

FAREWELL TO THE MAN FROM PLAINS

[NB: check the byline, thanks. /~Rayne]

Former president Jimmy Carter passed away today. He was 100 years old, the oldest former president and the first to attain their centenary. His wife Rosalyn Carter passed away in November 2023.

He will be remembered most for his immense contributions to society post-presidency, from his diplomatic efforts to the founding of The Carter Center and its support of voting rights and democracy, his efforts through the Center to eradicate disease, and his work for Habitat for Humanity.

He will also be remembered as a national hero for his role in preventing a nuclear accident in 1952. The episode was not widely publicized until 2021:

Carter, a young U.S. Navy lieutenant in 1952, was in in nearby Schenectady, New York, training to work aboard America's first nuclear submarine at the time of the accident at a reactor in Chalk River, Ontario, just 180 km from Ottawa, the Canadian capital.

According to a Canadian government website, mechanical problems and operator error "led to overheating fuel rods and significant damage" to the core of the reactor, prompting officials to turn to the United States for help in dismantling the device.

A total of 26 Americans, including several volunteers, rushed to Chalk River to help with the hazardous job. Carter led a team of men who, after formulating a plan, descended into the highly radioactive site for 90 seconds apiece to perform specialized tasks.

Carter's job, according to the CBC recounting, was simply to turn a single screw. But even that limited exposure carried serious risks; Carter was told that he might never be able to have children again, though in fact his daughter Amy was born years later.

Carter was generous and humble, faithful and steadfast, true to his family, faith, and country to the end.

May he rest in power.

Photo: Carter with future spouse Rosalynn Smith and his mother at his graduation from the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, June 5, 1946, via Wikipedia.