

Jenn Ooton
Editorial Page Editor
303-684-5295

OPINION

To Build A Better World, Start In Your Own Community

EDITORIAL

President
Ford was
dedicated
to the U.S.Gerald R. Ford
July 14, 1913-Dec. 26, 2006

Former President Gerald Ford, who died Tuesday at the age of 93, served his nation and its people with honor, dedication and, when it counted most, great personal courage.

His 13 terms in Congress were marked by loyalty, dedication and great leadership, but the scandal-ridden years of the Nixon presidency saw Ford rise to the top.

He ascended to the vice presidency with the fall of Spiro Agnew. Then, when Richard Nixon finally succumbed to Watergate, he became the first and only president never elected to that office or to that of vice president.

As he took office he told the nation, "Our long national nightmare is over."

But it would not have been if he had not made a difficult and, as it turned out, courageous decision, one that was widely and vigorously condemned at the time.

He pardoned Nixon. In doing so, Ford did indeed end the nightmare, and the nation shook off the ugly mantle of Watergate that it had worn for so many months and moved onward.

The pardon cost Ford his political career. However, as with many things political, history provides a leveling perspective.

Five years ago, Ford was recipient of a John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award for his decision to pardon Nixon.

This man, often described as "a genuine human being," also leaves his mark on Colorado. He loved our mountains and was a good neighbor and friend to many during the years he vacationed in Vail.

In 1994, making his second visit to Loveland, the first being 59 years before, he charmed local residents with his humor and good naturedness at a Boy Scout function.

Gerald Ford was the right person at the right time in the nation's history. Announcing his passing, his wife, Betty, provided perhaps the most fitting eulogy: "His life was filled with love of God, his family and his country."



The accidental president

WASHINGTON — Those who believe that a kindly Providence keeps a watchful eye on America's welfare can cite the fact of Gerald Ford. On Aug. 9, 1974, at a moment when the nation was putting aside an unhappy, tormented president, and was aching for serenity in high places, to the center of national life strode an abnormality — a happy, normal man as president.

Watergate and a presidential resignation were only two of the nation's problems that August. The mid-'70s were years when everyday things could no longer be counted on — inflation was undermining the currency as a store of value, and lines at gasoline pumps testified to the power of foreigners to get between the Americans and their best friends, their automobiles. Ford was a political sedative for a nation with jangled nerves.

He was one of five presidents who never got elected to the office. (The others were John Tyler, Millard Fillmore, Andrew Johnson and Chester Arthur.) He was the only person to be president without receiving any popular or electoral votes for president or vice president. He was about as exotic as ... well, as he was fond of saying, he was "a Ford, not a Lincoln."

He was born in Omaha and represented a western Michigan district, and much was made, rightly, of his Midwestness. In the years before the Southern ascendancy in the Republican Party, the party spoke in the flat Midwestern cadences of the senator who had been Mr. Republican when Ford came to the House in 1949 — Robert Taft of Ohio. When Ford became minority leader in 1965 — replacing an Indianan, Charles Halleck — the second-ranking Republican was Leslie Arends and the Senate minority leader was Everett Dirksen, both of Illinois.

Ford was an "accidental president," but there are reasons why accidents happen as they do. Call it the cunning of history, or an irony of American life, but this un-

George Will
Washington Post
Writers Group

Gerald Ford came at the right time

derestimated graduate of the Yale Law School served a purpose Nixon did not have in mind when he nominated him to replace the disgraced Vice President Spiro Agnew. Nixon probably hoped Ford's popularity in the House would enable him to rally House Republicans against impeachment. Instead, Ford's presence in the vice presidency probably made his former House colleagues less afraid of impeachment.

There is a photograph of the House Chamber when President Truman was delivering one of his State of the Union addresses. Scattered through the chamber in front of Truman were four future presidents — Congressman Kennedy, Sen. Johnson, Congressman Nixon, Congressman Ford. Never before or since have four consecutive presidents gone directly from the legislative branch to national elective office.

In 1976, Ford might have won a full term if he had been less statesmanlike: His pardon of Richard Nixon unquestionably hurt him politically, but unquestionably helped with national healing. Ford also might have won if he had stepped out of character and been more adventurous — if in selecting a running mate he had chosen, as he considered doing, Ambassador Anne Armstrong, a Texan, to be

the first woman on a national ticket. Instead he chose a Midwesterner, Kansas Bob Dole, thereby giving a boost to a distinguished career that would produce the party's presidential nominee 20 years later. Ford also might have won if some unsettling economic numbers had not come out a few days before Election Day. Or if in one of the debates he had not become lost in the labyrinth of peculiar thinking and rhetoric that went with detente. He insisted that Poland was not dominated by the Soviet Union.

