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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

December 17, 1976

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM FOR: RON NESSEN
FROM: JAMES E. CONNOR JEF
SUBJECT: Letter from Trude B. Feldman

The attached was returned in the President's outbox with the following notation:

"This got to me somehow. Maybe after January 2."

Please follow-up with appropriate action.

cc: Dick Cheney

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Ron Nesson

This got to me
somehow.

Maybe after
I

Jan 2

December 15, 1976

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN....

Dear Mr. President:

Here is an advance of a rushed article which I hope you'll read before the wires take out of context. Since it had to be done over a two-day period after the election, I used portions of our other interviews (and in some cases, changed the tense); then allowed your brothers--who wanted something positive written while you're still President--to approve of the complete article. So I did same with their blessings and approval.

I hope we can meet before you leave--to talk (for history) about your achievements; also about what Betty and the family have done for you (as per my note of December 1st and the Citation we gave Betty). Since then, Nelson Rockefeller's comments on you and Betty, and what you two should be remembered for, are too marvelous to abandon---so I trust we can complete same with you.

--

I wish you a lovely and restful Christmas holiday, and hope that 1977 will bring you your innermost desires.

Respectfully,

Trude



GERALD AND BETTY FORD: "IT'S NOT THE END OF THE WORLD"

Losing a close election was heart-breaking, but on a personal level Betty and Gerald Ford have few regrets about the end of the 29 months in the White House that neither of them had ever expected.

"No one likes to lose," the President told me in the heat of the campaign, "but losing isn't the end of the world. We would go back to living as a family again—without this fishbowl existence."

Betty Ford added: "Maybe it's selfish of me, but I'd like to have Jerry more to myself. All of our married life he has been in government. After twenty-eight years of marriage mixed with politics, it'll be good to live like a normal married couple."

But if the Fords were ready to accept defeat calmly, the President did not hide his potential disappointment. "I did the best I can," he said. "I put every ounce of energy into this job, and to find out that it wasn't good enough for the American people... well, that would hurt."

The President was in a pensive mood—looking past November to the months that followed, whether as the country's Chief Executive, elected in his own right, or as a lame duck waiting out the days to ride

The President and First Lady talk frankly about their years in the White House, the disappointments of the campaign and their hopes for the future

BY TRUDE B. FELDMAN

down Pennsylvania Avenue with his successor.

"After a taste of the Presidency, naturally I'd like to be elected in my own right," he said. "Four more years would give me a real chance to do what I want most in government—to expand individual freedom from mass government, mass industry, mass labor, mass education.

"But if I lose"—the President's eyes grew distant for a brief moment—"if I lose, I'll blame only myself. I'm the one in charge and I won't make excuses."

It was a confident President I was interviewing then—positive of keeping intact his record of never having lost an election, certain that he would overcome Jimmy Carter's lead in the polls.

If he did lose, however, the President said he might return to the practice of law or take a job teaching

political science in a university. And although Betty Ford did hint that serious discussion had taken place in the Ford family on the general subject of "after the White House days," the First Lady was far more interested in accentuating the positive—including what a "really good and strong President" he was. But Betty Ford was realistic enough to admit that he might lose. "We'll be disappointed if he loses, sure. But we won't be downcast or broken-hearted.

"Jerry was thrust into the job—he hadn't sought it. But when he took office, he worked as hard in the White House as he has in his whole career, and we've both learned that the Presidency of the United States is the toughest job in the world. I hadn't ever expected to be First Lady, but it turned out to be an exciting and gratifying experience. When Jerry took the oath of office, I felt I was taking it as much as he was." During the campaign Betty Ford was popular and effective, perhaps even more popular than her husband. Characteristically, she didn't hesitate to criticize some of her husband's advisers during the primaries. The 1 turn to page 30

continued

President took her advice and gives her much of the credit for the amazing comeback that nearly won him the election.

He took special delight in the campaign buttons that said, "Betty's Husband for President." At first Betty thought he might be "sensitive" to the buttons. "I hid the first one that was given me," she said. "But then Jerry himself brought one home and teased me about it, so I knew it was all right."

