PRESIDENT ANDREW JACKSON

**By**

**Marguerite dar Boggia**

When Andrew was 15 in 1781, he and his brother, Robert, were captured and contracted small pox. His brother, Robert, died shortly after his release. His oldest brother died in battle. He lived through the revolutionary war. He fought with the American irregulars. Andrew’s mother also fell ill and died, while trying to retrieve some nephews from a British prison ship. Andrew became an orphan. His father died before he was born.

In 1791 he fell in love with Rachel Donelson Robards of the prominent Nashville Donelson family. They lived together without the benefit of marriage, as her divorce did not become final until 1794. This greatly shocked society. It was held against him later, when Jackson ran for office. His ire and enmity were greatly aroused when his beloved wife was ostracized. He really loved his wife.

The rise in his Tennessee political career was meteoric. He became a congressman, then a senator. He built a legal practice and when he resigned as Senator, he became a Judge in Tennessee. When he resigned as a Judge, he devoted his attention to his command of the militia and business adventures. He speculated in land, bought slaves, bred and raced horses and bought a cotton plantation. He prospered.

In 1812 the United States finally declared war on Great Britain for violating American sovereignty and interests. When the war-like Creek Indians had slaughtered 400 whites, Jackson and his men from Tennessee, wiped out the main Creek force. Because of this victory, Jackson was given command of the Southern frontier. When the British were about to attack New Orleans, Jackson and his men wiped out the British forces. The British had over 2000 casualties and Jackson had 13 dead and 57 wounded and missing. Jackson was hailed as a hero.

Jackson was ordered to subdue the Seminole Indians who were raiding across the border of Spanish Florida. Since the orders were vague, he effected a lightening conquest of Florida itself! Being in sole control, he tried and executed two British nationals whom he claimed were inciting and abetting the Indians. The Secretary of War, John C. Calhoun, complained of his unauthorized actions, but it eventually resulted in Spain ceding Florida by a treaty. Later Calhoun became his future virulent foe.

The people adored his strong willpower and considered him as a champion of justice. Even though his ego growth was to be through demonstrating courage, his soul wanted him to develop sympathy and compassion. He did not hate the Indians. He considered them as inferior to the men of the West. He made treaties with the various tribes, sometimes through threats. He offered them to either become part of the citizens of the United States or to move further west. Most chose to move.

When the Indians legally took their case to court, the Superior Court agreed with the Indians, that they were a foreign nation. But the individual States ignored the Court’s ruling. Jackson, as President, did not defend the Indian’s rights. Those Indians that refused to move west were removed by force, in what is known as the tragic and shameful “trail of tears”.

President Jackson appointed people, not for their competency, but because they were his friends. One appointment resulted in the theft of a million dollars. He probably did not mean to, but he created the ‘spoils system.’ Because of his appointment of Anthony Butler, who lacked diplomacy and tact, war was instigated ten years later with Mexico.

Jackson had a quick temper and acted violently out of rage. He was self-willed, dynamic, vengeful and determined once his mind was made up. His sensitivity to insult embroiled him in many fights and brawls; but he was loyal to friends and courageous. In a duel with Charles Dickinson (who was a crack shot) Dickinson fired first and hit Andrew in the chest. That bullet remained in his chest all of his life. Andrew stood his ground, aimed carefully and killed his foe. There were many other fights. All of his life, he was happiest when he was fighting an enemy, whether that foe was foreign or political.

Jackson declared (as the Jeffersonians had maintained) that the quasi-public Bank of the United States was illegal; that it gave special privileges to private stockholders in a public corporation and it posed a threat to freedom and liberty. The federal government held one fifth of the stock in the corporation. By law it was the federal government’s own banker. Every twenty years a vote was cast for the renewal of its charter. Jackson called for revoking its charter. When the Congress passed the recharter bill just before the election, Jackson vetoed it. The opposition party was certain that Jackson would lose the election to his second term of office if he vetoed it. Mud slinging of the candidates was the norm. Instead, he won the election by convincing the people of corruption in government including imprudent lending. Deeming that he had the mandate of the people, Jackson ordered the Secretary of the Treasury to withdraw from the bank all of the federal funds. When the Secretary refused, he fired the Secretary and appointed his own choice who complied with his request. He then placed the funds in various State chartered banks. **He was the LAW.** The State Banks, with this tremendous inflow of new cash, imprudently lent money, and created land speculation in the West, that resulted in the 1837 Panic depression.

Jackson opposed the ‘American System’ only because it was proposed by the opposition party. The plan called for economic subsidies to be given for transportation, with high tariffs. Later in his second term of office, he approved the system, with lower tariffs. Unfortunately, it seems that **politics has not changed much.**

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***Marguerite dar Boggia*** *presently serves as Membership Secretary of ISAR. She was past publisher of Kosmos for many years, as well as Secretary & Director of ISAR and UAC. She is a co-founder of UAC and served as Registrar at the first UAC’86. Her goal is to cooperate with the Spiritual Hierarchy of our planet and to work for and to serve humanity. She offers online* ***Free****, three pages weekly of the Esoteric Studies as was known* ***by Pythagoras****. She can be reached at her website, which she created at the age of 90:* [***www.FreePythagorasTeachings.com***](http://www.FreePythagorasTeachings.com)