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Politics by Perry

1975: It Was a Dumb Year, Really

By James M. Perry

I MUST SAY to you," Gerald Ford said to us last Jan. 15, "that the state of the union is not good." Not good, not all that bad either, 1975. It turns out, was a transitional kind of year, during which we tried to put Watergate, Vietnam, the ragged economy, and the CIA and FBI horrors

Analysis and Opinion

behind us, desperately tidying up our house for the Bicentennial. The fact that our President managed to turn his occupancy of the White House into a smashing political disadvantage, something political scientists swore was impossible, was symbolic. It was a dumb year, really.

JANUARY

New Year's Day a Federal jury finds Haldeman, Ehrlichman, Mitchell, and Mardian guilty. So much for that. But South Vietnam begins unraveling faster than our cynical leaders privately had estimated it would. Phuoc Ling Province falls to our old enemies. By the end of the month, Ford is pleading with Congress for one more fix—\$52 million for Cambodia and South Vietnam. With the money, he says, "they can hold their own." Rockefeller, riding high as Super-

veep, is named head of a commission to investigate the CIA. The jobless rate surges to 7.1 per cent, highest in 13 years. In 1974, it is reported, the cost of everything went up 10.2 per cent.

Ford signs into law a bill setting the Federal speed limit at 55 miles an hour, which nobody pays any attention to, and John T. Poole, of Irving, Texas, sets a spaghetti-eating record, 10 pounds and 11½ ounces in one hour, thereby defeating an Italian team. "I'm the greatest," he says.

FEBRUARY

Our airlift of vital supplies into Phnom Penh, capital of Cambodia, is doubled. Without even more aid, Ford says, Cambodia will fall. "Are we to deliberately abandon a small country in the midst of its life and death struggle?" Well, yes. Ford projects the deficit in his new budget at \$51.9 billion. Democrats deplore so much spending, so much debt, Ford says he looks at the economy with "tough-minded optimism." He says "We can cope." Jobless rate goes up to 8.2 per cent, highest since 1941. But Americans spend \$1.9 billion to go to the movies, biggest year since 1946. CBS' Daniel Schorr says the CIA was involved in assassination plots against at least three foreign leaders. Attorney General Levi says J. Edgar Hoover kept private files filled with nasty stuff about Presidents, congressmen, and all kinds of other people. The files go back many decades.

APRIL

In Southeast Asia, the end is at hand. "I do not anticipate the fall of Vietnam," the President says. "There is no reason for despair," says Schlesinger. Lon Nol skips Cambodia. Ford appeals for a bigger fix—\$972 million in military and "humanitarian" aid. The Khmer Rouge stream into Phnom Penh, and that war is over. Nguyen Van Thieu resigns as president of South Vietnam. We begin air-lifting orphans out of the country, and one of the first planes crashes, and 100 little kids die. Desperately we begin withdrawing our own people and our friends. Two of our Marines are killed at the Tan Son Nhut Airport in the final spasm: Lance Cpl. Darwin Judge, 19, of Marshalltown, Iowa, and Cpl. Charles McMahon, Jr., 23, of Woburn, Mass. They join 46,000 others.

We begin receiving the first of some 140,000 refugees from Vietnam. Arkansas' Sen. John McClellan says he doesn't want "excessive" numbers at a base in his state. Florida's Rep. Robert Sikes says there's no room at the base in his district. Rep. Andrew Hinshaw of California says he's worried about health problems at his base.

Kissinger—1975 did him no favors—says there's no purpose now in reviewing what happened in Vietnam. "Within the context of the time, it seemed the right thing to do."

MARCH

The North Vietnamese open a heavy assault in the Central Highlands and South Vietnamese troops reel. Hundreds of thousands of civilians abandon their homes, run for safety. Our old allies abandon Hue. Defense Secretary Schlesinger blames the collapse of South Vietnam's army on Congress' "niggardly" refusal to come up with more money. Kissinger takes off for the Middle East to achieve peace with honor in that part of the world.

