

President Gerald R. Ford

The 38th President of the United States, Gerald R. Ford, was born in Omaha, Nebraska in 1913 to Leslie Lynch King and Elizabeth Speer. His boyhood years were spent in Grand Rapids, Michigan. What is not well known is that Gerald was adopted at the age of 12 by Gerald R. Ford Sr. a successful businessman in Grand Rapids. The young Ford became the half brother of four brothers and two sisters.

In his early school years Gerald was very good at athletics. While attending the University of Michigan, Gerald was so good on the football field that he could have become a professional football player after graduation. However, he chose to go to Yale University to study law. Working as an assistant coach at the school, he graduated in 1941 and passed the bar examination to become a lawyer in the same year. He did practice law for little more than a year before joining the U.S. Navy during World War II.

During his Navy years, Gerald's ship, the U.S.S. Monterey, was involved in many battles in the South Pacific and his ship took part in the recapture of the Philippine Islands. Upon his discharge in 1946 Gerald Ford held the rank of Lieutenant Commander.

After leaving the Navy Gerald Ford practiced law for awhile even though he was interested in politics. He entered into public service in 1949 when he was elected as a U.S. Representative to Congress for the State of Michigan. Gerald Ford was re-elected to this office twelve times. The people he represented and his political colleagues thought him to be a deeply sincere and honest individual. This would one day come to be very important as the events of the United States political scene unfolded in the early 1970s.

In 1973, then Vice President Spiro Agnew resigned from his position because of criminal charges of bribery being brought against him. Bribery means giving a secret gift, usually money, to someone in power to get a favor in return. The 25th Amendment to the Constitution states that, if the office of Vice President is vacant, the President can appoint a new Vice President, as long as Congress approves the appointment.

The President, Richard Millhouse Nixon, nominated Gerald Ford to be the new Vice President in part because of Ford's good reputation for honesty. Both the Senate and the House of Representatives confirmed Mr. Ford and he took office on December 6, 1973. However, the Watergate break-in scandal erupted in 1974 and on the 8th of August 1974 then President Nixon resigned from office as well. He was the first President to do so.

President Gerald R. Ford (Cont'd)

The 25th Constitutional Amendment also states that if the President resigns the Vice President takes over the office. So Congressman Gerald R. Ford was the first person to become the Vice-President by the provisions of the 25th Amendment and then to become President by the 25th Amendment. Gerald Ford became President without being elected Vice President or President by the people of the United States.

Knowing that the country was in great turmoil from all of the circumstances that had occurred, President Ford pardoned Richard M. Nixon. He then went on to nominate Nelson D. Rockefeller to be the Vice-President. Thus Governor Nelson Rockefeller became the second Vice-President to be installed in the office of Vice President by appointment under the 25th Amendment.

President Ford went on to slowly replace the people in Nixon's cabinet with the people he wanted in his cabinet positions. Ford, a Republican, was often opposed by the strongly Democratic controlled Congress. First inflation and rising prices consumed the new President's energies and then this was followed by a recession. President Ford was quite conservative in his financial views and more moderate in his domestic influences.

The new President worked energetically in world affairs to calm the state of distrust between Egypt and Israel. Ultimately this led to the first truce between the two countries. He worked to push for additional nuclear limitation treaties with the Russians during this part of the Cold War.

Other very criticized actions undertaken by President Ford included his offer to pardon draft dodgers from the Vietnam War if they would work in public service for two years and swear by reaffirmation their oath and allegiance to the United States. Similarly deserters could rejoin the branch of service that they deserted and serve two years faithfully. Upon completion of this service they would then have their deserter status rescinded.

The Vietnam War continued into 1974 but President Ford could obtain no further funding from the Congress in order to aid the South Vietnamese. This was the precursor to the fall of Saigon in 1975 and the combining of South and North Vietnam into a single Communist controlled country.

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In the election of 1976 President Ford was nominated by the Republican Party as their Presidential nominee, and the Democrats selected Jimmy Carter. It was to be Jimmy Carter, the Governor of Georgia, who would be the next President of the United States.

After leaving office President Ford served on various committees and lectured across the country. His memoirs put to words Gerald Ford's desires and accomplishments in healing the United States during some of its most troubling political times. The 38th President of the United States, Gerald Rudolph Ford, passed away at the age of 93 one day after Christmas in the year 2006. The President and his wife Betty had three sons and one daughter.

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President Gerald R. Ford Questions

1. As a young man, Gerald Ford excelled at what sport?
 - a. Baseball
 - b. Football
 - c. Golf
2. During World War II, Gerald Ford served in the U.S.
 - a. Army
 - b. Navy
 - c. Marines
3. Gerald Ford served for many years as a
 - a. U.S. Congressman
 - b. U.S. Senator
 - c. Governor
4. Gerald Ford was well known for his
 - a. Bribery
 - b. Business knowledge
 - c. Honesty
5. Gerald Ford became Vice President because he was
 - a. Nominated by the Republican Party
 - b. Nominated by the Democratic Party
 - c. Appointed under the provisions of the 25th Amendment
6. Gerald Ford became President by
 - a. A landslide vote of the American people
 - b. A narrow vote by the American people
 - c. The provisions of the 25th Amendment
7. Gerald Ford pardoned former President
 - a. Richard Nixon
 - b. Jimmy Carter
 - c. Nelson Rockefeller
8. Which war continued while Gerald Ford was President?
 - a. Operation Desert Shield
 - b. Operation Desert Storm
 - c. Vietnam War

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President Gerald R. Ford Answers

Multiple Choice

1. b.
2. b.
3. a.
4. c.
5. c.
6. c.
7. a.
8. c.