

Tribute Gallery

Presidents are judged for what they accomplish in office, but also for what they set in motion to be realized by others. It is no exaggeration to say that during his short time in the White House, Gerald Ford gave the American people back their government. One biographer has called America's 38th President "an ordinary man called to serve America in extraordinary times."

In the years after leaving the White House and Washington, D.C., Gerald Ford received numerous tributes and awards for his decades of public service.

Profiles in Courage

2001

Named after John F. Kennedy's Pulitzer prize-winning book of the same name, this award is presented annually to a public official who best demonstrates political courage. When awarding it to Gerald Ford, Caroline Kennedy noted that it was being given for his ... "Decision of conscience to pardon former President Richard M. Nixon."

Presidential Medal of Freedom

1999

The Presidential Medal of Freedom is the nation's highest civilian decoration. Established by President Truman in 1945 to honor civilians providing exemplary service during WWII, President Kennedy expanded the focus to include those who make "an especially meritorious contribution to the security or national interest of the United States or to ... other significant public or private endeavors." President Bill Clinton presented it saying, "(Gerald Ford) guided our Nation toward reconciliation and a reestablished confidence in our government."

The Congressional Gold Medal

1998

Considered the most distinguished form of recognition bestowed by Congress, each medal is unique, each struck exclusively for its recipient. George Washington was the first to receive the Congressional Gold Medal in 1776. President and Mrs. Ford were the first President and First Lady to be

presented with the award, jointly. It was given to them for, “dedicated public service and outstanding humanitarian contributions to the people of the United States.”

Mrs. Ford also received honors in her own right.

Gerald R. Ford Medal for Distinguished Public Service
2005

Established in 2003, this award is given annually by the Gerald R. Ford Foundation’s Board of Trustees to an individual who has served the public good in the private and public sectors and whose service reflects the strength of character, diligence, decisiveness, sound judgment and integrity depicted by Gerald Ford. When Mrs. Ford was presented with the award, Gerald Ford said, “Her total dedication to openness, frankness, her real strong belief in equal rights for women, her handling of her breast cancer, her forthrightness of dealing with her chemical dependency are strong character evidences of a lady I tremendously admire.”

Presidential Medal of Freedom
1991

Our nation’s highest civilian honor was presented to Betty Ford by President George H.W. Bush. In his remarks, President Bush said, “Her courage and candor have inspired millions of Americans to restore their health, protect their dignity, and shape full lives for themselves.”

Gerald R. Ford passed away on December 26, 2006. Services were held in Rancho Mirage, California and at the U.S. Capitol and National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. On January 2, 2007 President Ford’s remains came home one final time to Grand Rapids where tens of thousands of mourners silently passed by his casket. At sunset on January 3, Gerald R. Ford, the nation’s 38th President of the United States, was laid to rest on the grounds of the Museum that bears his name.