



The Final Days

Carl Bernstein , Bob Woodward

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The Final Days is the classic, behind-the-scenes account of Richard Nixon's dramatic last months as president. Moment by moment, Bernstein and Woodward portray the taut, post-Watergate White House as Nixon, his family, his staff, and many members of Congress strained desperately to prevent his inevitable resignation. This brilliant book reveals the ordeal of Nixon's fall from office -- one of the gravest crises in presidential history.

The Final Days Details

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From Reader Review The Final Days for online ebook

Damon says

I guess it seemed appropriate to read this at the moment?! I like reading about the internal machinery of the White House and this is one of the definitive accounts, almost to a fault. It's told entirely in narrative form from 100 days before through to Nixon's resignation as President. Characters come in and out of the story throughout but I think I kept a grip on who each person was and what they did. I have no idea how some of Nixon's staff managed to keep functioning under so much stress, especially Haig, his Chief of Staff. It must have taken extraordinary dedication to the office to keep going when the facts were clear and the President was lying directly to their faces.

I felt the missing component throughout the book was Nixon himself. He seems absent, often lurking in the dusk during a late cruise aboard the *Sequoia*, like some Kurtz of the Potomac. Perhaps he was indeed detached, missing, and drunk throughout these days but I felt there was something missing.

Scott says

Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein's *The Final Days* is an absolute gem, the highest level of political reporting.

This is a follow up to their brilliant book *All the President's Men*, and takes up where that book ended. Richard Nixon's White House is under siege, following the revelations of the Watergate scandal and the indictments of many of his top aides. All of the key players in the drama are followed in great detail, from the President and his family, to White House staffers, members of Congress, and the Judiciary. The profound shock of the scandal takes its toll on each.

Richard Nixon truly was a secretive, paranoid, vindictive geek. In many ways he was a pathetic and tragic figure. Many who read this will remember the more titillating details of the book (Nixon talking to the pictures on the wall of past presidents, forcing Kissinger to get down on his knees and pray with him, etc.). But to me this is truly an extraordinary account of a terrible crisis in the time of United States history, and a very sad human drama for all involved as well. I would very much recommend this for anyone interested in the Watergate scandal and its aftermath.

Sydney (?????) says

Historical context. Simply had trouble finishing it.

Checkman says

Wow that was a slog. Obviously since it took me over a year to finish it. Not nearly as involving as *All the President's Men*. So much minutiae to wade through. Picked up in the last third when everything is falling

apart for Nixon and the deathwatch for his administration had begun. However it's still a major historical account of a very messy time in the history of the United States. A wrap-up for the previous twelve years which saw the Bay of Pigs, Cuban Missile Crisis, the Berlin Wall going up, JFK's assassination, MLK's assassination, Charles Manson, Vietnam, "Mister Ed", "My Mother the Car", and the Hippies.

Just don't expect to be able to breeze through it over a long weekend. Well at least I sure couldn't.

Paul Bryant says

Good evening.

This is the 37th time I have spoken to you from this office, where so many decisions have been made that shaped the history of this Nation. And each time I have done so to discuss with you some matter that I believe affected the national interest I now understand I made some of you feel slightly on edge. I understand now that I have a problem with eye contact and passive aggression. For that I am sorry.

In all the decisions I have made in my public life, I have always tried to do what was best for the parts of the Nation which I happen to like. Throughout the long and difficult period of Watergate, I have felt it was my duty to persevere, to make every possible effort to complete the term of office to which you elected me. To cling on by my fingertips, as you might say.

In the past few days, however, it has become evident to me that I no longer have a strong enough political base in the Congress to justify continuing that effort. Great boots have been stamping down on my clutching fingertips. The whole thing has become nauseating. As long as there was able to be clinging without stamping, I felt strongly that it was necessary to see the constitutional process through to its conclusion, that to do otherwise would be unfaithful to the spirit of that deliberately difficult process and a dangerously destabilizing precedent for the future.

But with the stamping, I now believe that the constitutional purpose has been served, and there is no longer a need for the process to be prolonged. I have damaged hands and will probably not be able to fondle my various pets which were gifts and not bribes in the future as I have in the past, in spite of what my political enemies will have you understand.

My family unanimously urged me to do so. But the interests of the Nation must always come before any personal considerations.

