



"Sugar!"

**Ford's
pardoning
closes
book**

joe dreesen
smiling grimly

Gerald Ford's pardon of Richard Nixon on Sept. 15, 1974, came as an unexpected surprise to an already confused and battered nation, floundering in the morass of Watergate.

Ford had assured the country three separate times before Sept. 15, that he would let the judicial process run its course in regard to Richard Nixon, and only then would he consider the question of a pardon.

So why did Ford take such rash action in pardoning Nixon, resulting in a serious loss of credibility and popularity to his one-month old presidency?

According to Ford, by pardoning Nixon he hoped to 'shut and seal the books' of Watergate and therefore, heal the nation's wounds. While he gave other reasons for the pardon (Nixon's health, his inability to receive a fair trial) this seemed to be his primary motive, according to him.

What Ford really did was to pour acid on an already festering wound.

Angry protests were raised nationwide, people complained of a double standard of justice. According to Sen. Howard Baker, Watergate was "once again an issue."

Was Ford oblivious to the mood of the nation just prior to the pardon announcement?

A nationwide public opinion poll then showed that 60 per cent of the American people thought Richard Nixon should be brought to trial.

Certainly Ford was aware of this poll. Unless he was

an utter fool, he would have realized that, by pardoning Nixon, he would alienate at least a majority of the population.

So did Ford have other reasons for pardoning Nixon? Was there a deal struck between the two back in the fall of 1973, when they discussed the possibility of Ford becoming vice-president?

The chance of being vice-president and even ultimately president is an alluring prize for anyone. At that time, it was not thought that Nixon would be impeached or forced to resign. Even if Ford agreed to pardon Nixon in return for the vice-presidency, his chances of having to do so were slim.

To insure that Ford would not renege on his promise, one could surmise that Nixon taped the discussion of a pardon. In the event that Ford did not go through with the deal, Nixon might have turned this tape over to the press. He had nothing to lose, Ford everything.

While the above is mainly conjecture, it is also conjecture which allows us to believe Ford's stated reasons for the pardon, which are in themselves vague and unclear.

Ford was merely an appointee of a president who practiced moral tergiteude in excess. Could that in itself be a reflection on Ford's character and integrity?

The answer to this question and others concerning Watergate will probably never be known. Gerald Ford has indeed "shut and sealed the book" on Watergate, but without writing the last chapter.

Ford learning colorful ways to say recession

A top economic adviser slipped up yesterday and told reporters that President Jerry Ford's inauguration promise to "straight talk" to America is a hoax.

"It really stands for 'late talk,'" he said, "and it isn't even new."

His comment referred to the White House's sudden announcement earlier this week: "By golly, we're in a recession after all."

The President seemed dismayed about the mistake. "Well, there goes my open, honest administration image," he said. "It was nice while it lasted."

The President then admitted he and his economic chief Alan Greenthumb have known for at least five months the nation was in a recession, but purposely have been denying it. Sort of.

"It was such fun keeping you guessing!" he said.

"Yes, but don't you think the American public deserves to know the truth—all of it—as it surfaces?" I asked.

"Really," he said, "any dimwit educated American citizen can see we have unemployment, slow economic growth and rising inflation. That's recession. Why should we have to come out on page one and label it that?"

"And anyway, I figure as long as the American people want to go on believing in

endless prosperity despite it all, spending their wads of bills and buying on credit, I shouldn't spoil their party. They look so happy in their ignorance."

The President told us the mastermind organization is LAG, a top-secret cabinet office run by the White House press secretary. LAG processes all truth about the state of the Union as it comes in, and then he and his staff decide how long to wait to release it to the public—"for their own good," he said.

nancy stohs
second thoughts

"Without LAG I'd probably have announced things left and right (that's a pun) at all the wrong times," he said. "Like pardoning Mr. Nixon. That was decided last May, you know, right after the President decided he was going to resign."

"Oh? And what are you keeping from us now?"

"Oh, there's a host of things about Watergate you don't know yet," he grinned.

"We're not releasing those until 1990, when we feel they can be judged more objectively."

"Has this holding back of information always gone on?" I asked.

"Oh, certainly, all the way back to Honest Abe. Let's see, I believe the Civil War was actually declared five years before it broke. But I'm not sure—that isn't scheduled for release yet."

Based on how far behind it is on current events, he said, the public is really living in about 1961.

"Actually, LAG insures the public they'll find out about these things at all," he said. "If they'd just open up their eyes they could see for themselves half of what's going on. But it takes our declaring a war, calling a state of emergency or announcing a world food crisis to make them think twice."

I asked him if that still wasn't better than letting 200 million people live under harmful illusions?

And doesn't it take facing the facts to create solutions?

"Oh, I suppose. But the longer we delay, the better we look, as if we're doing all we possibly can to prevent it. Besides, it gives me a chance to practice my rhetoric. Do you know how many colorful ways there are to say 'we're not in a recession, it just looks that way?'"