



## **What, Me Dull?**

Listen, one of the reasons those crazy French overthrew me, supposedly, was because I was dull and boring. I want you to know the truth. Just listen to a bit of my life and let me know if you think it was dull.

I was born in Paris (never a boring city) on October 6, 1773. My father was Louis Philippe Joseph. He was a member of the younger branch of the royal family known as the Orleans branch. He was probably the richest man in France. Did you ever hear of him? Probably not, because he is better known as Philippe Egalite, which means Philip Equality. You see, he supported the French Revolution to such a great extent that he was elected to the most revolutionary body of that period, the Convention. In fact, he also voted for the execution of King Louis XVI. My father's vote was crucial because the vote to have King Louis executed was close and passed by only one vote. So you see, he was a loyal son of the French Revolution even to the point that my father was guillotined (the revolution had a reputation of devouring its own children).

Anyway, I also supported the French Revolution and fought in important battles. I liked our general, Dumouriez, so much that I followed him right down to the time he went over to the Austrians—the Revolution. I spent a lot of time in exile during the First French Republic and later while Napoleon reigned. Since you are Americans, it might interest you to know that among the places I lived was Philadelphia, where I stayed for four years. I traveled as far as Bardstown, Kentucky, where I donated some paintings to



a church. If you visit, you can still see the paintings. But keep away from the Bourbon, which tastes terrible and, worse, has a terrible name. My sister also settled in the U.S., marrying a naturalized American citizen; one of their descendants married the mayor of Utica, NY. I later convinced her to return to France because life in the U.S. was so boring. In 1809 I married a princess of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, a daughter of King Ferdinand, and we had ten children—does that sound boring to you?

After Napoleon lost his throne, I returned to France. I didn't like Louis XVIII and I liked Charles X even less because I was a liberal. I opposed both of them and became quite popular. People were surprised that a person of the royal blood could be liberal and open-minded, not like those inflexible cousins of mine. I impressed important leaders of the time, like old Talleyrand, which helped me a lot.

Charles tried to name his grandson king when the French overthrew him, but no one trusted Bourbons any more (with good reason), so they turned to me. After all, I had fought for the French Revolution and happily accepted the revolutionary tricolor as the French national flag (something those stupid Bourbons never did), and was willing to work with the legislature. I admit it was a cheap trick the way Lafayette wrapped us in the flag to get the crowd's approval for a new monarchy, but I what can you do?

Now, you know that the French were always revolting during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, so I had to play it cool. I allied myself with the rich middle classes so I would have more support; and, after all, they had been primarily responsible for overthrowing governments although the poor served as cannon fodder. When I decided that I would not rock the boat did you see what happened? The French started considering me dull and began



comparing me to the glory that was Napoleon, especially after we transferred his body to Paris in 1844. What a mistake that was. He was buried in a stupendous memorial complex that people go to even now, but they don't come to see me. Yeah, right, glory! When Napoleon kept fighting everyone in sight the French turned against him; he only became glorious twenty years after he was safely dead. So I was peaceful in foreign affairs and helped the rich and look what happened. The French turned against me too. Did you see that cartoon Daumier did of my face turning into a pear? I don't think that's so funny, do you? But it sure was popular and contributed to people assuming I was boring. It got me so mad that I cracked down on the press, which I admit now was a mistake.

And you know what those rich people I favored did? They supported me for 17 out of the 18 years I reigned. Then they turned against me just because the economy took a hit. I just couldn't take it any more, so when I saw what was happening I abdicated on February 24, 1848. I took a cab and left Paris so I could get to England. I told people I was "Mr. Smith." I had to be careful: remember what happened to my cousin, Louis XVI. I tried to leave the throne to my grandson, but it didn't work because the revolutionaries declared another republic. And who did they get as President? That insane Louis Napoleon who tried to overthrow me twice and who would get rid of the republic.

Anyhow, that is my story. You can see that I was not a dull person but a sensible one—that's why I always took an umbrella with me. I lived quietly in Britain until



August 26, 1850. If you want to see me, I am buried in Dreux, France. Come during the annual winter festival in December. You'll have an exciting time.

**Louis Philippe**  
**King of the French, 1830-1848**

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