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The Citizen President

Written By: Harry Gribnitz

During the mid 1970, I was still living in the Chicago area. I must admit until he became Vice-President, I really knew very little about Gerald R. Ford. When he was chosen to succeed Spiro Agnew as Vice-President, I remember everyone praising his honesty, humility, frugality and West Michigan values. I was pleased with the contrast with the Nixon Administration and the Watergate mess. I was very optimistic when he succeeded to the Presidency as the United States first unelected President.

"I am acutely aware that you have not elected me as your president by your ballots, so I ask you to confirm me with your prayers."

"Our long national nightmare is over. Our Constitution works. Our great republic is a government of laws and not of men"

"A government big enough to give us everything we want is a government big enough to take from us everything we have."

We now had a President that I could respect, honor and follow. Maybe our national nightmare was over. But then he did what at the time seemed to me to be the unthinkable, "I, Gerald R. Ford, President of the United States.....have granted and do grant a full, free and absolute pardon unto Richard Nixon" I was stunned and dismayed. In the aftermath of Watergate and Viet Nam, my first thought was had the "fix" been in all along? Was a pardon a part of the political deal. Was President Ford really not the man we thought he was?

The scrutiny of history proved President Ford was correct. He was not only a man of impeccable integrity but one of courage. How had he reached this monumental decision? Did he form a "blue ribbon" special presidential commission to study the issue and make a recommendation? Did he wait for congress to hold hearings? Did he consult his advisors? Did he take a "poll"?

Let's let him tell us in his own words. "We needed to get the matter off my desk in the Oval Office so I could concentrate on the problems of 260 million Americans and not have to worry about the problems of one man.' It can go on and on, or someone must write "The End" to it. I have concluded that only I can do that. And if I can, I must."

His honesty, candor and enlightened thinking probably cost him the Presidential election. I hope we can find a Citizen just like him to elect in 2008. A Citizen President concerned about the problems of his fellow citizens not worried about their standing in the polls.

Sincerely,

*Harry Gribnitz
Your Home Loan Specialist for Life!*

PS: Did you happen to notice the tribute to President Ford on the envelope for the letter? No, I am not talking about the stamp. We reused some envelopes that had an incorrect return address. Isn't frugality another West Michigan virtue? I think President Ford would have appreciated this understated tribute and given us one of his warm smiles.

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