President Ford, looking back on his White House years, is confident of his place in history. "I don't regret any basic decision I've made," he told me. "Most or all of the decisions I've made I think I'd do pretty much again." He does wonder if he should have seen Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the Russian Nobel laureate whom he failed to invite to the White House. "That's one bit of advice I wish I hadn't taken," he has told his aides. But as far as the rest of it goes, Gerald Ford thinks he did right—as he saw it. "I don't think any President worked harder," he told me.

Are there any ways in which he could have been a better President? "The time I put in the job couldn't have been expanded," he answered. "I honestly can't think of any way I should have done things differently in order to be a better President. That doesn't mean, however, that I have all the characteristics I wish I could have. I wish I were a better public speaker, for example, but I recognize that everyone has certain deficiencies."

One problem that Gerald Ford admitted not being able to solve was infighting among White House staff. Some observers believe it nearly cost him the Republican nomination and, because of that, was a major factor in giving Jimmy Carter such a huge lead at the outset of the campaign—a lead the President just missed overcoming. "The thing that frustrates me the most," President Ford said, "is bickering among some of the people who are supposed to be working for me and for the American people."

Yet he was loyal to his staff—too loyal, many Potomac watchers now say, and gave them his support and his friendship, even as he voiced concern that the abuse of power by White House staffers, which unseated his predecessor, might return to haunt him. "The temptation to exercise authority when one is too close to it is irresistible," the President said. "That makes it all the more important to find people of integrity to work with. But even the best are likely to stumble, so I try to keep a close watch and not let too much power accumulate in too few hands."

"Jerry learned a bitter lesson from his staff's mistakes and from his reluctance to fire anyone," one White House aide told me last fall. But in the final months of his Presidency, Gerald Ford began to face that problem. "I'm too easygoing with those who work for me," he said, "and my nature is to overlook it when they're not up to par. I guess I'm too tolerant. It's hard for me to fire anyone."

For example, aides say that his press

secretary had misled the President into appearing on NBC-TV's "Saturday Night," a program not widely noted for its good taste. Ford's participation in a show that included distasteful skits was seen by members of his family and staff as demeaning to the dignity of both the office and the man. The President was furious, but neither press nor public knew how he felt at the time.

Betty Ford had her own share of staff problems and also hesitated to make changes. Perhaps it was her precarious health that made her reluctant to "rock the boat"—as she put it. A Congressional wife who is a close friend observes, "Betty allowed her staff to control her movements to such a degree that she was told which invitations to accept and whom to talk with and, often, what to say. It got so bad at one point that Jerry actually said to her, 'Tell your staff they work for you. You don't work for them.'"

During the campaign, Mrs. Ford noted: "I've only recently become aware that some of my own staff, as well as some people in Jerry's, are doing things we don't approve of. Some aren't as qualified as we thought—or as they should have been."

The rough-and-tumble Presidential campaign took its toll in many ways. "Jerry always concentrated hard on every job he undertook, and it was rough trying to be President and run a campaign," Mrs. Ford has observed. "When he was busy running the country, he simply couldn't stay on top of the campaign as much as he should have. I always worried about people telling him everything was going smoothly when in fact it really wasn't."

If there was trouble with the staff, the family gathered closer than ever during the primary battles and in the election campaign itself. The pressure of the campaign and the tensions surrounding the televised debates served to rally Michael, Jack, Steven and Susan to their father's side. For Gerald Ford, the response of his wife and children was deeply gratifying, and he went out of his way to express such gratitude. "He'd thank us for every little thing," Betty said. "He never took us for granted."

The Ford children seemed to appreciate what their father stood for and what the pressures of the Presidency were. "That's why they pitched in the way they did—and I'll never forget it," President Ford told me.

The night after his election defeat by Jimmy Carter, Gerald Ford had a quiet dinner in the White House with his wife, their four children and his oldest son's wife. "It meant a great deal to Betty and me that the kids weren't anxious to run off, that they stayed and talked things over," he told his brother Tom.

Jack Ford, 24, spent more time on the campaign trail than his brothers or his sister, Susan. He says he was especially pleased to have won his father's confidence. The President didn't hesitate to ask Jack's advice on a number of campaign issues.

