Please Welcome Mr. & Mrs. America
A look at the lives of Presidents and their Wives
From Washington to Eisenhower
“What You Don’t Know CAN Kill You”

An excerpt from:
PLEASE WELCOME MR. & MRS. AMERICA: 
A look at the lives of U.S. Presidents and Their Wives

From Washington to Eisenhower

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What You Don’t Know CAN Kill You!


Lucretia Rudolph Garfield: B: April 19, 1832, Hiram, Ohio. D: March 14, 1918, South Pasadena, California.

James Garfield started his working life as a hogey on the Ohio-Erie Canal driving a mule team when he was 17 years old. Perhaps working with mules gave Garfield his patience and knowledge of just how “far to go.” Once he shared a platform with Eugene Hale, a congressman from Maine. When Hale’s speech went on for more than two hours, the crowd grew impatient and started calling for Garfield. When he stepped up to speak he asked the audience to stay for another half hour. He then delivered a thirty minute speech that was so rousing that the audience asked for more. Wisely, Garfield quit while he was ahead.

Unfortunately, Garfield didn’t stay ahead long. In less than four months after taking office as President, Charles Guiteau shot him on July 2, 1881.
The assassin had already failed as a theologian, a lawyer and a bill collector when he turned to politics. After writing a speech in support of Grant for President which he never actually delivered, he printed copies to distribute. Believing these efforts had helped get Garfield into office, Guiteau believed he should be awarded a diplomatic post. He went to Washington to accept a consulship which was never offered. After several months he decided that he had been commanded to kill the ungrateful President. He bought a revolver and spent the month of June stalking the President. On July 2 as Garfield waited at the Baltimore & Potomac Railroad to board a train, Guiteau stepped forward and shot him at point blank range.

One bullet grazed Garfield’s arm, the other lodged in his body SOMEWHERE – and THAT was the problem! The doctors couldn’t find the bullet! Since X-Rays hadn’t been discovered then, the only way to find the bullet was to manually probe with instruments – but this increased the risk of infection.

When word of the quandary reached the papers, everyone suddenly had ideas about what to do to save the President. One of these people was Simon Newcomb who had been experimenting with running electricity through wire coils then putting metal nearby causing a hum that could pinpoint the location. But the hum was so faint it could barely be heard.

When Alexander Graham Bell heard about this idea, he figured his newest invention, the telephone, might be able to help since it amplified sound made through wire.

Newcomb and Bell got together to try to figure out a way to use the telephone with the coils to find the bullet. After several tests on Civil War veterans with bullets still in them, they believed they had the problem solved.

On July 26 they went to the White House to try to locate Garfield’s bullet. But something strange happened as they passed the apparatus over the President. There was a hum no matter WHERE the wand was placed on the body. They made several more attempts with the same results.
The press used the failure as a personal attack on Bell. Though they kept experimenting, the President died before they could solve the problem.

So what exactly was the problem? It turned out that the White House had purchased some brand new coil spring mattresses. Since no one had ever used that type of mattress before, they didn’t realize that the mattress’s coil springs were affecting Newcomb & Bells’ apparatus. Had they known that the surgeons probably could have saved James Garfield by putting him on a different bed and locating the bullet!

*There are men and women who make the world better just by being the kind of people they are. They have the gift of kindness or courage or loyalty or integrity. It really matters very little whether they are behind the wheel of a truck or running a business or bringing up a family. They teach the truth by living it.*

~James A. Garfield, 1831-1881

*Lawnfield; Mentor, OH – open to the public.*

[http://www.nps.gov/jaga/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/jaga/index.htm)
"What You Don't Know CAN Kill You" is an excerpt from EVE's book PLEASE WELCOME MR. & MRS. AMERICA which is a companion piece to the storytelling program of the same name. If you enjoyed this chapter, you can order a copy of the book at http://edenvalleyenterprises.org/bkscrdtam.html#american

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From CANAL SONGS AND STORIES, a fun and informative program that features music and stories from the Ohio-Erie Canal, to DOCTOR PUTNAM'S MIRACLE MIXTURE, a vivid, high-spirited living history program, Eden Valley gives your audiences drama that brims with energy, humor, and fantasy and features a magical cast of characters.

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