

Jimmy Carter

Jimmy Carter. Did pretty well for just a peanut farmer
Nineteen seventy six (1)
He took his campaign out from the Georgia sticks (2)

Some say he was not a great leader (3) Jimmy Carter
But he made peace and fought for human rights (4)
He set our standards high
That's what Jimmy Carter did

Jimmy Carter
He was a nuclear engineer for starters
Graduated from the Naval Academy
That would be quite an achievement for you and me

He met with Israel and Egypt in 1978
Sadat and Begin at Camp David (5)
Made peace for all the world to see
That's what Jimmy Carter did

Washington outsider
Human rights protector and freedom fighter
It wasn't easy, but he always did his best to serve humanity

Jimmy Carter
The hostage crisis made his life much harder
Led by the Ayatollah Khomeini (6)
Iran detained our folks for fourteen months of misery

To get our people back home safely
Jimmy Carter
Gave in to all their conditions
And set the stage for Reagan's victory (7)
That's what Jimmy Carter did

President Carter
He took the heat for the oil embargo (8)
Everybody panicked, it was high energy
The double-digit inflation killed his Presidency (9)
But he tried to make us less dependent on foreign oil
He showed us energy alternatives
Like solar power and natural gas (10)
That's what Jimmy Carter did

NOTES

- 1) **1976:** Jimmy Carter, a Democrat, was elected the thirty-ninth President of the United States in 1976.
- 2) **The Sticks:** ‘The Sticks’ is a colloquial term meaning, essentially, a rural area. The fact that Carter was not a “Washington insider” made him very attractive to voters in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal, which left many people disillusioned with politics as usual. Carter came from Plains, a small farming town in Southwestern Georgia.
- 3) **Leader:** Perhaps because he was a political “outsider” who lacked experience in Washington, Jimmy Carter had some difficulty working with Congress. Unlike noted deal making Presidents like Lyndon Johnson, Carter was unable to move many of the policies that were most important to him through Congress successfully.
- 4) **Human Rights:** Jimmy Carter made respect for human rights the foundation of U.S. foreign policy. He said the U.S. would not maintain close relations with any nation that violated the rights of their citizens. This brought hope to many people around the world, but also proved difficult for the U.S. to follow consistently, particularly when important American allies like South Korea and the Philippines were found to be human rights violators.
- 5) **Camp David:** One of Jimmy Carter’s most important international achievements was to bring together the leaders of Israel and Egypt, two countries that had been bitter enemies for decades, for a peace summit. Carter hosted them at Camp David, the Presidential retreat outside of Washington, D.C. For twelve days, he shuttled back and forth between Menachem Begin, the leader of Israel, and Anwar Sadat, the leader of Egypt, and eventually brought them to an agreement. The Camp David Peace Treaty is still in effect. Carter’s 2006 book *Palestine Peace not Apartheid* continued Carter’s interest and involvement in Middle Eastern peace processes. In this study, Carter argues that both Palestinians and Israelis are responsible for the rift between them, with Israel bearing more of the responsibility than is often discussed, particularly in the U.S. The book ignited a series of controversies, many focusing around Carter’s use of the word ‘apartheid’ in regard to Israeli policies toward Palestinians. Carter was accused of engaging in hyperbole and even inaccuracy for his use of this term and for other commentary throughout the piece. Carter maintains that privately,

however, many — including several prominent, Jewish Americans — have thanked and supported him for speaking honestly and openly about the relationships between Israelis and Palestinians.

6) **Ayatollah Khomeini**: Great hostility toward the United States was unleashed during the Iranian Revolution. Iranian students, with the consent of the revolutionary government of Ayatollah Khomeini, held sixty-two American citizens hostage in the U.S. embassy in Iran. It was a humiliating and frightening incident for the American people, and many blamed Carter, who was unable to negotiate freedom for the hostages until just before he left office. The hostages were held for a total of 444 days.

7) **Reagan's Victory**: An agreement to release the hostages was reached before the Presidential Election of 1980, allowing Ronald Reagan to take office before a much more optimistic nation.

8) **Oil Embargo**: Because they resented American support for Israel, Arab oil producing nations punished the United States by cutting off oil exports in 1979. Gas prices rose sharply, and there were long lines at gas pumps. American dependence on foreign oil was made painfully clear. Carter tried to find ways to reduce that dependence, mainly through energy conservation, ie urging people to find ways to live without using as much fuel.

9) **Inflation**: Rising prices hurt Carter's Presidency because people were angry that their money would not buy as much as it had previously. During Carter's presidency, inflation peaked at 13%, an extremely high level by present standards.

10) **Energy Alternatives**: Jimmy Carter was a strong supporter of alternative energy sources such as solar power. He installed solar panels on the White House to set an example for the American people (Ronald Reagan removed them upon taking office). Carter also urged the public to conserve energy by consuming less, but had limited success changing American lifestyles.

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