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The nation recently laid to rest one of its most controversial political enigmas, ever to serve as President of the United States, Richard M. Nixon. I was struck by the restraint, quite properly I thought, shown by most of the press and the public at-large, of being able to lay aside any differences and come together, fully united as a nation, for the solemnity of the moment. It once again, demonstrated the resiliency of the American people to rise above controversy.

However, the moment has passed, and must say that I have an entirely different recollection of the historical events of this man's presidency, than the near canonization of this individual, some might have us accept.

I, personally, do not feel that Mr. Nixon deserved the full-honors bestowed upon him, ostensibly in honor and respect for the office for which he once held. He was the first President to be driven from office, in disgrace, in the history of our union. Had he not resigned, he would have most surely been ousted from that office by impeachment (between July 27 and 30, 1974 the House Judiciary Committee, had indeed, passed three articles of impeachment). Although I might have a sense as to why President Ford decided to pardon Nixon, I cannot feel this pardon was in the best interest of the United States. One need only to ponder the weight of the evidence and the gravity of the crimes committed, and we must not dilute ourselves, crimes were committed. Consider in contrast, if you will, a military individual who receives a Dishonorable Discharge. That individual loses all benefits afforded all Americans, including the right to vote or to run for public office. As Richard Nixon was Commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces, I consider his likelihood of impeachment with the same gravity as I would a Dishonorable Discharge.

Richard Nixon, did more to tear down the institution, that of the Office of Presidency of the United States than any of those who went before him. What was once revered with such high esteem, and respect around the world, this office has now become one of cynicism and distrust, and this feeling, unfortunately, as a result of Watergate, permeates the entire spectrum of political life today.

Politicians, so it seems, have an uncanny knack for feeding off one another, and it was this aspect during the funeral that came through loud and clear to me while listening to the eulogies being delivered. All were self-serving and told more about the man giving the eulogy, than of the man they supposedly come to honor. The political posturing for future gain, I found very distasteful, but clearly evident.

Mr. Nixon, to end of his life, has never admitted any wrong doing, yet the Watergate tapes clearly

showed an abuse of power at a level never thought possible in our democratic form of government.

The tapes also showed quite a different side of Richard Nixon, from a moral stand-point, contrary to the praises raised in eulogy for him. The foul language he used, and the four-letter words, he flippantly bantered about in describing fellow Americans who just happened to be on the wrong side of him philosophically, astounded, not only the public, but even one of the most respected and beloved Evangelists of our time, Billy Graham, who as much said so! Too, we must not forget what is described as **The Enemies List**, frightening wasn't it? And will the remainder of the Nixon tapes ever be released to the public? I am sure they would go along way to dispel some of the revisionists' conceptions of history and allow the public in the future to know what actually did happen.

How American, was a much repeated refrain, used by Senator Dole in his eulogy, in describing Richard Nixon's life. Well, Senator Dole, without any equivocation, mental reservation, or self-evasion of mind, must surely realize what Richard Nixon did to the Office of Presidency was not American, it was clearly **UNAMERICAN!**

There is an old French Proverb, which states:

**"The reputation of a man is
like a shadow: It sometimes
follows and sometimes precedes
him — it is sometimes short
and sometimes long."**

Unfortunately, **that one very long and very dark shadow of Watergate**, completely overshadows any accomplishments he may have enjoyed, **and this shadow will certainly follow him, as his legacy, into the history books.**

John Dean, Counsel to the Presidency during Watergate, had it right when he advised Mr. Nixon, "that a Cancer was growing on the Presidency . . .", little did we realize that this cancer would be **TERMINAL**. For never again will the Office of the Presidency ever regain the esteem or trust it once enjoyed by the American people and the world. Unfortunately, neither Presidents Reagan or Bush, who would follow, did very little to alleviate these fears, or to ". . . put Humpty-Dumpty back together again."

This is the real legacy left by Richard Nixon, and history must record it as so, and we must never let it be forgotten, lest it be repeated.

Sincerely,

P.S. — Lest we forget, the jury and verdict are still out on President Clinton, truly astounding and a sad state of affairs, that we should find ourselves comparing wrong-doing from one Administration to another. Is there no brighter side to politics?