

Joe Sikspak and Emperor Nixon



Arthur Hoppe

DEAR PRESIDENT: I, Joe Sikspak, American, take pen in hand to put a chestnut in the fire. I'm glad you finally let it out why we're still fighting in Vietnam.

Like you told those 200 wealthy Texans down at John Connally's ranch the other day, "If the United States leaves Vietnam and permits a Communist takeover," you said, "the office of the President will lose respect and I'm not going to let that happen."

You sure hit Mrs. Sikspak's nail on the head with that one. "I know exactly how the President feels," she said, when I read it to her. "It's just like Gary Cooper in High Noon."

And I know what you mean, too. If you bring our boys home and stop bombing those Vietnamese, guys are going to start wandering into your office with their hats on, putting their feet up on your coffee table, calling you a lily-livered coward and demanding you make them postmaster of Elmira, N.J., or whatever.

It's like I was saying down at Paddy's Place last night. I order a 7-Up high and say, "Paddy, me and all the boys at the factory are against this here war in Vietnam. "But," I say, "we can't have the President losing his respect."

"You're right, Joe," says he, wringing out the bar rag. "But I got the solution."

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NOW PADDY'S one smart cookie. (He was an aerospace engineer until he got vocationally re-trained.) So you ought to listen to what he says.

"Joe," he says, "who's the most wide-respected leader of our day?"

"Joe Namath?" I say. "Willie Mays?"

"... mean in politics," he says. "And the answer's Queen Elizabeth or maybe Emperor Hirohito. They get more respect than they can use."

"You want to make Nixon our Emper-

or?" I say, kind of surprised. "I don't know, Trish and Julie would make fine princesses. But Pat just don't look like an Empress. And as for the sound of Emperor Nixon, well..."

"We can't make him our Emperor, Joe," says Paddy, frowning. "It's not the American way. What we do is make him our hereditary President."

"President Nixon, The First?" I say, nodding. "That sounds okay. What's he do?"

"He greets Boy Scouts, sends gracious notes to the widows of coal miners and calls up winning football coaches," says Paddy.

"Who runs the country?" says I. "A Premier?"

"That's not the American way either, Joe," says Paddy. "Instead, he appoints a Chairman of the Board to run the country. Like maybe Henry Kissinger. No sense making any radical changes."

"This wins him respect?" I say.

"Sure, Joe," says Paddy. "Lyndon Johnson lost respect by getting us into Vietnam and Nixon says he'll lose respect if he gets us out. So the only way is to do nothing and let the Chairman of the Board take the heat. Seeing he doesn't have to worry about respect, the chairman can do the right thing."

"And the President," I say, "can win respect by riding around in his yachts and limousines and jet planes and having state marriages for his daughters and..."

"That's right, Joe," says Paddy. "The public would never notice the difference."

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SO YOU SEE, President, the way to get respected is to set up a dynasty. Only I ought to tell you that, like always, I'm for the genuine article. So come November, I'm voting for Teddy.

Truly yours,
 Joe Sikspak, American