Because some of his father's statements were "distorted in the press," Jack says he sympathized with Governor

Carter's difficulties over his *Playboy* interview, pointing out that crucial positions were taken "out of context." He cited a comparable example from his own experience: "My dad and Governor Reagan were both scheduled to attend the Iowa caucus before the convention. It was a crucial moment, and the delegate count was close. Suddenly the Reagan crisis broke out and Dad had to choose—be a candidate or be a President. He decided to stay in the White House and manage the evacuation. The press said Dad didn't want to be humiliated by Reagan so he stayed home. That really annoyed us."

Last September Susan Ford, moved out of the White House and rented an apartment in Alexandria, far from the Ford family home, with three other girls. The family was away often that she found the White House "lonely" place, and her friends did not like to have to get clearance every time they visited. "The White House is really confining," she says. "It's not like living in a home. It's a beautiful museum."

Susan will enter the University of Kansas in January, where she'll be able to attend classes, walk to her apartment and study her assignments without a Secret Service man standing by. "It'll be good to get back to normal," she says. "I wanted Dad to win the Presidency on his own, but personally I'd rather have him back in the family."

Looking back, Betty Ford feels that "Jerry has grown in the job of President. I knew he was a hard-working man when I married him. He used to go to the office on weekends, and I'd go along just to be with him. In fact, we celebrated our son Mike's first birthday in that office. And it's just like that today. After dinner Jerry works in a room on the second floor that I made into a den; I sign mail and we sit there and talk about so many things."

The day after the election, the President's brother Tom Ford told me: "Sure Jerry is upset about losing—he's always had a competitive spirit. But he was raised during the Depression, and he learned during those formative years that you don't always get what you want. He was a very serious young man. He studied harder than others to make something of himself. He saw the strain on Dad, who worked so hard to help push us through school. Jerry had the stamina and stability to hold down one or two jobs and keep up his grades in school. That has helped him to adjust to any situation—and played a big part in building his character."

Another brother, Jim, said, "Jerry aged in the last two years sooner than he would have. But he's still young for his years, and now that he'll be relieved of those tremendous responsibilities, he'll have time to travel with Betty. Then I think he'll do anything that's a challenge to his thinking processes. He'd make a good professor because he'd have the students' interest."

The President says he will probably write about his life in Washington—including details about his appointment

continued on page 130

combine pudding mix and gelatine. Stir in milk until smooth; add chocolate.

2. Bring to boiling over medium heat, stirring constantly. Cook, stirring, until chocolate is melted and mixture is thick and smooth—about 3 minutes.

3. Remove from heat; stir in vanilla. Pour into bowl. Refrigerate, covered, or set in ice water, until pudding mixture is completely cold—about 1 hour.

4. In small bowl, beat 1 cup cream until stiff. Beat in ¼ cup sugar until blended. Refrigerate.

5. Cut each chocolate roll crosswise into six slices. Cover slices with damp paper towels.

6. To assemble: With wire whisk or rubber scraper, fold the whipped cream into the chilled chocolate-pudding mixture.

7. Pour 1½ cups chocolate-cream mixture into a chilled 3-quart glass serving bowl.

8. Line bowl, from chocolate-cream layer to top, with rows of chocolate-roll slices.

9. Carefully spoon the remaining chocolate-cream mixture into the bowl.

10. Refrigerate, covered, until well chilled—several hours or overnight.

11. Before serving, beat remaining whipped cream with remaining sugar. Decorate top with swirls of whipped cream.

Makes 10 to 12 servings.

BAKED PEAR BREAD PUDDING

1 can (1 lb) pear halves, drained, cut into 1-inch cubes
¼ cup raisins
1 teaspoon cinnamon
5 slices white bread, crusts removed
¼ cup butter or margarine, softened
4 cups milk
½ cup granulated sugar, ¼ teaspoon salt
5 eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 tablespoons currant jelly
Confectioners' sugar

1. Preheat oven to 350F. Lightly butter an 8-by-8-by-2-inch baking dish.

2. Toss pears with raisins and cinnamon. Spread in bottom of prepared dish. Spread bread slices generously with butter. Cut each slice in half diagonally. Arrange overlapping in dish, buttered side up.

3. In saucepan, heat milk until bubbles form around edges of pan; remove from heat. Add granulated sugar and salt; stir to dissolve.

