Pardons

**I am in the process of making application for a pardon, knowing in my mind that spiritually I am free. *(Jeannie, prisoner)***

**This pardon is a “stain on Biden’s legacy,” said Eugene Robinson in The Washington Post, but what father wouldn’t “save his son” if he could? Biden has long watched Hunter struggle with enormous pain: the 1972 car crash that killed his mother and sister; his brother Beau’s 2015 death from brain cancer; his addiction to cocaine and alcohol. And while Hunter did plead guilty, his offenses – falsely attesting to not being a drug user on a gun permit form, late payment of taxes – are “not the kinds of crimes that usually get prosecuted” in the first place. (The Week magazine, December 13, 2024)**

**Dr. Samuel A. Mudd, sentenced to life in prison for splinting the fractured leg of Lincoln’s assassin, John Wilkes Booth, became a hero to guards and inmates of his island prison when he stopped a yellow-fever epidemic there, in 1868, after the army doctors had died. President Johnson, Lincoln’s successor, pardoned Mudd in early 1869. *(Isaac Asimov’s Book of Facts, p. 241)***

**We often pardon those who bore us, but we cannot pardon those whom we bore. (*La Rochefoucauld)***

**What’s the difference between an “amnesty” and a “pardon”? A pardon is granted to an individual, usually but not always after conviction. An amnesty is granted to a group, usually but not always before conviction. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**The abuse of “executive privilege”: By calling attention to the absurdity of “executive privilege,” Steve Bannon is doing the country a favor, said Timothy Noah. Bannon, a far-right Donald Trump adviser, is refusing to answer a subpoena from the House’s Jan. 6-committee, claiming he is exempted from testifying about his role in encouraging that violent attack on democracy – even though he left the White House three years earlier. Trump is claiming everyone in his orbit is shielded from testifying about that event. That’s obviously ridiculous, but the use of executive privilege to shield presidents from oversight has long been “out of control.” No president claimed executive privilege until President Dwight Eisenhower made up the doctrine to avoid testifying in the McCarthy hearings in 1954. Richard Nixon tried invoking executive privilege in 1974 to avoid surrendering his Oval Office tapes during the Senate Watergate hearings, but the Supreme Court ruled against him, reasoning there is no protection over conversations that include possible crimes. Nonetheless, Trump invoked executive privilege in response to all subpoenas, even during two impeachment hearings. If Bannon’s claim doesn’t compel the Department of Justice and the courts to cut this “made-up” doctrine down to size, “nothing ever will.” *(The Week magazine, October 29, 2021)***

**Almost all your faults are more pardonable than the methods we think up to hide them. *(La Rochefoucauld)***

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**Which U.S. president in the last 50 years was the most generous in granting pardons? Gerald Ford. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Bill Clinton -- granted 456 pardons. President Ford granted Richard M. Nixon “a free, full and absolute pardon” for any criminal conduct during his presidency and Nixon responded with a statement of remorse at “my mistakes over Watergate.” Announcing the pardon at a surprise appearance before newsmen and photographers, Ford said “I feel that Richard Nixon and his loved ones have suffered enough.” He said, “My conscience tells me clearly and certainly that I cannot prolong the bad dreams that continue to reopen a chapter that is closed. My conscience tells me that only I, as President, have the constitutional power to firmly shut and seal this book.” *(Paul Lee Tan, in Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations)***

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**In every pardon there is love. *(Welsh proverb) 19921***

**Know all and you will pardon all. *(Greek proverb)***

**One afternoon Abraham Lincoln found on his desk a heartrending appeal for a pardon, unsupported by the usual sheaf of letters from influential sponsors. “What,” asked the president, “has this man no friends?” The adjutant at Lincoln's side assured him that the man hadn't a one. “Then I will be his friend,” said Lincoln. He signed the pardon. *(Bob Dole, in Great Presidential Wit, p. 33)***

