

**A Good Story
Kit Kat Club
January 15, 2019**

A Good Story is my title and I hope you'll agree by the end of this tale that it's no misnomer.

That said, the title should probably be *A Good Kit Kat Story* because, as you'll learn, this essay would not have happened without Kit Kat.

The story begins with my last essay, which was titled *A New Adventure*. The focus of my December 2013 presentation, as some may remember, was Andrew Wyeth the American realist painter. Telling his story led me into an important part of American art. My essay involved learning and writing about Wyeth and about his father, the famous illustrator and painter, N.C. Wyeth, and about his son, the painter Jamie Wyeth. They are America's only three generation family of famous fine artists.

It was fun to learn about them and the learning involved reading and reaching out to a few experts. One of those experts was an art historian named Henry Adams. A professor of art history at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Henry is a leading expert on American art, including the art of Andrew Wyeth.

I emailed him out of the blue asking if he would be willing to talk with me about Andrew Wyeth for my Kit Kat essay. He responded quickly and said that I should call him the following Saturday. We had a great conversation. It was less about the particulars of Wyeth's paintings and more about the man himself. Henry was the right person to talk with since he knew Wyeth personally and had also talked with Andrew's son, Jamie.

In the midst of that initial conversation – and the trigger for this story – was a quick tangential discussion about Boston. It came up because the Boston Museum of Fine Art was planning a 30-year retrospective of Jamie's art. As we talked, I mentioned that Henry seemed to know a lot about Boston. He said that his family had been there for a long time. He even mentioned that his dad had been a member of the Somerset Club, which he compared loosely with the Kit Kat Club. I responded by saying that he certainly has a famous Boston name. I then asked if there was any connection. Henry, who had no doubt been through similar conversations in the past, said that, yes, he was a member of that family and a descendant – sixth and fifth generation great grandson respectively – of Presidents John Adams and John Quincy Adams.

We ended a comfortable and interesting conversation with me expressing my gratitude and saying that given his expertise that maybe sometime he'd be interested in being a May guest speaker at Kit Kat. He responded tentatively, but positively, and off we went.

That was in early fall of 2013. Little did either of us know that that call would lead to many more. Henry was our guest speaker in May 2014 when he talked about the Cleveland School of American art and the wild times at the artsy, anything goes Kokoon Arts Club (1913-1946) – a club that was inspired, in part, by the New York City’s avant-garde Kit Kat Club.

But more importantly for this essay, Henry ended up being a part of a new adventure. That new story is the topic of this essay.

Once I presented my Wyeth essay, I started talking more with my good friend, Jo Ann Davidson, about the matter of presidential descendants. As many of you know, Jo Ann is a former Speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives and the only woman in Ohio history to hold that position. Jo Ann, of course, would be quick to add that changing only woman to first woman would be a good development.

As we talked, Jo Ann and I quickly realized that we know other presidential descendants. We know our fellow Kit Kater – and my sponsor – Dr. George Harding, who is the grandnephew of President Warren Harding. And we are friends with former Ohio Governor Bob Taft, who is the great grandson of William Howard Taft. With the addition of Henry Adams we realized that we were counting to three.

Added to this was an interesting development that we had just become aware of: Mark Roosevelt, great grandson of Theodore Roosevelt, had become the President of Ohio’s Antioch College in 2011. When I learned about this I called Bob Taft and told him about it. But he already knew and said that he’d recently had lunch with Mark. It was the beginning of a friendship they both value and enjoy.

So, there you have it, an unlikely foursome of presidential descendants from Presidents 2, 6, 26, 27 and 29. And, at the time, all of them lived in Ohio. Jo Ann and I started thinking that it would be fun to bring them together for a filmed and facilitated conversation focused on their unique experiences and perspectives as presidential descendants – members of one of, at the time in 2014, only 42 presidential families when you count as one each the two Adams and Bush families.

Though presidential history matters greatly, our focus was not on what happened in the respective presidencies, but how these presidencies impacted presidential descendants. Of course, once I looked into it a bit for this essay, I was not surprised to learn that despite our democratic heritage, there remains a fascination with presidential progeny.

Though our presidential descendants initiative started out as a bit of a lark, a little adventure in the realm of American history, it took longer and was more work than either of us amateurs expected. It took Jo Ann and me over a year to actually make it happen. And it didn’t happen without help from many, and, most significantly, from the presidential descendants.

Before telling you that part of the story, let me give you a very quick reminder of the five presidents and then say a word or two about their Ohio connections.

