

Gerald Ford

National Nightmare
Thirty-Eighth, 1974-1977



Nicknames: "The Accidental President", "Mr. Nice Guy"

Birth: July 14th, 1913, Omaha, Nebraska

Death: December 26th, 2006, Rancho Mirage, California

Significant Events During Ford's Partial Term: Pardon of Nixon ... Wounded Knee II

Quotes: *"I do not think the public would stand for it."* -- Gerald Ford, on being questioned by the Senate whether he would pardon Richard Nixon should Nixon resign the presidency

"Our long national nightmare is over." -- Gerald Ford, after pardoning Nixon

"Jerry Ford is a nice guy, but he played too much football with his helmet off."

-- attributed to Lyndon Johnson (#36)

How his term ended: Ford was defeated for reelection by Jimmy Carter.

Other Professions: Dishwasher, Waiter, Janitor, Football and Boxing Coach, Model, Park Ranger, Lawyer, Soldier

Worst Mistakes: Ford did not strictly lie about it, perhaps, but he certainly misled people when he strongly implied that he would not pardon Nixon (see the first quote above). Ford explained it away by saying that pardoning Nixon was the way to "get over" Watergate and move forward as a country. How can letting a criminal go help heal the wounds of those victimized? Doesn't it, rather, rub salt into the wounds?

In fact, using that logic (letting criminals go unpunished is balsam to their victims), the perpetrators of 9/11 should be released from prison so that we can "get over" that tragedy. Also, Hitler should be transformed from a fiend into a hero in the history books so that we can come to grips with the Holocaust and experience the yearned-for "closure" and warm and fuzzy "I'm OK, Adolf's OK" nirvana.

All letting crooks off the hook really does is encourage others to flaunt ethical codes, too. Why should people play by the rules when others don't and yet get away with it? Why should folks respect law and order if it's inconsistently enforced? Some grandmother or little girl gets the book thrown at them for downloading a song from the Internet, while Richard Nixon is handed a "Get out of Jail Free" card? Get real! Ford had a chance to show the citizens of his own country, as well as the rest of the world, that the rule of law rules the United States, and he blew it.

Worse yet, Ford was a key factor in the invasion of East Timor by Indonesia in 1975. Meeting with Indonesian General Suharto (as is true of many Javanese, Suharto only has one name), Ford and his traveling companion Henry Kissinger gave Suharto the green light to go ahead with his violent intentions toward the tiny island country. Indonesia had been holding off with the invasion, fearful of how the United States would react to such aggression. But a mere fourteen hours after Ford had assured Suharto "[We] will not press you on the issue. We understand...the intentions you have," Indonesia attacked. Tens of thousands in East Timor were killed and raped, and many women and girls were made into sex slaves.

Saving Grace: There is no record of Ford ever hitting any small children or puppies as a result of his errant golf swings.

Notes: At birth, Ford's name was Leslie Lynch King, Jr. His parents soon divorced and when

his mother remarried, her new husband, Gerald Rudolph Ford, adopted the boy and changed his name to Gerald Rudolph Ford, Jr. Ford's nickname then became "Junie," a derivation of "Junior."

Gerald had three half-brothers who were later born to the Fords. He did not learn he was adopted (child psychologists at the time recommended not telling children) until he was seventeen. While at work one day, his biological father walked in and said, "Leslie, I'm your father."

Ford was a High School football all-star. He was also an exceptional student. Ford received an athletic scholarship to the University of Michigan. After college, the offensive lineman had offers to play professional football, but turned them down.

Ford volunteered for the Navy when he was twenty-eight, after hearing about Pearl Harbor. He barely survived a typhoon that struck the Navy fleet in the South Pacific in December of 1944.

Ford was the first President to not only not be elected to the presidency, but also was never elected Vice President either (the former Vice President, Spiro Agnew, had resigned in disgrace, and Ford was *appointed* as Vice President before taking over for Richard Nixon as President, who also resigned).