

Romney Appears to Have Been Awarded for Malice Toward Trump

by Conrad Black



There is something poignantly appropriate in this dismal political year of mudslinging, attempted criminalization of policy differences, and the almost unrelieved moral bankruptcy of the national political media, that this year's Profile in Courage Award by the Kennedys is to Senator [Trump](#) in his impeachment trial in 2020 over his telephone conversation with the president of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky.

This was in fact a dishonorable vote. There were no grounds to impeach President Trump. In the course of his telephone conversation with President Zielensky and in his capacity as the chief law enforcement officer of the United States, Trump asked if the Ukrainian leader had information about the commercial activities of former President Biden's son Hunter

in the Ukraine.

He was very highly paid as a non-executive director of a natural gas company with a reputation for questionable political connections. Hunter Biden had no experience at all in that industry, and his father when he was vice president had boasted of having caused the removal of a Ukrainian prosecutor who was investigating that company.

President Trump did not ask President Zelensky for incriminating evidence against the Bidens; he asked what happened, a neutral question. The principal discussion in the course of the impeachment trial in the Senate was whether the Constitution's citation of "bribery, treason, or other high crimes and misdemeanors" required that the other crimes and misdemeanors be of equivalent gravity to bribe-taking and treason to justify conviction and removal from office.

But it was not disputed there was a requirement for a crime, and the acquittal of President Clinton when he was impeached in 1998, effectively held that his apparently untruthful response to a grand jury question about an extramarital peccadillo did not constitute such a grave offense that it would justify his removal from office. This was all slightly esoteric in the case of the Trump impeachment, as there was not a scintilla of probative evidence that he had done anything legally exceptionable at all.

I have no standing to mind-read Senator Romney, but neither do the judges of this award. And the widespread impression was that his motive had absolutely nothing to do with any alleged misconduct by President Trump.

His sweaty, halting, and unconvincing explanation of his vote to anti-Trump Fox news commentator Chris Wallace certainly didn't create the impression that he was casting a conscientious ballot to convict. Most observers were of the view that Romney was exacting a revenge for having been

interviewed by Trump for the position of Secretary of State but passed over in 2016.

Two days before he took his oath as senator from Utah in January 2019, Romney published an op-ed piece in the *Washington Post* denouncing Trump for having too many ethical shortcomings to hold the office to which he had been elected.

The Kennedy award included a further general compliment to Romney's public service, which includes a term as governor of Massachusetts and the head of the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics. He was a successful business consultant and private equity executive, and his father was a well-known automobile executive and governor of Michigan and Secretary of Housing and Urban Development under President Nixon.

There is no doubt that Mitt Romney is a capable man, but he has faced in all four directions on almost every issue from abortion to healthcare. He is a consultant who "loves data," constantly shifts positions, and strikes poses that do not inspire confidence that he is anchored in the integrity for which he has just been so warmly commended.

As the country erupted in urban riots last summer, and the leader of Black Lives Matter in New York threatened to "burn America down if we don't get what we want," Senator Romney marched in a Black Lives Matter parade in Washington. This is not easy to reconcile with the Kennedy award.

One irony in this affair is that one of the senators whom John F. Kennedy and MacGregor Burns cited for his courage was Edmund Ross of Kansas who resisted great pressure in the Senate and cast the vote that acquitted President Andrew Johnson in his impeachment trial in 1868. Johnson had exercised his right to fire the secretary of war, and he was impeached for violating an act of the Congress that was in fact unconstitutional.

His service to the country had not been well-publicized as it

had not been popular at the time, and the authors of "Profiles in Courage" rendered a service in focusing upon it and the circumstances of Ross' vote, and the motives and legal basis for it were all in stark contrast with what appears to have been an act of simple personal malice by Mitt Romney.

The award also mentioned that Romney voted to convict Trump in his impeachment trial earlier this year for inciting an insurrection, despite the absence of any evidence whatsoever that he did anything of the kind, and he only urged his rightly outraged supporters in Washington on Jan. 6 to behave "peacefully and patriotically." Even if Romney's motives were less odious than they appear, he was a thoroughly undeserving recipient of this award. It is a mockery of what it purports to celebrate.

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