I'll do this chronologically and thus start with John Adams.

John Adams was the first Vice President and the second President of the United States. A Massachusetts man, Adams was a Harvard College graduate who became a lawyer. His achievements as one of our founding fathers are immense and include being a partner with Jefferson and others in the writing of the Declaration of Independence. Prior to his election to the presidency in 1800, Adams served in numerous diplomatic positions. His brilliance and irascible nature were both strengths and weaknesses and help explain why Adams, who was a Federalist, was a one-term president who was beaten by an "anti-federalist," Democratic-Republican named Thomas Jefferson. Their relationship collapsed under the weight of their political battles, but they came back together with the encouragement of Dr. Benjamin Rush, another signer of the Declaration of Independence, and began writing candid and important letters to each other toward the end of their lives – lives that famously ended on the same day, July 4, 1826, which was the 50th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

John Quincy Adams was the talented son of John Adams. A Harvard College graduate and lawyer, John Quincy was raised by his father to be a leader, which was both the good news and the bad news due to his father's incredibly high standards. He was a personal secretary to his father during portions of John Adams' diplomatic career. John Quincy went on to be a diplomat in his own right and eventually became one of America's very best secretaries of state and the chief architect of the Monroe Doctrine.

By the time he decided to seek the presidency – as a Democratic-Republican and not as a Federalist like his father – John Quincy had already served as a U.S. Senator and been a professor of logic at Brown and a professor of rhetoric and oratory at Harvard. Amusingly, in the 1824 presidential election, it was said that American voters faced a choice between "John Quincy Adams, / Who can write / And Andrew Jackson, / Who can fight." The battle ended without an Electoral College majority for any of the four candidates. The U.S. House of Representatives then decided the election. A reversal of fortunes took place in 1828 when Jackson defeated Adams making him, like his father, a one-term president. But there was a major coda to John Quincy's career. It came when he decided to return to political life as a congressman from Massachusetts. Among other commitments, he distinguished himself during his congressional career as an effective and fearless leader in the fight to end slavery.

Turning to Theodore Roosevelt we find a force of nature. He was a former New York governor who became Ohioan William McKinley's 1900 vice presidential running mate. Untrustworthy by the standards of many Republican power players, including Cleveland industrialist, Mark Hanna, who referred to TR derisively as a

“cowboy,” Roosevelt was thrust into the spotlight in 1901 when President McKinley was assassinated. Teddy loved being president and he made the most of it with the amazing exception of blurting out right after his 1904 election that he would not run for a second full term – a moment he always regretted.

Most of the electorate loved Roosevelt. His progressive, reform agenda, including his call to challenge the “malefactors of great wealth,” was rambunctious and needed as a corrective to the industrial and financial trusts that were dominating and destabilizing a rapidly growing economy that included “robber barons” and the dispossessed. Despite the fact that his home was in Oyster Bay, New York, Roosevelt was arguably our first western president. This is true because of his love of the west from the time, as a young man, he escaped to the Badlands after his wife and mother died on the same Valentine’s Day. TR’s love of the west also related to his profile as a great outdoorsman and hunter of almost anything that moved; and to his passion for conservation. With a father who was a founder of the American Museum of Natural History, TR, in seven short years, was responsible for placing over 230 million acres of land, including the Grand Canyon and the Petrified Forest, in the public trust.

It is hard to talk about Theodore Roosevelt without talking about his great friend from Ohio, William Howard Taft. The cerebral Taft had the political personality of a jurist. A lawyer and Yale University graduate, Taft became a judge in his 20s. Roosevelt liked and trusted Taft and appointed him civilian governor of the Philippines. TR then called him back to Washington to serve as Secretary of War. And then, in 1908, Taft was Teddy’s pick to replace him. Though President Taft followed in TR’s philosophical footsteps in many ways and actually did more “trust busting” than TR, Roosevelt was disappointed with what he perceived to be Taft’s personal and political conservatism. This and ambition led Roosevelt to run for president in 1912 as the Progressive – or Bull Moose – Party’s candidate. Though Taft came in last and Wilson won, TR’s effort remains the most successful third party presidential race in American history.

The next and final president in this presidential chronology is Marion, Ohio’s Warren G. Harding. A publisher of the Marion Star and former Ohio State Senator and U.S. Senator, Harding was elected President in 1920 after his famous “front porch” campaign. Interestingly, both of Harding’s parents were country doctors and his brother, George Harding, was a physician who founded a highly regarded private psychiatric hospital, Harding Hospital; it was located in Worthington, Ohio at the former family retreat of the Hoster Brewing Company owners. It has more recently become part of Ohio State University’s medical center.

