

When a previously unreleased audio recording surfaced on the 3rd of August, 1974, Nixon's presidency was doomed. Although he'd spent two years telling everyone he knew nothing about a cover-up of the Watergate break-in, the tape revealed otherwise.

President Nixon decided he had to resign. He told the country about his decision on August 8, 1974.

America's outgoing leader bid his staff an emotional farewell on the morning of August 9, 1974. Quoting Theodore Roosevelt (whom Nixon called "T.R."), he said:

"When my heart's dearest died [that is, T.R.'s first wife], the light went from my life forever." That was T.R. in his twenties. He thought the light had gone from his life forever - but he went on. And he not only became President but, as an ex-President, he served his country always in the arena, tempestuous, strong, sometimes wrong, sometimes right, but he was a man.

. . . We think that when someone dear to us dies, we think that when we lose an election, we think that when we suffer a defeat, that all is ended. We think, as T.R. said, that the light had left his life forever.

Not true. It's only a beginning - always. The young must know it; the old must know it. It must always sustain us because the greatness comes not when things go always good for you, but the greatness comes when you are really tested, when you take some knocks, some disappointments, when sadness comes; because only if you've been in the deepest valley can you ever know how magnificent it is to be on the highest mountain.

On the 8th and 9th of August, 1974, Richard Nixon was in "the deepest valley." He spent the remaining twenty years of his life trying to get back to "the highest mountain."

Credits:

Clip from part three of "Nixon," a three-hour "American Experience" documentary from PBS. (The three parts are: The Quest, Triumph, and The Fall.)

This clip includes parts of the June 23, 1972 "smoking gun" audio tape, sections of Nixon's resignation address (given on August 8, 1974) and his staff farewell (the following day). Directed by Elizabeth Deane; executive-produced by Lisa Zeff. Online, courtesy PBS.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Richard-Nixon-Downfall-of-a-President>

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