Ford signs a \$23 billion tax cut and New York City begins to slip into bankruptcy. George Wallace tells a visiting group of foreign correspondents that he wishes the United States could have been on Japan's side in World War II.

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DOUBLE TAKE DOUBLE TAKE

By GERALD NACHMAN

Listomania

MY LIST of New Year's resolutions led off with a firm vow not to do any columns in 1976 involving lists, but it isn't quite working out that way so far — as you will detect by the following Ten Best Lists of the Year:

TEN BEST NAMES OF 1975: Cat Futch, Chevy Chase, Tawny Godin, Tovah Feldshuh, Iman, Gelsey Kirkland, Page Lee Hufty, Werner Erhard, Bruce Springsteen and Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman (tie).

TEN BEST COMEBACKS: Patty Hearst, Eldridge Cleaver, the Philippines, John Henry Faulk, Valentino, the \$2 bill, Roy Rogers, the Hindenburg, Bill Veeck, beef and oil (tie).

TEN WORST SETBACKS: J. Edgar Hoover, New York City, Stephanie Edwards, Jimmy Hoffa, the World Football League, Indira Ghandi, Pogo, the Secret Service, Curt Gowdy, the Bicentennial and Gerald R. Ford (tie).

TEN TIREDDEST TOPICS: "Nashville," rape, the Rev. Moon, Bruce Springsteen, "family hour," sharks, bisexuality, Cher, Jimmy Connors, Muhammad Ali — and Muhammad Ali (tie).

TEN BEST DISCOVERIES: Judith Campbell Exner, South Molucca, gay football players, the ozone layer, Mary Bagon's



MARY McGRORY: Goodbye to a Year

1975 was the year that couldn't get it together. It was a stop-go, yes-no kind of a proposition all the way through. It was a year when nothing happened.

You don't like it, do you? You can't work it into cocktail party chatter. A little too Kraft-Ebbing. Nobody will smile.

monster, then they said they would n't.

Ding-dong. Patty Hearst was found. Jimmy Hoffa was lost. The feminists failed to get the FR



Looking Back on Washington Happenings of 1975

Happy New Year! And may you not get in a fix in '76. To help keep you on a path that's straight and true — there's nothing like a backward view — of the really, big important events — that had an impact simply immense.

JANUARY — One hundred and three new members of Congress arrive in town breathing fires of reform. Thirteen of them are single men just breathing fire. No wonder Congress is burned out in three months.

Argentine Ambassador Orfila reveals he had entertained 7000 people in his first 11 months. He quickly learned you can get VIPs whenever you take steak out

Betty Beale

Refurbishment of Yellow Oval Room drives First Family into President's exercise den to relax. Must be crowded with all those machines but what family dares to put on \$100,000 chairs?

Gridiron Club swears in first woman member at big dinner. Speaker Ella Grasso, who's quite a girl, says she's seen liverlier parties at Leisure World.

New article tells how David Kennerly gets along fa-

Pepsi Cola prexy Don Kendall introduces Russian champagne to promote detente. Dentente at \$12.95 a bottle? Nyet!

Henry gives Nancy a Labrador retriever to keep her company when he's working late or afar. At home first thing rolypoly hubby does is roll on floor and play with puppy. So good for easing strain on imperial brain.

Page Lee Hutfy become glamor girl of Washington. She always had looks, charm and breeding but nobody gave a damn till they thought Teddy Kennedy did. It's such things that make fibbers out of women libbers.

New article tells how David Kennerly wows Ford family.

New article tells how David Kennerly goes ov with Ford family.

OCTOBER — Jack Ford is pictured with Micger's wife Bianca which means Jack's Dad can't bad so it isn't fair to call him a square.

Pearly Bailey wows White House audience President Sadat. She's trying for deed to pyram will settle for U.N. delegate bid.

Ambassador Zahedi receives Iran's highest dition entitling him to special burial. Shah has hea son-in-law being smothered by American affectic

Naked streaker takes jumps at Washington Show but press takes no notice from him. Fifth