TOP TEN CLOSEST PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

10. JAMES MADISON over DEWITT CLINTON, 1812: Perhaps the first of the closely contested elections, few from so close back in 1812 Madison managed to beat a guy named Clinton (no, not Chelsea) by a mere 55 electoral vote—but in an era when many elections were more like coronations than true competitions, that was considered pretty close. Unfortunately, all that Mister Madison got for his troubles was a war with Britain and a burned-out White House.

9. JOHN QUINCY ADAMS over ANDREW JACKSON, 1824: Actually, this one wasn't close at all; Jackson easily beat presi-
dent John Adams's son by a whopping 18 percentage points. The problem was he failed to take the majority of the total electoral votes cast, so the whole thing to the House of Representatives where Hamilton was a winner. Not remarkably, they simply voted along party lines and gave the election to the distant second-place finisher Adams. Jackson would get his revenge, however, by trouncing Mister Adams four years later and again in 1828, two terms, which is something neither John Quincy nor his father, John Adams were ever able to do.

8. JAMES K. POLK over HENRY CLAY, 1844: This one really was close, with the victorious Polk beating one of the most popular political power brokers of his day, Henry Clay, by a mere 40,000 votes out of some 2.6 million cast. Fortunately, Polk turned out to be a fairly successful president who successfully pronounced a war with Mexico and accomplished a number of other initiatives during his brief tenure in the Oval Office, and probably would have been a shore-in for a second term had poor health discouraged him from seeking a second term.

7. GROVER CLEVELAND over JAMES BLAINE, 1884: In the first of two non-consecutive terms, New York's Democratic Gov-
ernor Blaine's attempt to sway the popular vote and clinch an election victory in the second half of the nineteenth century by squeaking out a 25,000 vote win (out of 6.5 million cast) to beat the favorite, James A. Garfield of Maine. Blaine might have won handily had he been from a state other than New York; his home state population at the time was something like 10 million people. Fortunately for the portly Cleveland, he hailed from the most populous state in the union, which gave him all the electoral votes he needed to win. Apparently, it's true: location does matter, location is everything.

6. BENJAMIN HARRISON over GROVER CLEVELAND, 1888: Four years after beating Blaine, Cleveland got his comeuppance when he lost to the grandson of the country's 12th president, William Henry Harrison. If, as the president himself remembered for managing to die a month after being sworn in.) The only problem was, Cleveland actually lost the popular vote by 100,000 votes (out of some 6.5 million cast) but lost the electoral vote, demonstrating that it's not whether you win the election, but who wins the electoral votes that is something that is sometimes disastrous. Fortunately for the former President, Cleveland, he hailed from the most populous state in the union, which gave him all the electoral votes he needed to win. Apparently, it's true: location does matter, location is everything.

5. JAMES GARNER over WINFIELD HANCOCK, 1880: In the second of the Civil War the Republicans were badly divided over a number of issues, which threatened to split the party and give the presidency to a Democrat for the first time in 20 years, but the govenor for awhile, but finally Ohio Senator James Garfield beat the distressed Civil War General Winfield Hancock by a razor thin 21,000 vote margin (out of some 6 million cast) and probably would have been a shore-in for a second term had poor health discouraged him from seeking a second term.

4. RUTHERFORD B. HAYES over SAMUEL TILDEN, 1876: After eight years of Ulysses S. Grant's corrupt and incompetent administr-
ation and another four years of Chester Arthur's unpolished reign, vot-
ers really wanted a change and cast the country into the hands of the New York Democrat Samuel Tilden president, who easily beat his op-
nonent by a comfortable 6 percentage points and over 100,000 votes. The only reason you've never heard of President Tilden is because he was cast out of the national collegial college after the fall of a clear majority needed to claim victory. After some partisan shenanigans, however, Hayes was awarded one more electoral vote than Tilden, putting the toe-toting Hayes into the White House, where he would serve two terms. It's little known that in this very close election, some historians believe that an informal deal was struck to resolve the dispute: in return for Democrat Senecavites in Hayes' election, the Republicans agreed to withdraw federal troops from the South, thereby ending Recon-
struction. I wonder if Al Gore had thought of that?

3. JIMMY CARTER over GEORGE H.W. BUSH, 1980: In the fall of 1976 Americans were apparently so angry at Tricky Dick, and his time as congressman and his brief tenure in the Oval Office, and probably would have been a shore-in for a second term had poor health discouraged him from seeking a second term.

2. JOHN F. KENNEDY over RICHARD NIXON, 1960: Probably the first really close race in the modern era, the young senator from Massachusetts barely squeaked out a victory over Ike's administration, Vice President Richard Nixon. It wasn't an over-
whelming repudiation of the Massachusetts governor turned president, however; in a race that wasn't decided until the wee hours of the morn-
ing, Carter managed to edge out a 37 electoral vote plurality. How close was it? Had Ford managed to pull out Ohio, it would have been all over for the former Governor, Carter would have had more electoral votes in this than many suspect; some historians believe that an informal deal was struck to resolve the dispute: in return for Democrat Senecavites in Hayes' election, the Republicans agreed to withdraw federal troops from the South, thereby ending Recon-
struction. I wonder if Al Gore had thought of that?

1. GEORGE W. BUSH over AL GORE, 2000: in order to arguably the most confused and upheld election in history, even the TV networks couldn't decide whether Florida was a red state or a blue state, and finally compromised by making it a shade of chartreuse. Though Gore won the popular vote by half a million votes and won both in Florida. Consider everything that happened after the next eight years, he probably wishes he'd lost.

BONUS TRIVIA FACT: Apparently being president is healthier than being vice-president. Of the 47 men who have held the office of Vice-President, 6 died while in office as compared to just four presidents. Of course, no one has ever been assassinated, so the job that he has going for it.