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## Pardoning Nixon

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## **Pardoning Nixon**

Gerald R. Ford's Decision 31 Years Later

*By Mandi Bird*

On August 9, 1974, Gerald R. Ford became the 38th president of the United States. One would think a new president taking the oath of office would be cause for celebration -- but this was hardly the case. In fact, Betty Ford stated in her book *The Times of My Life* that it was the "saddest day of my life" due to the circumstances under which President Nixon resigned.

In President Ford's autobiography, *A Time to Heal*, he gives an account of the events leading to his decision to pardon Nixon, as well as the ramifications that followed. Ford's vivid account makes the reader feel he/she is experiencing the turmoil first hand.

To this day, some accuse Ford of cutting a deal with Nixon -- if Nixon resigned and Ford became President, Ford would pardon Nixon. In his book, Ford emphatically stated that this was not the case. All of the questions surrounding the Watergate Scandal were keeping Ford from his duties as well as overshadowing the problem with inflation rates, which was sending America into an economic disaster.

President Ford, a god-fearing man with plenty of integrity, did not make the decision to pardon Nixon prior to becoming president.

One must consider that President Ford became vice-president and president without campaigning -- He never aspired to either position. (His dream was to become Speaker of the House.) Our nation needed his understanding of the issues at hand, his ability to compromise, and most of all his honesty to get through a trying time. One of my favorite quotes came from his first address: "I am indebted to no man, and only to one woman--my dear wife--as I begin this very difficult job." Ford would do what was best to "bind up the nations wounds," even pardon his disgraced predecessor.

Although I don't believe Nixon deserved a pardon any more than the men who did time for their involvement in Watergate, President Ford's decision was right for the country. It was right because the people could not forget the scandal, and the media would not let them move on -- the hearings could have gone on for years. Ford made the decision to pardon Nixon knowing it would probably cost him the presidency, but because he put America first it was probably the most honorable decision he ever made. How many men and women in government today would make the same decision?

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