



## Thanks, Mr. Ford

**Andrew Tully**

**WE OWE HIM.** This Thanksgiving week is a fitting time to say "much obliged" to Gerald Ford.

He came to us when he was most needed. We didn't need the cerebral flamboyance of a John Kennedy or a Franklin Roosevelt. We needed a President who could remind us that the Republic was still basically sound, a Gerald Ford who rejected despair.

His critics have charged that he was uninspired, that he offered us no bright visions of the future. True. He is not a man of spectacular ideas. But with low voice and low profile, Mr. Ford restored respectability and goodness to the office of the presidency.

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**IRONICALLY,** Gerald Ford was a gift to the nation from Richard Nixon, who had left the presidency in ruins. That figured. Whatever the degree of Nixon's rascality, he could read the scoreboard. He knew that after Spiro Agnew — and himself — the nation needed a tranquilizer.

There are those who claim that in return for the vice presidency Mr. Ford agreed to pardon Nixon should the necessity arise. Assuming the truth of this allegation, I don't believe Gerald Ford had to be persuaded to go along. He didn't need to be told that putting Nixon in the dock would seriously, perhaps fatally, wound the Republic. If he felt contempt for Richard Nixon, he also had concern for his country.

Indeed, an immediate Nixon pardon was imperative. For nearly two years the country had perforce riveted its attention on Watergate and its attendant scandals. Newspaper front pages and television screens bellowed the indecencies revealed in the Watergate hearings, the courtroom proceedings, and the scandalous White House tapes, all orchestrated to produce the impeachment of a President for high crimes and misdemeanors.

At a time when government was in near chaos, Mr. Ford was determined to put Watergate behind us. He knew pardoning Nixon would be unpopular, but it is a measure of the man's character that he put the commonweal above his political good.

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**MR. FORD** didn't achieve big things. There are still too many unemployed Americans. But his policies did bring an end to the recession, and the record book will show that during his two-year-plus term in office the rate of inflation was reduced to about half. American troops left Vietnam. Under his stewardship, Egypt and Israel signed the Sinai agreement after years of stalemate. And even his vetoes showed a President strong enough to say no.

Finally, Mr. Ford found enough self-confidence to run one of the most gruelling presidential campaigns in history. He lost the race, but not until he had fought to the bitter end for his policies.