

A Grandmother's Sage Advice about Leadership & Character

By November 1973, the Watergate hearings were well underway. Vice President Spiro Agnew had resigned six weeks before. The *Saturday Night Massacre* -- where Attorney General Elliot Richardson was sacked by President Richard Nixon for refusing to fire the Special Prosecutor - was only a month old.

Having recently served under fire in Vietnam as a Lieutenant in the U.S. Navy, keeping the patriotic tradition of our family was part of my inner core, preserving our nation and defending our Constitution ran in our heritage.

But I was also deeply disturbed by President Nixon's descent into darkness.

I traveled home for our traditional New England Thanksgiving dinner.

Privately I turned to my grandmother for counsel.

Born under the Presidency of Benjamin Harrison, she was a pure Victorian with the commensurate values of honor and integrity. She was ten years old when Teddy Roosevelt became President; she revered his character and leadership.

As an old Massachusetts Yankee, she came from a long family lineage of patriotic conservatives, dating back to the '1630s. Her great-great grandfather fought at the Battle of Lexington and Concord, her grandfather at Gettysburg, her husband of the fields of France and her sons all served: my father in the Navy in the Pacific, my uncle in the Army Air Corps in Europe, and my other uncle in the Air Force in Korea.

She was a staunch Republican from head to foot, it ran in our Yankee blood.

I confided my anxieties and frustrations about Nixon, who was also my military Commander in Chief.

Thoroughly expecting to hear a resounding defense of Nixon from my grandmother. she then taught me one of the greatest lessons of my life; saying:

*Bobby, I've lived through the Presidencies of fourteen men (she then named them).
I've lived through many economic panics and depressions, as well as five major wars.*

Every President will be faced with his share of crises, large and small.

If there is anything to be learned from difficult times: it's their political party does not matters one iota - it's the man of highest principles, of integrity, of trustworthiness centered on doing what's right and good for the nation.

Always vote for the man of highest character, she poignantly instructed, the man of truth and courage, not the man who utters eloquent words but cannot be trusted with the destiny of our beautiful America.

That's why she reviled Richard Nixon.

Her insight stirred a quiver in my soul, for she spoke a sacred wisdom for the ages.

It was at that moment I became an Independent - with affiliations to neither Republican nor Democratic Party.

It didn't mean I wouldn't be politically active, but would never give allegiance to a party that would tear me away from my allegiance to my soul.

In the succeeding years, I supported more Republicans than Democrats, but the deciding factor was always my grandmother's sage advice.

During the Trump years, her wise counsel has rung truer than ever.

But why did so many of some of my dearest friends – corporate CEOs, Ivy League alumni, and college graduates (even PhDs) – believe in Trump, some until the end?

Perhaps it was because they would not or could not see the character flaws in this dark leader; they listened to his words, while discounting his bad character and his deeds.

Seen another way: they let themselves be duped. This is what enabled Hitler to disembowel Germany, then Austria, then most of Europe.

We must never let it happen here.

I pray for the Soul of America and invite you to that prayer.