From the discussions I have had with Congressional and other leaders, I have concluded that because of the slight Watergate matter which I had not been fully informed about until ten or twelve minutes ago I might not have the full support of Congress.

I have never been a quitter. I have been a clinger and a receiver of pet gifts and a serial underminer of the nation's morale but never a quitter. To leave office before my term is completed is abhorrent to every instinct in my body. I am racked with horror, the very bile rises in my throat as I contemplate leaving the White House whilst the Democratic Party is still intact. But as President, I must put the interest of America first. America needs a full-time President and a full-time Congress, particularly at this time with problems we face at home and abroad.

To continue to fight through the months ahead for my personal vindication and the vindication of my little dogs, my horses and other political affiliations and to prove how third rate the burglary was which began this whole sorry story would almost totally absorb the time and attention of both the President and the Congress in a period when our entire focus should be on the great issues of peace abroad and prosperity without inflation at home.

Therefore, I shall re – I shall therefore re - I shall – I shall –

Gggg

Snnnggg

And Vice President Ford will be sworn in as President from noon tomorrow . As I understand the matter, his first act will be to pardon me for any high crimes and misdemeanors committed by other people.

As I recall the high hopes for America with which we began this second term, I feel a great sadness that I will not be here in this office working on your behalf to achieve those hopes in the next 2 1/2 years. But in turning over direction of the Government to Vice President Ford, I know, as I told the Nation when I nominated him for that office 10 months ago, to replace Spiro T Agnew who had just been jailed for high crimes and misdemeanors, as you will recall, that the leadership of America will be in hands which can be counted on not to drop too many important things..

By taking this action, I hope that I will have hastened the start of that process of escaping which is so desperately needed by the President right now.

I regret deeply any injuries that may have been done in the course of the events that led to this decision. I would say only that if some of my judgments were wrong, and some were wrong, they were wrong because really they were right, and I say that in the spirit of humility and of taking a firm stand against everything which isn't in the best interests of this great nation of ours.

To those who have stood with me during these past difficult months, to my family, my friends, to many others who joined in supporting my cause because they believed it was right, I will be eternally grateful for your support and will be visiting you in your various correctional facilities, of that you may be assured. And to those who have not felt able to give me your support, let me say I leave with no bitterness toward those who have opposed me, because all of us, in the final analysis, are wrong, even though some of us are right.

I shall leave this office with bitterness and deep regret at and yet I believe that future historians will recognise Watergate and all it represents as one of my greatest achievements.

Sometimes I have succeeded and sometimes I have failed, but always I have succeeded. I pledge to you tonight that as long as I have a breath of life in my body, I shall continue to live.

God bless America.

Goodnight

Christopher Saunders says

Woodward and Bernstein's quasi-sequel to *All the President's Men*, *The Final Days*, chronicles the last year of Nixon's presidency from the April 1973 resignations of Bob Haldeman and John Ehrlichman through his resignation. The authors interview dozens of participants, providing a fast-paced insider account of Nixon's advisers first trying to contain the damage, slowly and reluctantly realizing that they've been dupe, and their belated, frantic efforts pushing their boss to accept the inevitable. Unfortunately, this fascinating insider's take comes drenched in spurious gossip: Nixon's drinking and suicidal ramblings, Pat's frigidity, Kissinger's backstabbing, Ford's dithering, cabinet insubordination, Congressional bitchery - and the whole time, America is safely managed by a benevolent Alexander Haig. How much is true, and how much is merely score settling by proxy, is an exercise for the reader, though its tabloid readability is undeniable.

Clif says

Do sane people seek the Presidency? At least these days it appears the candidates themselves truly want the job. The American people no longer get faceless hacks like Warren Harding selected by the party behind closed doors.

Richard Nixon was sane, but he had serious psychological problems. No lover of humanity, no glad-hander, this man of dark thoughts who you would think to be the last to succeed in politics, improbably made it to the highest office in the land. His character defects were enabled to flower by the power of office. Suddenly he could freely indulge in one of his pleasures: going after and punishing his enemies. His fragile ego could never tolerate a slight, no insult was ever forgotten and insults were perceived even when those accused had no idea their actions had that result.