As usual, it helps to look the part, and Harding’s stature and demeanor helped him look presidential. In fact, there was a saying when Harding was in the Senate that he was the only Senator who could wear a toga and look natural in it. Importantly, Harding was from a powerful, politically significant state with a presidential victory margin that, at the time, was the biggest in U.S. history. In the post-World War 1

roaring 20s, the amiable, good natured Harding talked about a return to “normalcy” and stability. And while there was good economic news, a relatively strong senior leadership team and solid commitments to improving race relations and government efficiency, including the creation of the Bureau of the Budget, these accomplishments are often overshadowed by the legal and ethical problems of the “Ohio Gang” and the oil-related bribery scandal that came to be called the Teapot Dome Affair. Personally culpable or not, Harding at one point reacted to his problems by angrily voicing the age-old wisdom that in politics it’s not your enemies who get you in trouble; it’s your friends.

There you have it, the serendipity of five presidents and their families. And just for fun, here’s a quick and random reference to examples of each president’s Ohio connections:

1. Southern Ohio’s Adams County is named after John Adams. And John Adams’ Revolutionary War colleague, General Rufus Putnam, helped lead the planning for Marietta, Ohio, the Northwest Territory and Ohio University. Putnam’s OU connection is so strong that the university mascot, Rufus, is named after him. His descendant, Nancy Putnam Hollister, was George Voinovich’s second Lt. Governor and she is the only woman to become Ohio Governor, which happened for 11 days when Voinovich left office in December 1998 to take the Senate seat that he had just won the month before.
2. John Quincy Adams was committed to western expansion and to building the infrastructure necessary to develop this new territory. Historians have identified this vast population expansion and land development as the greatest single fact of nineteenth century American history. And, of course, it included Ohio where the population nearly quadrupled from 1810 to 1830. Additionally, John Quincy loved to read and write and learn about new inventions. It was the latter that brought him to Cincinnati after his presidency in 1843 to learn about the world’s most powerful observatory. This visit led local leaders to name Mount Adams after the former president.
3. In addition to being President McKinley’s Vice President and William Taft’s friend and boss, Teddy Roosevelt had other Ohio connections. One interesting connection comes in the fact that Roosevelt’s incorrigible daughter, Alice, was married to Cincinnati Congressman and eventual Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, Nicholas Longworth. Stories about Alice are almost as good as stories about her father. One comes when Teddy is in a meeting at the White House and Alice walks by with a snake on her head. The man he is meeting with asks why Roosevelt doesn’t discipline his daughter more effectively. Teddy responds by saying that he can run the country or control Alice, but he can’t do both. Another is a famous quote from an adult Alice when she was at the center of the Washington social and

political scene. She was at one of her famous dinner parties and said that if you don't have anything good to say about anybody, sit next to me.

But back to creating a conversation with four presidential descendants. As previously referenced, Jo Ann and I wanted to convince busy professionals to stop what they were doing and have a conversation. And busy may not be the word for it. They have all been making major contributions to their respective professions for decades. Here's a quick sketch:

- A graduate of Harvard and Yale Universities, Henry Adams is a leading art historian who has produced nearly 400 publications and is in demand to speak and curate. He's currently finishing a biography of glass artist Dale Chihuly.
- Though now retired, George Harding is a well-respected psychiatrist who was a long-time Harding Hospital leader and university educator.
- A graduate of Yale and Princeton and a lawyer, former Governor Bob Taft continues to be engaged as a teacher and researcher at the University of Dayton.
- A Harvard graduate (undergraduate and law school), Mark Roosevelt is a former Massachusetts state representative and unsuccessful gubernatorial candidate. He is also a former Pittsburgh, PA school superintendent. It was from that post that he moved to the presidency of Antioch College. He is now the President of St. John College, which has campuses in Annapolis, Maryland and Santa Fe, New Mexico.

As you can see, we were trying to connect with people who rarely stop moving. And even if they had interest in our project – and initially we had no idea as to whether or not there would be any – there was the question of what the exact ask was. This meant that we had to run our embryonic idea past someone who was able to help us advance our thinking. After considering who might possibly be interested in filming our conversation, we struck upon the idea of talking with both Dan Schellenbarger, head of Ohio Government Telecommunications/Ohio Channel, which is dedicated primarily to covering state government related events, and with the Ohio Historical Society, which now has a 21st century sounding name – the Ohio History Connection.