4. In large bowl, beat eggs. Gradually stir in hot milk mixture; stir in vanilla extract. Pour the mixture over bread.

5. Set dish in pan of hot water; bake 40 to 50 minutes, or until knife inserted comes out clean.

6. Remove pudding from water, and cool at least 10 minutes before serving. Decorate, as pictured, with jelly and confectioners' sugar. Serve warm or cold.

Makes 6 to 8 servings.

Mazola NO STICK

GERALD AND BETTY FORD: "IT'S NOT THE END OF THE WORLD"

continued from page 30

as Vice-President, his accession to the Presidency and the 1976 election campaign. But he adds that he has no plans to work on such a book in the near future.

A relatively recent hazard of the Presidency is the backstairs gossip often written by White House aides—personal or political—that is published after a President has left office. Ford regards the recent spate of books about the intimate lives of some of his predecessors as "unfortunate." But he is philosophical about the possibility that he may be subjected to the same treatment. "You can't prevent this kind of thing from happening," he said, adding: "Anyway, I don't think they'll have much to write about."

Betty Ford would like to be remembered as the First Lady who warned millions of women about early detection of cancer when she was candid about her own condition only weeks after she moved into the White House. She had hoped to convince her husband to appoint a woman to the Supreme Court—something she thought might very well happen had Gerald Ford been elected to a full four-year term—and she also very much wanted to be in the White House to witness the signing of the Equal Rights Amendment, an issue for which she had personally lobbied with the President.

At one point, Betty had also suggested that her husband choose a woman, Anne Armstrong, the U. S. Ambassador to Great Britain, as his Vice-Presidential running mate. "Jerry surprised me by choosing Robert Dole," she told me. "I'd have preferred Nelson Rockefeller."

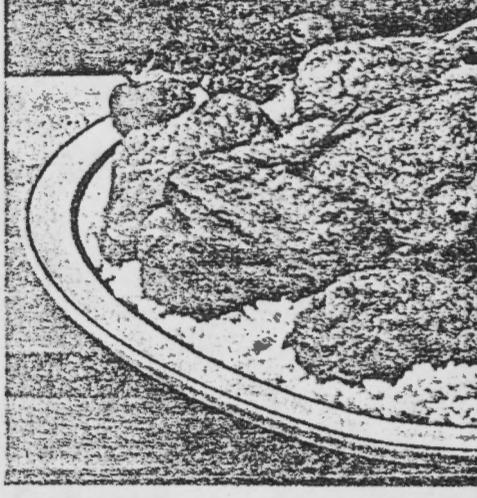
She would also like to have been instrumental in having the role of homemaker accorded more dignity. "Homemakers don't get proper respect or appreciation for what they do. I've had both—a career and marriage. I think that actually it's harder to be a wife and

spect ought to be given to the homemaker."

Betty Ford's good humor did not desert her even during the most tense moment of the campaign—the final Presidential debate between Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter. She accompanied her husband to the auditorium of William and Mary College several hours before the debate. While he was making a sound test, Betty scribbled a note to his opponent, Jimmy Carter, and left it on his rostrum. It read: "Dear Mr. Carter, may I wish you the best tonight. I'm sure the best man will win. I happen to have a favorite candidate, my husband, President Ford. Best wishes, Betty Ford."

Only days before, to ease the tension and give him a light moment during the heat of the campaign, Betty presented her husband with a gift on their 28th wedding anniversary—a nutcracker in

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the shape of a wooden soldier. Before giving it to the President, Betty mischievously inserted a fresh peanut, with CARTER printed on the shell, and put it in the soldier's mouth.

Beginning January 20th, Gerald Ford will probably spend his time golfing, skiing and doing some soul-searching about what might have been. As for Betty, she is a happy woman today. She will have her husband all to herself, she'll be able to go to her favorite restaurants for lunch or dinner, and she'll probably dance and shop and speak her mind without worrying about what the political fallout might be. In fact, she says whimsically that she might like to return to the White House some day as an employee. "It would be nice to become the social secretary to another First Lady," she told me. "There's so much fun, excitement and merriment to planning White House functions.

"It was a great life."