This obsession with getting even was topped off with a sense of martyrdom. Even before Watergate exploded in his face, Richard Nixon was convinced he was fighting the good fight largely alone and unsupported, a righteous man doing battle against hopeless odds but prevailing. Pathetically, when he had been stripped of any rational reason to remain in office, or to maintain that he was innocent, he fell back on not being a quitter.

The oddest thing of all to those of us looking from the outside, was the taping system he put in place to assure his legacy. That would not be so strange except that the man proceeded to put his own deviousness on audio record, knowing full well he was doing so! This astounded the nation.

Nixon has not been the only President to engage in very questionable behavior, though he did reach a low in that it was criminal. What caused him trouble was the tapes. If not for those, he would have sailed right through office like any other President, made possible by the general awe of the office plus the power over his staff who, almost without exception, would fall on their swords rather than not be loyal member of the team. With this immense psychological hold on so many people, obedience to the law, or telling the truth seem like minor things. Nixon only was ousted because he literally convicted himself with his own voice.

Woodward and Bernstein bring all the intricacy of the operation of the White House to light. The reader will quickly see a willing host of underlings ready to do what is asked rather than tarnish the office of the Presidency. Right and wrong have no meaning in this addiction to the support of power. The President himself (and I mean any President) loses his head, unable to distinguish the office from the self. The founding fathers rightly put the separation of powers into place but there is no way to protect a man from being beguiled by his own view of himself.

Many many pages are consumed with people showing how loyal they can be, fearing to call the man a criminal, dismissing illegality as inconsequential in comparison with all the great feats of statesmanship. It is only when people read the transcript of the tape where Nixon is heard admitting the cover-up and urging it on, that the man loses support. Most frightening, and I clearly recall this from the time, is how some people will defend a man beyond all reason just because he holds an office. This is a curious mirror image of what we see currently with people condemning Obama just because he holds the office. Potential authors - please explore this 1970's 2010's contrast, I suspect it is folks with the same political view responsible for both cases.

Nixon was in a contest with fate, which, as the Greeks knew so many centuries ago, cannot be bested. His downfall was an inevitable result of who he was. The President of the United States is reduced to seeking the approval of his barber, alone with the man for a final haircut on his last day in office. It was the one point in the book where my emotions were touched.

I have no doubt that, for each of us, if we live long enough, we will discover who we truly are and why we do what we do. With luck, self-knowledge comes before tragedy, but the more one is surrounded by courtiers, the less likely a positive outcome.

This is a terrific book, highly rated and deserving of that. It recounts the fall of a man, but a glorious high point in the history of the nation, when the promise of the law being applicable to all came closest to being a fact.

Mikey B. says

This is at times a very detailed account of the trial and downfall of President Richard Nixon. Who would have thought that a President needed so many lawyers on his staff?

At the beginning the number of individuals involved is enormous. Nevertheless the tale becomes more compelling and tragic as we reach the inevitable culmination of Nixon's downfall.

In the biography I read of Nixon by Conrad Black he observes that Nixon was isolated and did not have enough contacts outside of the White House. By contrast, Roosevelt, who was unable to walk, always had an extraordinary array of people visiting throughout his many years as president. Nixon's sequestration is supported in the pages of this book by Woodward and Bernstein.

In many ways it was Nixon who paid the price for the lies of the Vietnam War. The Kennedy and Johnson administration did far worse in terms of lies and deceit than Nixon. Kennedy and Johnson both lied and mislead the American people about U.S. military build-up in Vietnam. Robert Kennedy allowed the bugging (and persecution) of Martin Luther King. Nixon's crimes were less by contrast. But, he did constantly lie and obfuscate – initially refusing to release the tapes, then releasing edited transcripts. And he lied on network television.

Also Nixon was not media savvy – Reagan was one of the best at this in the modern era. Even the younger George Bush was better than Nixon with the press.

There are times when the authors are obviously on a Nixon vendetta. There was no need to speak of Nixon's eating habits or refusing bottles of wine. That put pettiness into the story.

I did find Nixon's support from his family – his wife, his two daughters and their husbands admirable. Possibly within their hearts they knew of his duplicity to the country – yet they continued to love him as husband and father. He had committed no crime to them. As we reach the end of the book I came to respect, in some measure, Nixon as a human being. With all the insurmountable pressure he never unravelled as a human being. The only thing he had left after resigning was his immediate family.

