

# Past presidents are not forgotten

The Presidents' Day holiday honors our past presidents.

Before 1971, the country celebrated President George Washington's Birthday on Feb. 22. Many states also observed President Abraham Lincoln's birthday on Feb. 12.

Congress moved several holidays to Mondays so that people could have a long weekend. Washington's Birthday moved to the third Monday in February in 1971.

President Nixon renamed the holiday Presidents' Day. Congress never officially changed the name. However, most people now call it Presidents' Day.

This year, the Kid honors former President Gerald R. Ford. He died Dec. 26, 2006.

Ford was born in Omaha, Nebraska, on July 14, 1913. He grew up in Grand Rapids, Michigan and starred

on the University of Michigan football team. Then, he served as assistant coach at Yale while studying law.

He was a lieutenant commander in the Navy during World War II. After the war, he started his law practice in Grand Rapids.

Elizabeth "Betty" Bloomer and Ford were married just before he was elected to Congress in 1948. They had four children, Michael, John, Steven, and Susan.

President Ford was never elected as vice president or president.

In 1973, the country faced a crisis. Vice President Spiro Agnew resigned as part of a plea bargain for taking bribes and not paying his taxes.

President Richard Nixon nominated Ford to become vice president. During his 25 years in Congress, Ford was known as a man who told the truth and kept his word. He was quickly approved by Congress and became vice president on Dec. 6, 1973.

However, the crisis in government was not over. The Nixon White House was under investigation for illegal activities during the 1972 campaign. The scandal was called "Watergate" because the first crime discovered was a burglary at an office in the Watergate hotel and office building. A court ordered Nixon to give up recordings of conversations in the White House.

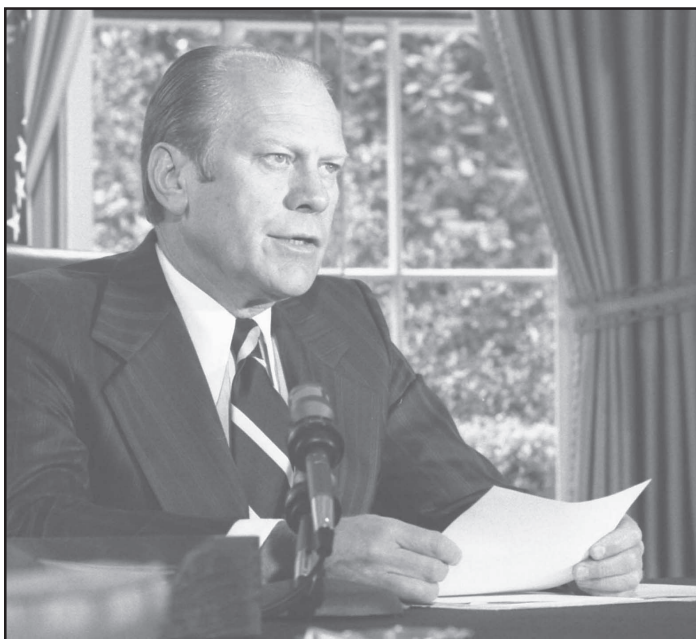
Nixon resigned after Congress started the process to remove him as president.

Ford became the 38th president of the United States on Aug. 9, 1974.

A month later, Ford pardoned Nixon for any crimes Nixon committed while president. Most Americans did not like the pardon at the time. Jimmy Carter of Georgia beat Ford in the 1976 presidential campaign.

History has taken a more positive view of the pardon. Ford is respected for his calm, honest approach through the crisis.

Ford died Dec. 26 at his home in Rancho Mirage, California. His final resting place is a hillside north of the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library in Ann Arbor, Michigan.



President Ford announces his decision to pardon Nixon.

Courtesy Gerald R. Ford Library, Photographer David Kennerly

## Word scramble:

Unscramble this quote from Gerald Ford that explains his view of human nature.

T O M S   P O P L E E   R E A   S O L T Y M

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D O G O ,   S T O M   F O   H E T   M I E T

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## Newspaper in Education Activity

Find five words in your newspaper that you could use to describe our president.

Write a paragraph to explain why you selected these words.