**Understandingis often a prelude to forgiveness, but they are not the same, and we often forgive what we cannot understand (seeing nothing else to do) and understand what we cannot pardon. *(Mary McCarthy, American author)***

**President Bush has issued 99 pardons during his five years and seven months in office -- the lowest rate for any postwar president. Bill Clinton issued 457 pardons in eight years. Ronald Reagan granted 406. *(Associated Press, as it appeared in The Week magazine, September 8, 2006)***

**Presidents and their pardons:**

**George H. W. Bush -- 77 pardons.**

**Lyndon Johnson - 1,187 pardons.**

**Dwight Eisenhower -- 1,157 pardons.**

**Richard Nixon -- 926 pardons.**

**Harry Truman -- 2,044 pardons.**

**John Kennedy -- 575 pardons.**

**Franklin Roosevelt - 3,687 pardons.**

***(Source:*** [***http://jurist.law.pitt.edu/pardons.htm***](http://jurist.law.pitt.edu/pardons.htm)***)***

**A woman who spent 11 years in federal prison graduated from law school this week. Serena Nunn was 19, with a clean record, when she got caught up in a drug deal arranged by her boyfriend. Under mandatory federal guidelines, she was sentenced to more than 15 years. But in 2000, after she completed her college degree behind bars, President Bill Clinton granted her a pardon; she soon enrolled at the University of Michigan Law School. “It took me a while to get comfortable in my own skin,” she said. “But so what? You paid your debt. Now get on.” *(The Week magazine, May 19, 2006)***

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**Fittingly, Donald Trump issued a final raft of 143 presidential pardons to fraudsters, corrupt politicians, and cronies such as Steve Bannon, the architect of Trump's unlikely rise to power. *(The Week magazine, January 29, 2021)***

**President-elect Donald Trump is going to start “issuing deeply controversial pardons the minute he gets into office” next month, likely including a mass pardon of the Jan. 6 Capitol rioters. (The Week magazine, December 13, 2024)**

**Trump in his first term issued some of the “most corrupt pardons the country has ever seen,” including one to tax cheat Charles Kushner, his son-in-law’s father, whom Trump now wants as ambassador to France. (The Week magazine, December 13, 2024)**

**Trump’s pardon paradox: “Donald Trump has it all wrong,” said Jennifer Rubin. The former president seems to think he can avoid federal prison time by winning the 2024 election and then pardoning himself for any federal felony convictions. But “his only hope” for getting a get-out-of-jail-free card is that a different Republican wins the nomination and becomes president. Trump and his supporters are talking about “self-pardons,” but there is no legal basis in the Constitution for something so illogical, and they would not stand up to even this Supreme Court’s review. If self-pardons were possible, then “why would not every president take advantage of the opportunity to engage in a crime spree, secure in the knowledge he could pardon himself on the way out the door?” Not incidentally, presidential pardons only apply to federal crimes, and Trump is facing state charges in New York and may soon be charged with trying to overturn election results in Georgia – a serious crime. To avoid potential incarceration, Trump will need either to make plea deals with prosecutors, and/or get a pardon promise from a Republican rival in return for Trump’s endorsement. “The last thing he should want is to win the presidency.” *(The Week magazine, July 7/July 14, 2023)***

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**Lawmakers in Massachusetts have pardoned a woman convicted of witchcraft during the Salem Witch Trials in 1693. The pardoning of Elizabeth Johnson Jr. after more than three centuries came about after an eighth-grade civics class researched how to officially clear her name. State Sen. Diana DiZoglio then added the pardoning measure to a budget bill. “We will never be able to change what happened,” she said, “but at the very least can set the record straight. *(The Week magazine, June 10, 2022)***

**Good week for: Justice delayed, after the Scottish government indicated it will issue formal pardons and apologies to 3,837 people – 84 percent of them women – who were tried as witches between 1563 and 1736. “We absolutely excelled at finding women to burn in Scotland,” said campaigner Claire Mitchell. *(The Week magazine, December 31, 2021 / January 7, 2022)***

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