With the distance of almost forty years now this story has all the makings of a Shakespearean tragedy.

Scooter says

I read this one a while ago. It's sort of a sequel to *All the President's Men*, chronicling the crackup of the Nixon administration. In many ways, this book is better than its predecessor: it's not focused on just Watergate, and it follows the politicians rather than the reporters (*All the President's Men* is largely the story of how Woodward and Bernstein did their reporting).

Two very striking facts will always stay with me from this book. First: it's eye-opening to read how much all of these people cared not just about themselves, but about what was right, appropriate, and legal. Remember, these folks lived in a world where no president had ever resigned -- this was brand-new territory. Second: my gracious, the time the President spent on saving his own hide instead of running the country! You get a sense of how scandals really can be crippling; that's not just some media cliché.

Anyway, I've mentioned that I'm a Watergate junkie, and this was an extension of that. Very well-written book.

Aaron Million says

In some ways, *Final Days* is a sequel to Woodward and Bernstein's *All The President's Men*. But in this book, the focus is on the unraveling and deterioration of the Nixon administration. Writing in a vivid, engaging style, the authors focus on the last year of the Nixon White House, concentrating especially on the last few weeks – with Nixon desperately trying to cling to power when it became crystal clear to almost everyone that his only real choice was between resignation and impeachment. But unlike the previous book, the authors do not chronicle their own saga and adventures as they try to uncover the Watergate scandal. Instead, this book is based on the first-hand recollections of many people who had daily contact at high levels of the administration.

Much of the time is spent focusing on Nixon's legal defense team and his Chief of Staff, General Alexander Haig. Haig comes across as an opportunist, someone who makes an attempt to be loyal to his superior, but really only so it can ultimately serve his own purposes. In much the same spirit as his predecessor, H.R. Haldeman, Haig tries to restrict access to Nixon. This actually speaks more about Nixon and his reclusiveness than it does about Haig, yet Haig seemed incapable of leveling with Nixon on the reality of his situation. I find this characterization interesting in that this book was written well before Haig's infamous flame-out as Secretary of State under Ronald Reagan.

Henry Kissinger also comes across in a less than stellar way, being portrayed as having a paranoia about equal to that of Nixon's, and trying to cover up his own foul deeds concerning illegal wire-tapping. This should not surprise anyone who has a general knowledge of who Kissinger was and how he operated. Woodward and Bernstein do not really say anything about him that you can't find written in many other places. They do acknowledge that Kissinger basically kept U.S. foreign policy from being dragged under by Watergate, and that is not an insignificant feat, especially given the tensions inherent in the Middle East at the time, and also with the U.S. still smarting over Vietnam.

Woodward and Bernstein, at the beginning of the book, write about their standards for putting things into the book, since almost everything in here is based on first-hand observations and thoughts by the participants involved. They said that they left out anything that they could not confirm. Taking them at their word, that makes the events of this book all the more incredible: the delusional thinking of Nixon's daughter Julie and some of the staff members such as Ken Clawson – people who refused to accept that Nixon had done anything wrong; the professional rivalry and disdain between Nixon's lawyers Fred Buzhardt and James St. Clair; the machinations of Haig; and most of all, the tortured behavior of Nixon himself. Nixon vacillated constantly between deciding to fight through a certainly unwinnable impeachment trial in the Senate and

deciding to resign.

Of all the interesting revelations in this book, what most struck me was when Buzhardt told Haig about Nixon providing some Dictabelt recordings that he (Nixon) had made on many random subjects. These were Nixon's innermost personal thoughts about people, places, and events. It strikes me as inordinately sad that Nixon did not have anyone who he truly felt comfortable with as far as being able to share his feelings. I am neither a Nixon hater nor an apologist. I find many things that he did repulsive, and on the whole, I consider him to have caused serious harm to the country, mainly due to his treasonous actions in railroading Lyndon Johnson's 1968 peace initiative to try to end the Vietnam War, and for the intense distrust between the media and the elected leaders of this country that his actions in both Vietnam and Watergate have perpetuated. By no means is he completely responsible for the latter, nor did it begin with him. But he sure gave it a good boost, and I still think Watergate warps our sense of the Presidency today. Also, as the tapes clearly showed, he was racist and bent on destroying his "enemies" whenever possible. Yet at the same time, he seemed capable of extreme kindness to people, and I do think that he really wanted to make the United States a better country when he left it than when he found it. At times, I feel bad when I think about what happened to him. But more often, I am appalled at his atrocious behavior and actions.

