

# Ford Becomes 38th President -- 'Our Long Nightmare Is Over'

## He Calls on Nation 'To Bind Up Wounds'

Washington

Gerald R. Ford became the 38th President of the United States yesterday, promising that "our long national nightmare is over."

Calling upon the nation to "bind up the internal wounds of Watergate," the new President declared: "Our Constitution works. Our great republic is a government of laws and not men. Here the people rule."

And then, his voice choked with emotion, he urged the nation's prayers for his predecessor and friend of a quarter century, Richard M. Nixon.

"May our former President, who brought peace to millions, find it for himself," he said.

Mr. Ford assumed the powers of the presidency at 11:35 a.m. (EDT), the moment that Mrs. Nixon's letter of resignation was handed to Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

Then, at 12:03 p.m., the new President was administered the oath of office in the East Room of the White House by Chief Justice Warren E. Burger before an overflow crowd of friends, the cabinet and present and former congressional colleagues of Mr. Ford.

In that same room, scarcely two hours earlier, Mr. Nixon had said an emotional good-by to his cabinet and top aides.

Raising his right hand, Mr. Ford rested his left hand on a Bible held by his wife and opened to one of his favorite passages, the fifth and sixth verses of the third chapter of Proverbs: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understand-

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ing. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy path."

Then in a firm voice, Mr. Ford took the oath of office.

As the thunderous applause ended, the 61-year-old president began perhaps the most moving speech of his career. Speaking with what appeared to be a new sense of self-assurance, he noted that he was assuming the presidency under circumstances never before experienced by Americans.

"This is an hour of history that troubles our minds and hurts our hearts," he said.

"Therefore," he continued, "I feel it is my first duty to make an unprecedented compact with my countrymen. Not an inaugural address, not a fireside chat, not a campaign speech. Just a little straight talk among friends. I intend it to be the first of many."

As the first American to assume the office after the resignation of a president, Mr. Ford said he is "acutely aware that you have not elected me as your President by your ballots. So I ask you to confirm me as your President with your prayers."

He declared that he had not gained office by secret promises, that he had not campaigned either for the presidency or the vice presidency.

"I have not subscribed to any partisan platform," he said, "I am indebted to no man and only to one woman — my dear wife — as I begin the most difficult job in the world."

This was reminiscent of



Gerald Ford was sworn in by Chief Justice Warren Burger as Mrs. Ford looked on

*AP Wirephoto*



PRESIDENT FORD AT DESK IN OVAL OFFICE  
His first day's work as President

*AP Wirephoto*



**President Ford met with congressional leaders (back, from left) Senator James Eastland, Representative Leslie Arends, Senator Robert Griffin, Senator Mike Mansfield, Senator Robert Byrd and Representative Robert McFall. Seated from left Senator Hugh Scott, the President, Representative Carl Albert, Representative Thomas O'Neill and Representative John Rhodes.**

*AP Wirephoto*

his earlier "I am my own man" that he sounded frequently during recent months of personal soul-searching as he sought to remain loyal to Mr. Nixon while at the same time holding himself above the spreading taint of the Watergate affair.

Declaring that while he had not sought the responsibility, he would not shirk it. He said that those who had nominated him and confirmed him just eight months ago as vice president were his friends of both parties.

"It is only fitting then that I should pledge to them and to you that I will be the president of all the people," he said.

He said he would address a joint session of Congress Monday night "to share with my former colleagues and with you, the American people, my views on the priority business of the nation, and to solicit your views and theirs."

The joint session, it was disclosed later, will begin at 9 p.m. on Monday.

Seeking to reassure the nation and the world that America has not been permanently damaged by the events of recent days, the new President pledged an uninterrupted and sincere search for peace.

"America will remain strong and united," he said, "but its strength will remain dedicated to the safety and sanity of the entire family of man as well as to our own precious freedom."

Repeating a phrase he first used during his confirmation hearings for vice president last fall, Ford remarked:

"I believe that truth is the glue that holds government together, and not only government, but civilization as well. That bond, though strained, is unbroken at home and abroad."

He pledged openness and candor in all his public and private acts as President and then, with simple eloquence, spoke the words that Americans had once despaired of ever hearing:

"My fellow Americans, our long national nightmare

is over."

In his only direct reference to Watergate, the new President said: "As we bind up the internal wounds of Watergate more painful and more poisonous than those of foreign wars, let us restore the Golden Rule to our political process, and let brotherly love purge our hearts of suspicion and hate."

Asking for the nation's prayers for the Nixon family, he spoke feelingly of Mr. Nixon's wife and daughters "whose love and loyalty will forever be a shining legacy to all who bear the lonely burdens of the White House."

"I can only guess at those burdens," he continued, "although I have witnessed at close hand the tragedies that befell three presidents and the lesser trials of others."

As he spoke his final words — "God helping me, I will not let you down" — the

several hundred persons present gave him a standing ovation.

Plans for the simple inauguration had been coordinated by General Alexander M.

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Haig Jr., who was Mr. Nixon's chief of staff.

Haig, accompanied by Mr. Nixon's long-time personal secretary, Rose Mary Woods, sat with members of Mr. Ford's own vice presidential staff during the ceremony.

The guest list had been compiled largely by Mr. and Mrs. Ford, and reflected the new president's popularity among democrats as well as members of his own party.

It was predominantly a congressional assembly, a gathering of those to whom

Mr. Ford felt closest during his long years in the House.

Former speaker John W. McCormack, a Democrat, came down from Boston and was warmly greeted on his entrance into the room by two friendly adversaries, Melvin R. Laird and John W. Brynes; both former Republican members of the House.

House Speaker Carl Albert of Oklahoma, a Democrat, arrived trailed by newly acquired secret service agents. Again, as a scant ten months ago after Spiro T. Agnew resigned as vice president, Albert stands next in line to the presidency until Ford selects and Congress confirms a new vice president.

Among others at the gathering were several who have been mentioned as possible vice - presidential choices. These included George Bush, chairman of the Republican National Committee, and Representative John Anderson of Illinois, third - ranking Republican leader in the House.

The new President showed little of the strain of the last few days as he arrived for his inauguration. He was wearing a navy blue suit and a red, white and blue necktie.

He had arisen just about dawn yesterday, after only a few hours of sleep, and, wearing a robe, retrieved the morning newspaper — emblazoned with the headline, "Nixon Resigns" — from his front steps.

While the rest of the family slept, he prepared breakfast for himself and his youngest son, 18 - year - old Steve, then conferred for nearly an hour at home with two of his close advisers, Byrnes and Philip W. Buchen of Grand Rapids, his former law partner.

*New York Times*



*AP Wirephoto*

**President Ford kissed his wife after he was sworn in as President in the East Room of the White House**