

Nixon's Emotional Farewell

... As I pointed out last night, I'm sure we've done some things wrong in this Administration. And the top man always takes the responsibility and I've never ducked it. But I want to say one thing: We can be proud of you. In five and a half years, no man or no woman came into this Administration and left it with more of this world's goods than he came in. No man or no woman ever profited at the public expense, or the public till. That tells something about you. Mistakes, yes. But for personal gain, never. You did what you believed in, sometimes right, sometimes wrong, and I only wish that I were a wealthy man—ha! At the present time I've got to find a way to pay my taxes. And if I were, I'd like to recompense you for the sacrifices that all of you have made to serve in government...

You know, people often come in and say, what'll I tell my kids. You know, they look at government. It's sort of a rugged life and they see the mistakes that are made. They get the impression that everybody is here for the purpose of feathering his nest. That's why I made this earlier point. Not in this Administration. Not one single man or woman.

And I say to them there are many fine careers. This country needs good

farmers, good businessmen, good plumbers, good carpenters. I remember my old man. I think that they would have called him sort of a little man, common man. He didn't consider himself that way. Know what he was? He was a streetcar motorman first. And then a farmer. And then he had a lemon ranch. It was the poorest lemon ranch in California, I can assure you. He sold it before they found oil on it [laughter]. And then he was a grocer. But he was a great man, because he did his job and every job counts up to the hilt regardless of what happens.

Nobody'll ever write a book, probably, about my mother. Well, I guess all of you would say this about your mother—my mother was a saint... Yes, she will have no books written about her. But she was a saint. Now, however, we look to the future.

I had a little quote in the speech last night from T.R. [Theodore Roosevelt]. As you know, I like to read books. I'm not educated, but I do read books [laughter]... There's another [quote] I found as I was reading my last night in the White House... He'd married a beautiful girl and they had a lovely daughter. And then suddenly she [Roosevelt's wife] died. This is what he wrote...

"And when my heart's dearest died, the light went from my life forever."

That was T.R. in his 20s. He thought the light had gone from his life forever, but he went on. And he not only became President, but as an ex-President he served his country, always in the arena, tempestuous, strong, sometimes right. But he was a man. And as I leave, let me say that's an example I think all of us should remember...

We think that when someone dear to us dies, we think that when we lose an election, we think that when we suffer a defeat, that all is ended. We think, as T.R. said, that the light had left his life forever. Not true. It's only a beginning always... Because the greatness comes not when things go always good for you, but the greatness comes when you're really tested, when you take some knocks and some disappointments, when sadness comes. Because only if you've been in the deepest valley can you ever know how magnificent it is to be on the highest mountain...

Always give your best. Never get discouraged. Never be petty. Always remember, others may hate you, but those who hate you don't win unless you hate them. And then, you destroy yourself. And so we leave, with high hopes, in good spirit and with deep humility and with very much gratefulness in our hearts...



TEDDY ROOSEVELT WITH WIFE ALICE (LEFT), CA. 1882; NIXON'S FATHER FRANK, 1952; MOTHER HANNAH, 1956