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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

November 19, 1976

Dear Bob:

I don't want to let any more time elapse before I let you know how appreciative I and Betty and the rest of our family are for your most kind open letter published in the Chicago Sun Times on November 4th.

The great disappointment of me and my family at losing the election has been eased by the knowledge that you and others understand what I have tried to accomplish in my two and a half years in the White House.

In the future, as I look back on this period, I will treasure the thoughtful and considerate things you wrote about my Presidency.

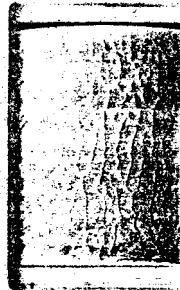
Betty and the children join me in sending to you our very best personal wishes.

Sincerely,

Jerry *Ful*

Mr. Bob Greene
Chicago Sun Times
401 N. Wabash Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60611

*P.S. Many, many friends
have written from all over the
Nation enclosing your wonderful
column saying your words were
there's. J.*





Loser quite a man

Thanks, Mr. Ford — we

Dear Mr. Ford —

These must be among the most trying hours of your life, and I hope this letter is not an intrusion. Losing the Presidency is a hurt that only a handful of men will ever know, and no one besides yourself can understand the personal sorrow that you are feeling now.

But I wanted to write — as one of many Americans who are not very interested in politics and who are not registered members of either political party — to say thanks. Thanks for being there when we all needed you.

You did not seek the Presidency when it was handed to you. You were the middleman in a crisis the like of which we may never see again. The rest of us could feel relief when your predecessor left office; while we talked about how the bad times were over, you alone faced the burden of trying to put us all back together again.

Before you came to office, you said you never would run for the Presidency on your own. You changed your mind soon after entering the White House, but it would be hard to blame you for that. Only 36 other persons in the history of this nation shared with you the experience of being President; it is not hard to imagine that the lure of wanting it some more is an enticement hardly any man could resist.

IN THE FIRST MINUTES of your Presi-



**Bob
Greene**

dency, you said that you realized that you had not been elected by our votes. You asked that, in the absence of our ballots, you could have our prayers. You wished aloud that your predecessor and his family could find personal peace; you said that the long national nightmare was over.

We out here in the country were moved by your speech that day. But we all have short memories; within months we were treating you the same way we have treated all of our modern Presidents. It is probably good, this intense scrutiny and easy criticism, for it helps make a President realize that his constituency is, indeed, paying close attention. But in your case we went out of our way to let you know we did not regard you as an unflawed man.

So we made the jokes, and the nasty cracks, and the innuendos. It wasn't just the editorial cartoonists and the political columnists; so many of us joined in the glee at

laughing every time you displayed clumsiness, making jokes about your way with words and snickering at the way you were led to believe was your lack of athletic ability. That you were an athlete; that you were a discerning survivor of the political arena of the Congress; that you were a top graduate of the class at Yale University; those things did not impress us. Now you were the target. Presidents are the biggest target.

BY THE TIME this election was over, it was fashionable to pick on a bumbling clown. How this may have been you as a human we didn't realize. You were the President, and that it had been conditioned to treat our Presidents the second half of the 20th Century.

So you must be nursing hurt that was never expected. You will be leaving the White House soon, perhaps leaving Washington now perhaps it is the right time to say words to you that we didn't even say.

You were a victim of circumstances, and we were victims of circumstances, and the crushing of the spirit that was about by your predecessor. It is easier for us to be victims, than to merely complain and not be able to do anything about it.



Together in defeat

Standing side by side in the White House press room Wednesday, the entire Ford family sadly but courageously accepts defeat. His voice almost gone after rigorous campaigning in the last few weeks, President Ford asked his wife, Betty, to read the concession telegram congratulating Jimmy Carter "on your victory." Lined up behind the First Lady are (l. to r.) Steve, the President, Susan, Michael, Mrs. Michael Ford and Jack. (AP)

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Mr. Ford—we needed that

Bob Greene

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laughing every time you displayed a physical clumsiness, making jokes about your uneasy way with words and snickering over what we were led to believe was your lack of intellect. That you were an athlete; that you were a discerning survivor of the political infighting of the Congress; that you were an attorney graduating near the top of your law school class at Yale University; those things did not impress us. Now you were the President, and Presidents are the biggest targets we have.

BY THE TIME this election season came around, it was fashionable to portray you as a bumbling clown. How this may have affected you as a human we didn't much care. You were the President, and that is how we have been conditioned to treat our Presidents in the second half of the 20th Century.

So you must be nursing hurts that you never expected. You will be leaving the White House soon, perhaps leaving Washington. And now perhaps it is the right time to say the words to you that we didn't ever say before.

You were a victim of circumstances. We all were victims of circumstances, of the national crushing of the spirit that was brought about by your predecessor. It was a little easier for us to be victims, though; we could merely complain and not be forced to do anything about it.

You, though—you had the job of beginning the healing. And you did it.

TWO YEARS AGO, it seemed at times impossible that we could ever be a nation that could smile again. That we could ever be a people who felt good about ourselves. But somehow it began to turn around. And you, more than anyone else, did it. In a quiet, low-key way, you made sure we knew that the White House was not a place of uncleanness any more. You made sure that we knew that a President could, indeed, still be a caring man worthy of our trust. You helped get us out.

I don't want to talk about the results of Tuesday night's balloting. As I said at the beginning of this letter, there are many of us who do not spend very much time thinking about political matters, and it is best to leave the political analysis to those who make a career of that.

This is just a note of gratitude for helping all of us find a peace that, for awhile, seemed destined never to be ours again. May you and your own family find peace, too. We can never repay you for the service you gave to your countrymen when we needed it most. It is difficult to put our feelings into words, but please know that the feelings are there, and that we will not forget.

Thank you, Mr. President.