Grade: A-

Bettie? says

We watched this slightly fuzzy film and some parts were just so similar to today. Give it a go.

Full film

Description: *The Final Days is the classic, behind-the-scenes account of Richard Nixon's dramatic last months as president. Moment by moment, Bernstein and Woodward portray the taut, post-Watergate White House as Nixon, his family, his staff, and many members of Congress strained desperately to prevent his inevitable resignation. This brilliant book reveals the ordeal of Nixon's fall from office -- one of the gravest crises in presidential history.*

Opening: **This was an extraordinary mission. No presidential aides had ever done what they were about to do. J Fred Buzhardt and Leonard Garment settled into their first-class seats on Eastern flight 177 from Wahington DC to Miami. They had reached an inescapable conclusion, and had reviewed the reasons over and over. Garment had a list on a yellow legal pad - now twenty-two or twenty-three items. It was a bleak and very unpleasant business.**

Parallel Lines:

- Nixon Library trolls Trump: Disgraced president's museum takes issue with comparisons after Comey's firing
- I love the fact that, in full Bernstein and Woodward style, The Washington Post is at the forefront of 37v.2 investigation: Rachel Maddow: Comey sacking

Will the Mayflower be the equivalent of the Watergate in being a major part of bringing down a president?

Andrew McCabe

Gopal Vijayaraghavan says

The saga of Watergate was about how a US President elected with a record margin of both popular and electoral votes, came to be nearly impeached for a cover up of a “simple burglary, breaking and entering”. “The Final days” by Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein was a chronological sequence of the events which happened during the ten months leading to President Richard Nixon's resignation on 9th August, 1974. The authors have meticulously documented the various events from the perspective of those who played varying roles to delay or hasten the resignation. This book had thrown light on the inner workings of the various organs of the US Govt touching the executive powers and privileges of the President vis-a-vis the powers of Congressional committees, Senate and US judiciary. The strength of US democracy is that the most powerful man in the world is not that much powerful and is to be answerable to the various institutions of the democratic Govt. Though, at times, the reader is wearied with too much details, the book is important as a historic record of an important event which shook the foundations of a great democracy. A great of amount of research and hard work had gone into bringing this book.

Matt B. says

From a historical perspective, one of the ten best books I've ever read. Fascinating.

Bryan says

I've got a few thoughts on Woodward and Bernstein's The Final Days, which is both more and less timely than it might seem at first.

This isn't really a book about Nixon, though he's a major character and you learn important things about him (see below). Rather, this is a book about the staff, lawyers, and loyalists who (as late 1973 and the summer of 1974) were still credulous enough to believe him that he neither knew about the various crimes related to Watergate nor made any effort to use the power of his office to cover them up. An early scene where Nixon instructs a couple of his lawyers to draft a national security explanation for several of his lies to definitively absolve him (while also withstanding future revelations) without his offering any exculpatory narrative or detail to help them is emblematic of the situation. Most of the book's drama comes from these staffers and associates realizing that the president they've invested their own time and careers in is indeed a criminal who has been lying to them.

The book implies that, too, that aside from the political and cultural consequences he was facing, Nixon was dug in on defending himself from impeachment to avoid having to acknowledge that he'd been lying to his

family as well as the country. His daughters, especially, defended him loyally, even at what seems like at least a short-term cost to their marriages. Nixon's sons-in-law, like certain members of his staff, are convinced of the hopelessness of his defense relatively early in the book.

It's also worth mentioning that Nixon, according to the sources who spoke to Woodward and Bernstein, was often drunk during this time.

It's tempting to draw parallels between Nixon and other, current American presidents. One thing the book makes clear, though, is that things have to get a lot worse than they are now before a president is forced from office. At the same time, the book shows that a president can only convince the rest of the country to ignore evidence of their true character for so long.

The Just-About-Cocky Ms M says

The facts in tandem with the facts and fiction in the novelized version of Watergate I had just finished. Love reliving those heady days of smarmy Nixon's disgrace and fall.