Both organizations are well regarded within their respective domains. Remarkably, both Dan and Burt Logan, Director of the Ohio History Connection, responded positively to our inquiries. Dan loved the idea of filming the conversation and Burt was pleased to sponsor the event. These commitments were made without any request for funding. In fact, everyone involved in the project took part voluntarily and without payment.

These project conversations took place after an initial conversation with Bob Taft. The former governor said that he would be willing and interested in participating in the event. That was all we needed to follow up with three steps:

First, we had conversations with George Harding and with Henry Adams. Both responded positively to the opportunity.

Then we asked Bob to reach out to Mark Roosevelt and broach the idea with him. We did not know Mark, but Bob's connection was good enough that he felt comfortable talking with him about the possibility.

Interestingly, in each of our conversations there was a sense expressed that the timing was right to do this. At the time, Henry was in his mid-sixties, George was in his mid-eighties and Bob was in his early 70s. I'm not sure how much age matters, but it seemed to be a time when reflection was in order in a way that it may not have been in earlier years. Additionally, there was comfort with an informal, low profile approach and, as usual, there was the ever-important intangible of personal relationships and a related level of trust.

But what was not quite there initially was Mark Roosevelt. Roosevelt was an extremely busy person dedicated to rebuilding Antioch College. He came to Antioch after it had fallen on hard times and temporarily closed its doors. It was out of money and potentially out of a future. Yet, as Dick Burdett reminded us some years ago in his Kit Kat essay, Antioch College has a wonderful and important history that was worth fighting for and building upon. And, importantly, its first president was Horace Mann the great educator and reformer who championed universal education and the "common school." Today, the school's motto is a quote from Mann: "Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity."

But, for Mark, there were issues that ran deeper than a busy professional life. Roosevelt told Taft that he wasn't sure that he wanted to participate in the conversation. He said that he didn't like ancestry worship and he wasn't quite comfortable. I talked with Bob and asked him to circle back with Mark and tell him that ancestry worship was not our goal and that it would be great if he would simply keep an open mind on a project that may or may not come to fruition. Bob agreed. He talked again with Roosevelt who was still unenthusiastic, but he told Bob that he would keep his mind open to the idea.

Meanwhile, other pieces of the puzzle were starting to come together. We had three of the four presidential descendants firmly committed to the project. We had a sponsor and we had a production director and a film crew. We also had agreement that the interview could be filmed in a State House meeting room.

Bob Taft reported all of this to Mark Roosevelt and asked him once again to participate. Time passed with us believing that the Roosevelt history – including its storied connection to President Taft – would do much to enliven our story telling.

Well, one day my cell phone rang and it was Mark Roosevelt. He started by telling me in no uncertain terms that he did not like ancestry worship. He also told me that

the last thing he wanted in his obituary was that he was a great grandson of Teddy Roosevelt. Then there was a slight pause and he said that despite his view this family connection would be the first thing in his obituary whether he liked it or not. He then went on to say that for reasons he did not fully understand his friend, Bob Taft, wanted to participate in the presidential descendants conversation and he wanted Mark to do the same.

Mark said that because his friend wanted him to participate that he would do so because he did not want to let Bob down. I was delighted and said so. I also thought pretty quickly that his genuine expression of personal loyalty and affection would be something that could, and often did, come out of his great grandfather's mouth. As you'll see, this is not the only time when presidential descendants said and did things that were reminiscent of their forbears.

Now that we had our foursome, Jo Ann and I began to think more seriously about a moderator. One initial thought was to connect with presidential historian, Douglas Brinkley. Brinkley grew up in Perrysburg, Ohio and graduated from Ohio State. Initial attempts to contact him quickly led to the reality that Brinkley is now someone who can and does charge significantly for appearances. With no project budget, we determined that this was not an option we should pursue. But we soon had an even better idea. We thought more about Ohio journalists and determined that if we could choose someone we had a great deal of respect for we would pick Columbus NBC news anchor, Colleen Marshall.

Colleen is highly experienced and well respected. And in addition to being a journalist she is also a practicing attorney and a great person. We scheduled a lunch with her to talk about our idea and our luck continued. Colleen liked the project and wanted to be our interviewer. She loved the historical and personal approach and liked the idea that the descendants were all living in Ohio.

