

## *Day of Mourning*

Today, January 2, has been proclaimed as a National Day of Mourning for Gerald R. Ford, the 38<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, who died on December 26, 2006, at the age of 93. President George W. Bush has ordered United States flags to be flown at half-staff for a period of 30 days from the day of his death “in honor and memory” of the fallen leader. Life Care and Century Park facilities are complying with the request.

Americans paid their final respects as they moved through the Capitol Rotunda in Washington, where Ford’s body lay in state, on Sunday and Monday. Many of them recalled how they were affected by Ford’s declaration that “our long national nightmare is over” as he replaced Richard Nixon as president in 1974 in the wake of the Watergate scandal. Some visitors said it took about an hour to pass through security checks and make their way past the casket. Mourners lined up for blocks. Some people wore blue jeans and sweat shirts; others had on something like their Sunday best.

Ford’s decision to pardon Nixon after Watergate, so controversial at the time that it probably cost Ford the 1976 election, was addressed by Dick Cheney, the current vice president who was Ford’s chief of staff. “It was this man, Gerald R. Ford, who led our republic safely through a crisis that could have turned to catastrophe. Gerald R. Ford was almost alone in understanding that there can be no healing without pardon.”

Today, at 10:30 a.m., the funeral service in the National Cathedral begins. This afternoon, the body will arrive at Gerald R. Ford International Airport in Grand Rapids, Michigan, to be taken to the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum for a brief private service. His remains will lie in repose beginning at 5 p.m. until 11 a.m. Wednesday. A private funeral service will be held at Grace Episcopal Church in East Grand Rapids for invited guests only. Interment service and burial will be held at the museum at 3:30 p.m. Wednesday.

President Bush observed: “Before the world knew his name, he served with distinction in the United States Navy and in the United States Congress. As a congressman from Michigan, and then as Vice President, he commanded the respect and earned the good will of all who had the privilege of knowing him. During his time in office, the American people came to know President Ford as a man of complete integrity who led our country with common sense and kind instincts. Americans will always admire Gerald Ford’s unflinching performance of duty and the honorable conduct of his administration, and the great rectitude of the man himself.”

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After leaving office, President Ford spent much of his time at a home in Beaver Creek, Colorado. Not surprisingly, he became active in community life. Among other activities, he created the Jerry Ford Invitational Golf Tournament that lured top golf professionals, as well as celebrities in government, entertainment and sports, to participate, with proceeds being invested into the Vail Valley.

Some Life Care associates – in Beaver Creek at the time of that event – got to meet President and Mrs. Ford and their family, and had photographs taken with them.



Ford was energized by the tournament and the festivities surrounding it, and enjoyed interacting with those in attendance, despite the scrutiny of secret service agents.

We are grateful for Gerald Ford's public service, his love for this country and the sacrifices he made for it. Our prayers are with his family in their loss.

BEAVER CREEK EVENT -- After leaving office, President Gerald Ford spent much of his time in Beaver Creek, Colorado, where he created the Jerry Ford Invitational Golf Tournament. In August 1993, members of the Life Care family met the Fords at that event. From left are Lola Hunter, President Ford, Susan Elizabeth (the Fords' daughter), Kathleen Preston, Forrest Preston and Betty Ford.