He almost won anyway. A change of 12,791 votes in Ohio and Mississippi would have sufficed. The 1976 presidential election was the only one the Republicans lost between 1964 and 1992. Ford was punished for Nixon's sins: Jimmy Carter won by running as the non-Nixon.

Henry Kissinger, who continued as secretary of state through the Ford years, wrote in 1999 a tribute to Ford, the "uncomplicated man" who came to the presidency in perhaps the most complicated context since the Civil War — in the aftermath of a disastrous war and as a result of a resignation. Kissinger understood that Ford, with his small-town, Midwestern aversion to histrionics, had perfect pitch for the needs of "a nation surfeited with upheavals."

Kissinger noted a "curious paradox of contemporary democracy," that as political leaders become more abject in trying to conform to the public's preferences, respect for the political class plummets. Ford was different: He "was immune to the modern politician's chameleon-like search for ever-new identities, and to the emotional roller coaster this search creates."

Surely subsequent presidential history has deepened the nation's appreciation of what it had for 29 months.

Write to George Will in care of the Washington Post Writers Group, Department 500, Washington, D.C. 20071 or georgewill@washpost.com.

Open Forum

Streets uncleared

Once again Weld County government has demonstrated its inability to provide even basic services, during and after the recent snowstorm. The roads in county subdivisions containing more than 500 families were not plowed, putting them at risk that fire and medical assistance could not reach them. The failure to plow the Vista Commercial Center, where the USPS distribution center is located, holding up the mail. Contrast this with the performance of the towns of Firestone and Frederick, which kept their arterials open throughout the storm and cleared streets the next day.

Yet the county commissioners continue to promote the profiting of a few large landowners and developers by permitting vast increases in residential development on unincorporated lands, which will only exacerbate this lack of service by county government.

This continues the mindless priority that the county commissioners give to individual profit for a few over the health, safety and welfare of the general population of Weld County residents.

JOHN FOLSOM
Longmont

Reinstate clause

Re: "City Should Support Constitution," Dec. 21, Open Forum

In the Dec. 21 opinion, the writer suggests the 1935 Constitutional duty clause should be reinstated into the city charter. I agree.

As a condition of their office, the mayor and council members are already under oath to support the Constitution in every single official action or inaction. Reinstating the constitutional duty clause into the charter will not change their duty to their oath. Their oath does not allow them to conduct, support or overlook any unconstitutional act by each other or by any city official whether hired, elected or appointed, including boards and commissions such as the Transportation Board, Planning and Zoning and Landmark designation commissions, even if such unconstitutional acts are supported by case law. Mayor and council members are ultimately responsible, through chain of command, for every single act conducted by the city.

What are they afraid of? Why don't they get the constitutional duty clause reinstated into the charter and make it required reading for every elected, appointed and hired city official?

CLYDE IOERGER
Longmont

Call them criminals

Re: "Immigrants are human," Dec. 24, Page A4

Here we go again with the bleeding heart secular regressives who are willing to allow people to flagrantly break the law, then plead to forgive the criminals by using the children as pawns in the discussion. These illegals have made a conscious decision to break the

laws of our country for personal gain. These people are not immigrants but criminals. They have jumped in front of honest people who are applying for legal immigration into the United States.

Immigrants by definition are law abiding people who want to work within the law to move to a country, make a permanent home, assimilate into the society, learn the language and become citizens. I submit that most of the people rounded up in the raids on the Swift plants fit none of these criteria. These illegals are not undocumented job seekers, illegal immigrants or any of the softball names dredged up by the dominant media. They are criminals. Their entrance into the United States has increased government expenditures for social services, caused hospitals to go bankrupt, increased the overall crime rate, increased identity theft, caused \$60 billion to be sent to Mexico yearly and on and on.

Don't believe me. Don't believe "Strategies to End Oppression." Read modern economists, such as Thomas Sowell and Walter Williams, to get the real truth of the effect of this group on the U.S. economy. Ask yourself why a group of Hispanic-surnamed citizens have filed a lawsuit against the Swift Co. in Texas, alleging the hiring of illegals caused the loss of their jobs and a 40 percent reduction of all workers wages. Find the truth for yourself.