As things got more serious, Jo Ann and I decided that it would be good to reconnect with George Harding. George, as some of you know, spends part of the year in Worthington and part of the year in Loma Linda, California where he has spent time teaching at the Loma Linda University Medical School, his alma mater. Loma Linda is one of only five "blue zones" in the world. It's a place where population health and longevity are particularly positive. People often live into deep old age – 90s and even many over 100 – and often in remarkably good health. Significantly, Loma Linda is a center for the Seventh Day Adventist Church, of which George is an active member. The denomination includes a focus on healthy, well-balanced eating and living, including a commitment to largely vegetarian diets. This philosophy was part of the Harding Hospital approach to wellness and it also helps explain the creation of Worthington Foods and its meat substitutes, one of which was named by George when he was a young person.

Our lunch with George took place in the summer of 2015. I called the day before to confirm that we were still on for lunch and the answer was yes. But George also

mentioned that he was dealing with some family issues. I said that it would be fine to reschedule. He said that, no, he still wanted to have lunch and that he would tell us about the referenced family matter when we got together.

What we learned over lunch at the Worthington Inn – with a painting of the Harding front porch campaign on the wall beside us – and, I know, you can't make it up – was what the readers of the *New York Times* were reading about on the front page of the same day's paper. The news was that George's second cousin and my former neighbor had worked with another Harding cousin to get DNA testing done to see if the historical speculation was true that President Warren Harding had a daughter with his mistress, Nan Britton, a small town Ohio girl, when he was serving in the U.S. Senate.

The answer, of course, was yes there was DNA proof. I don't think that George was shocked by the news, but he was struggling a bit to understand why this needed to happen publicly particularly given the many challenges of Great Uncle Warren and his administration.

Now, before continuing, I've got to say the obvious: What are the odds of this news story happening on the very day we are meeting with George to talk about our presidential descendants interview?

After mentioning this and agreeing that this story and the family reaction to it was entirely consistent with the human interest perspective that a presidential descendants conversation could provide, we all shifted to catching up and to talking about the format for the interview.

The format would be as follows. We would have just under an hour to talk. Colleen would begin with introductions and then move to a quick profile of each of the five presidents and their time in office. This historical overview would be followed by a question and answer session for the rest of the interview.

Finally, it was October 2015 and the big day was upon us. After a small lunch event with the descendants and their guests, we walked over to the Ohio State House and began the interview. Colleen came prepared with questions that were both personal and historical. She was direct, but respectful, and she has a personal style that made for a comfortable and candid conversation that was engaging and illuminating without veering off course. The last thing we wanted to do – and she wanted to do – was to turn the conversation into a psychodrama about being a presidential descendant.

Colleen's questions were representative of what many would want to know. Though I won't walk you through all the questions, I'd like to provide an overview. Colleen began with a historical question with a personal twist. She asked the presidential descendants if their families believed that their respective presidential ancestor was treated fairly during their presidency and afterward.

Mark Roosevelt began the discussion by saying that, on the whole, TR was treated fairly. He thought that this was particularly true because of his great grandfather's manic-depressive like behavior that lasted throughout his presidency and beyond – including his near suicidal, post-presidential Brazilian adventure to navigate the unmapped River of Doubt. This was a trip that he took with his son, Kermit, who was Mark's grandfather.

George Harding responded with a more nuanced answer given history's often critical assessment of his great uncle. The humorous and quick witted Roosevelt played off of this comment by saying that the treatment of President Harding probably helps explain why George Harding and other members of his family are psychiatrists.

Bob Taft responded to the question by saying that President Taft was more a jurist than a politician and that it showed. His relatively poor political skills and his struggle with Teddy Roosevelt and subsequent loss of his 1912 re-election to Wilson was all part of this pattern. In fact, President Taft was saved from this bad news when President Harding appointed him Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court. Interestingly, Bob took a moment to note that if it were not for Mark Roosevelt's great grandfather his great grandfather would not have been president. Then he turned to his left and said that if it were not for George Harding's great uncle, his (Bob's) great grandfather would not have been Chief Justice.

Despite being a better politician, Bob went on to say that he identifies with his great grandfather's political deficits. But before he said much more, Roosevelt couldn't resist asking if the story about President Taft getting stuck in the White House bathtub was accurate. Taft had fun with it and then said that the story is false, but the reason why relates to the fact that a bigger bathtub was installed at the White House so the President, who weighed in at around 300 pounds, could use it.

For his part, Adams said that he and his family felt good about history's treatment of their presidential forbears. However, he mentioned the rough and tumble nature of American politics – struggles that included the fact that both John Adams and John Quincy Adams were one term presidents after doing re-election battle with Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson respectively. Henry also mentioned the famous statement from Henry Brooks Adams, a great grandson of John Adams, that politics is the systematic organization of hatreds. And, yes, we still live with this reality today.

