold a mandatory meeting for Expo '83 at 7 tonight in the lobby of Osmond Laboratory.
- The Astronomy Club will meet at 7:30 tonight in 445 Davey.
- The Marine Science Society will elect officers at 7 tonight in 112 Walker.
- The American Home Economics Association will meet at 7 tonight in 204 Henderson Human Development Building.
- Penn State Overcomers will present the film "From Russia with Faith," a program about a Soviet teenager's escape from Russia, at 8 tonight in 104 Eisenhower Chapel.

police log

- The State College Police Department reported that a sliding glass door had been broken early Saturday morning at 924 Belaire Ave. Police said an estimate of damage was not available.
- State College police reported a bag of mail was found in Spring Creek Park near Houseville on Saturday. The mail was apparently taken from the Hill Top Trailer Park, East College Avenue. Police said an investigation is being conducted by postal authorities to determine if any items are missing.
- The letters will be redelivered.
- State College police reported the misuse of a gasoline credit card at Graham's Sunoco, 502 E. College Ave., on Saturday. Police said a person charged \$16 on the card. The card was stolen, police said.
- James Horsey of Philadelphia told University Police Services on Saturday that his jacket was missing from the Intramural Building. The value of the jacket is estimated at \$80, police said.
- Darryl Daisey, 404 Geary, told University police on Saturday that a window had been broken on the ground floor of Geary Hall. Damage was estimated at \$75, police said.
- David Mengle, a University photo printer, told University police on Saturday that his jacket containing a wallet and keys was missing from the main gym of White Building. The value of the missing items is estimated at \$100, police said.

Special Olympics needs volunteer ski instructors

Imagine skiing at a beautiful resort, all expenses paid, while at the same time helping an exceptional child. Sound too good to be true?

It isn't—this year's Winter Special Olympics, scheduled for Feb. 9, needs volunteers. Mentally retarded children from Centre, Clearfield, and Clarion counties will participate in the olympics. Volunteers will serve as personal ski instructors and chaperones for the children.

A meeting for those interested in volunteering will be held at 6 tomorrow night in 222 Rice Hall.

Tussey Mountain Ski Resort, formerly Skimont, in Boalsburg, will sponsor the event and supply all necessary equipment and lift tickets.

Margie Abrashoff, area coordinator of the special olympics, said the volunteers are "just terrific. They also get to meet the most interesting kids they'll probably ever meet."

David Smith, a student coordinator, said she worked with last year's winter olympics and about 60 University students participated as volunteers.

David Moskowitz (9th-secondary education) is assisting Smith with the organization of the event.

"It's such a good deal," said Smith (11th-therapeutic recreation). "Besides getting to ski for free, you also get to help the kids."

For most of the children, the winter olympics is the only opportunity that they will have to ski. The volunteers also enable the children to develop "unbelievable amounts of self-confidence. Their progress is amazing," Smith said.

Volunteers will meet with and instruct children at three meetings scheduled for Jan. 16 and 26, and Feb. 2 at Tussey Mountain.

Seven athletes will then compete in the state games against the winners from 19 other Pennsylvania regions.

Smith said she gives her time to these children "because of the challenge and their smiles."

Volunteers need not be expert skiers, but a knowledge of basic ski maneuvers is recommended.

—by Jeanne Nepa

Lion's Guard Drill Team
New Members Welcome
Meeting Thurs., 13 Jan.
Room 318/319 HUB 7:00 p.m.
For more info., call 234-0937 or 237-8420
Men's, Women's & Co-ed teams competing collegiately in various basic and trick drill exhibitions

Onion Soup Au Gratin
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UNIVERSITY CALENDAR Monday, January 10
Focus on Sweden meeting, 1 p.m., Room 319 HUB.
Sports: men's fencing vs. Notre Dame, 7 p.m. NSSLHA meeting, 7 p.m., Rooms 318-319 HUB.
College Consumer Party meeting, 7 p.m., Room 316 HUB.
Student Society of Student Social Workers meeting, 7 p.m., Room 308 Boucke.
USG Senate meeting, 7 p.m., Room 225 HUB.
P.S. Aikido Club workout, 7 p.m., IM Wrestling Room.
Astronomy Club meeting, 7:30 p.m., Room 445 Davey Lab.
Student Foundation for the Performing Arts meeting, 7:30 p.m., Room 227 HUB.
Lamb Fellowship meeting, 7:30 p.m., Room 174 Willard.
Monty Python Society meeting, 8 p.m., Room 221 Boucke.

Attention Winter Graduates!
Friday, January 14 is the deadline for ordering your Cap & Gown. Don't Delay!
Penn State Bookstore on campus
Owned and operated by the Pennsylvania State University

BACH'S LUNCH
Recitals Tuesdays Noon
Eisenhower Chapel bag lunch follows
Jan. 11 COLLEGIUM MUSICUM
Jan. 18 PIANO & CLARINET
Jan. 25 ORGAN
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Pre-Vet Club Meeting
Monday, January 10
7:30 111 A.I. Bldg.
Nominations for new officers will be taken
Special feature will be movies of veterinary practices

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Lea Maslkin of the New York Morning Telegraph called Miss Davis' portrayal "the finest, most compelling, and most perceptive she has ever played."
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