JERALD WESKALNIES
LafayettePoliticians
not above
the law

By Tom Fitton

Special to the Daily Times-Call

As the year draws to a close, I thought you might enjoy reading Judicial Watch's newly released list of Washington's 10 "most wanted" corrupt politicians for 2006. The names below have been in the news separately, but when they hang together in a list, one is presented a sordid picture of present day Washington:

1. Jack Abramoff, former lobbyist — Abramoff is at the center of a massive public corruption investigation by the Department of Justice that, in the end, could involve as many as a dozen members of Congress. Abramoff pleaded guilty to conspiracy, fraud and a host of other charges on Jan. 3, 2006, and was sent to prison in November to serve a five-year, 10-month sentence for defrauding banks of \$23 million in Florida in 2000.

2. Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-N.Y. — In January, Hillary Clinton's fundraising operation was fined \$35,000 by the Federal Election Commission for failing to accurately report more than \$700,000 in contributions to Clinton's Senate 2000 campaign.

3. Former Rep. Randy "Duke" Cunningham, R-Calif. — In November 2005, Cunningham pleaded guilty to federal charges of conspiracy to commit bribery, mail fraud, wire fraud and tax evasion. He was sentenced to eight years, four months in prison and ordered to pay \$1.8 million in restitution in March 2006.

4. Former Rep. Tom DeLay, R-Texas — Tom DeLay, who was forced to step down from his position as House Majority Leader and then resign from Congress, decided in 2006 not to run for re-election. Congressman DeLay has been embroiled in a series of scandals from bribery to influence peddling, and was indicted twice by grand juries in Texas.

5. Former Rep. Mark Foley, R-Fla. — Foley left the House in disgrace after news broke that he had been sending predatory homosexual e-mails to a House page. A recent House Ethics Committee report indicated that Republican leaders knew about Foley's dangerous behavior but failed to take action. Outrageously, the ethics committee recommended no punishment for those involved.

6. Rep. Denny Hastert, R-Ill. — In addition to mishandling the Foley scandal, outgoing House Speaker Dennis Hastert allowed House ethics process to grind to a halt on his watch. Gary Condit, Cynthia McKinney, William Jefferson, John Conyers, Tom DeLay, Duke Cunningham, Jim McDermott, Patrick Kennedy are examples of alleged wrongdoers who faced little-to-no ethics enforcement in the House.

7. Rep. Alcee Hastings, D-Fla. — Hastings is one of only six federal judges to be removed from office through impeachment and has accumulated staggering liabilities ranging from \$2,130,006 to \$7,350,000. Hastings was "next in line" for chairmanship of the House Select Committee on Intelligence until a wave of protest forced Nancy Pelosi to select another candidate. Nonetheless, Hastings is expected to continue to serve on the Intelligence Committee.

8. Rep. William "Dollar Bill" Jefferson, D-La. — Jefferson is alleged to have accepted hundreds of thousands of dollars in bribes to help broker high-tech business deals in Nigeria. According to press reports, he was also caught on tape discussing the deals, while an FBI search of his home uncovered \$90,000 in cash stuffed in his freezer.

9. Former Rep. Bob Ney, R-Ohio — Ohio Republican Congressman Bob Ney resigned in early November 2006, three weeks after pleading guilty for accepting bribes from an Indian casino in exchange for legislative favors. Ney was the first congressman to be convicted of a crime in the web of scandals involving former lobbyist Jack Abramoff and is expected to serve a jail sentence.

10. Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nev. — Senator Reid came under fire in 2006 for failing to properly report to Congress a \$700,000 land deal. Reid also accepted more than \$30,000 of Abramoff-tainted money allegedly in return for his "cooperation" in matters related to Nevada Indian gaming.

In addition to these 10 politicians, Judicial Watch's list of "Dishonorable Mentions" includes: Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich.; Patrick Kennedy, D-R.I.; former Rep. Cynthia McKinney, D-Ga.; Rep. John Murtha, D-Pa.; Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill.; and David Safavian, a former Bush administration official.

The bad news is the list could be much longer, as there are far too many politicians who abuse the public trust and place themselves above the law. The good news is that an increasing number of corrupt politicians were either caught or thrown out of office.

Tom Fitton is president of Judicial Watch, a conservative nonpartisan educational foundation that fights government corruption. For more information on Judicial Watch's "most wanted" list, please feel free to visit www.judicialwatch.org.

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