Finally, and with some humor, Henry noted that the picture on the Samuel Adams beer bottle is not his relative, Sam Adams, but another – and apparently better looking – Revolutionary War era character named Paul Revere.

Colleen Marshall's next question related to what the presidential descendants were most proud of and what they felt was most regrettable about their presidential ancestors' behavior.

Henry Adams said that he and his family were most proud of their ancestors standing up for what is right and often in the midst of strong opposition. The leading example, in Henry's mind, is John Quincy Adams' opposition to slavery during his post-presidential congressional tenure. An important element of this story is his support for the freedom of the slaves on the Amistad slave ship – a position that was ultimately decided in the slaves' favor by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Mark Roosevelt said that TR's major presidential commitments to political battles against the trusts and to being a wilderness warrior claiming millions of acres in public lands stand out in his mind as important contributions. But what mattered most to Roosevelt were TR's 1912 presidential campaign and his renewed fight for a progressive policy agenda.

Roosevelt also noted the terrible, corrosive power of money in politics and the fact that it has corrupted both parties. Taft agreed and said that matters are made worse because of instantaneous media and 24/7 news.

As for regrets, Mark said that TR's pugnacious, sometimes demeaning style was often taken too far and was thus regrettable. As an example, he referenced TR saying he could make a better man out of a banana than the man he was criticizing.

Taft, on the other hand, said that William Howard Taft's biggest contribution came during his time as Chief Justice. This included his great grandfather's push to enhance the independence and stature of the Supreme Court, including calling for the construction of a new Supreme Court building. As for regrets, Bob said that his great grandfather should not have allowed his wife and TR to talk him into being president. It simply wasn't a job he wanted or was really cut out to do well.

George Harding talked about the importance of public service and noted that JFK's famous statement that Americans should think not what their country can do for them, but what they can do for their country was a paraphrase of what Warren Harding said in his inaugural address.

Colleen Marshall steered the discussion in a new, but related, direction by asking the group an important question: Why should we care about history and about what our ancestors did or did not do?

Henry Adams, the professional historian of the group, said that historical perspective teaches that things that we take for granted can change and change in big ways over time.

For instance, it was not that many generations ago that slavery was legal and, in many states, common. And it was not that long ago that there were more radical differences than there are even today with regard to wealth and poverty and educational and economic opportunity. So, important things can and do change albeit in often slow and halting ways. In making this point, Henry referenced the famous line from Winston Churchill that Americans usually do the right thing after trying every other alternative.

Mark Roosevelt built on Henry's ideas and talked about the importance of history both personally and culturally. He noted that without knowing our history we orphan ourselves. He also agreed with Henry's point about big change, including civil rights, and the related ability to transcend challenges that seem impossible to address. Mark also said that history teaches humility because despite all our progress what we know is dwarfed by what we don't know.

Bob Taft and George Harding built on these insights. Bob said that history is a source of identity and hope. His example of hope was the terrible tragedy of the American Civil War and the nation's ability to move beyond it in profound, but obviously incomplete, ways.

George Harding talked about the importance of teaching history and the fact that all of these presidential descendants had spent significant portions of their lives as educators. Harding referenced our current political life and the need to return to the fundamentals of respectful dialogue and productive partnerships.

Colleen asked a final follow-up question about life lessons that emerged from their respective considerations of their presidential forbears.

Henry Adams reiterated the importance of the Adams families' history of idealism and their commitment to reading, writing and learning and the simple democratic principles that have stood the test of time.

Mark Roosevelt said that what comes to his mind is the importance of helping others and the practical value of kindness.

George Harding talked about the importance of education and learning and being open to changing one's perspective based on new insights and information.

Bob Taft talked about his growing sense of the importance of his family history and its tradition of public service.

There you have it. I hope you agree that this is a good story about an adventure that took flight because of Kit Kat. It's also a reminder of the presence of the past and the fact, as Andrew Wyeth and other artists have told us, that it is alive in visible and invisible ways in our everyday lives.

It brings to mind the great lines from our literature about the presence of the past. A leading example is William Faulkner's immortal statement: "The past is never dead. It's not even past."

But the wisdom of the past that comes most to mind for me after listening to and talking with the presidential descendants is a phrase that is often, but apparently inaccurately, attributed to Mark Twain. It's the saying that history doesn't repeat itself, but it rhymes. And rhyme it does with the presidential descendants.

Thank you.