

The Value of a Living Ex-President

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By Howard N. Meyer

ROCKVILLE CENTRE, N. Y.—Since my own early days, the United States has always had at least one living ex-President, one who had acquired wisdom and experience in office and the detachment and objectivity that came with departure from office.

Taft, Coolidge, Hoover, Truman, Eisenhower, and for a brief period Johnson, survived during the terms of their successors. They were available for counsel, even if not always called upon; they could be scurried to in

times of crisis (the aftermath of the Bay of Pigs presents a case in point) to restore a band-aid sort of national unity; they could be turned to in times of need, as when Truman asked Hoover to help starving postwar Europe.

Above all, they were a national symbol of comfort and stability—not quite on the order of the British royal family—to whom the troubled and disaffected could look for some kind of support for morale.

Now for months too long, we have been without a living ex-President.

This is a serious cause of disturbance and unease. It is almost as if there were an unfilled constitutional office.

Richard M. Nixon could serve his country well if he were to appreciate the gravity of this problem and volunteer to fill the need. How greatly we would all appreciate his sacrifice if he were to offer to function as a living ex-President. It would aid national unity in a time of crisis and near-despair as nothing else could.

Howard N. Meyer is author of "The Amendment That Refused to Die," on the Fourteenth Amendment.
