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Digitized from Box 126 of The Ron Nessen Papers  
at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library

JACK HILLIS

Mr. Ford, Backstage

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

January 8, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR:

BOB BARRETT

FROM:

RON NESSEN

The President has asked me to undertake a chore which I would appreciate your help on.

Jack Anderson wants to write a column containing a selection of homey, flattering anecdotes about the President's unpublicized graciousness and kindness.

For example, the phone call to Fran Tarkenton expressing condolences on the death of Fran's father or the President turning to General George Brown during Don Rumsfeld's swearing-in urging that someone help the Coast Guard member of the Honor Guard who had fainted.

I would be grateful if you could supply me over the next few days with a handful of anecdotes, previously unpublicized, which illustrate this side of the President.



THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

January 8, 1976

## MEMORANDUM FOR RON NESSEN

FROM: BOB BARRETT

A number of anecdotes come to mind regarding the consideration and kindness of the President. Some require a lengthy discussion and as such may make them unsuitable for use in a column. Nevertheless, with no concern for conservation of words, I give you the following:

Congressman Wilbur Mills: While waiting to depart from Vail a year ago, the President realized that Mills had entered the hospital for treatment. He asked to have Congressman Mills contacted by telephone. He spoke with him, wished him well and reminded him that though they had been on opposite sides of the political fence, that he (Mills) had always acted with courage and strength. The President assured Mills that those same qualities would see him through his current dilemma. I remember thinking how unnecessary and specially how "unpolitic" that call was, yet he made it with such grace and naturalness that it became most important that it be done.

Senator Ted Kennedy: Prior to the start of a private party up in the residence, the President called Senator Kennedy, knowing that an important check-up of his son had taken place earlier that day.

Senator George McGovern: Senator McGovern was a guest at a working dinner given for King Hussein of Jordan on April 29, 1975. McGovern was, in my mind, truly moved by his inclusion after a long absence from the White House. The President said, "George, no matter what, the House belongs to everyone. Now more than ever."

Chicago-VFW Convention: This was one of the President's first trips out of the White House. Outside the hotel there were a significant number of well-organized Greek demonstrators. The President was going over his amnesty speech. He was asked if the chanting, which was incessant and loud bothered him. He got up and looked out the window and said, "No, they are good people. I can understand their feelings. They're friends." Then he went back to reading his speech.



Mrs. Ford's Operation: Events occurring on that weekend that Mrs. Ford had her operation made that time especially difficult. The President was scheduled all day at the Economic meeting at the Washington Hilton. During the late morning, he left and we joined up with Mrs. Ford for a tree dedication at the Lyndon B. Johnson Park. By this time his concern was mounting. The President returned to the Hilton and patiently listened to every speaker, not departing until nearly 6:00 p. m. He returned to the White House where there was a reception for over 1000 people on the state floor. After working his way through the crowd, he went upstairs and joined the children who had gathered from around the country, for dinner. Mrs. Ford had since gone to the hospital. After dinner, they all went to Bethesda. His concern increased. We returned at 11:00 p. m. The next day, while the operation was taking place, the President had a number of agenda items as well as some foreign visitors. In addition, he was scheduled to make closing remarks at the Economic Conference on live TV at noon time. Running late, a suggestion was made to go to Bethesda by helicopter rather than drive. After taking off, a small thunderstorm did a fair job of buffeting the aircraft about. That was the last thing we wanted on that day, but he never said a thing. Upon arriving at the hospital, he found out that Mrs. Ford was not yet out from the operating room. As time passed, the weather got worse and soon it became impossible, as planned, to fly back to the White House and then drive to the Hilton for the noontime TV appearance. With the helo grounded, a motorcade was rushed across town under rather perilous driving conditions. Just at the time the cars arrived, the President saw Mrs. Ford coming out from the operation. He was only able to spend a few moments with her. Not confident of her condition, he departed by motorcade from Bethesda to the Washington Hilton. A down<sup>er</sup>power, slick Wisconsin Avenue and a little traffic control made the movement "hairy." In what seemed to be a developing pattern, the follow-up vehicle slid into the rear of the limo at an intersection. It was nothing serious, but again it was the last thing needed. But again never a word was said by the President. Dick Keiser and I were starting to wonder if the weekend would ever end. From Saturday afternoon through Sunday evening there would be five more trips to Bethesda. The President also attended services at St. Johns. Finally, late Sunday evening, we returned to the South Grounds and knew that once we got the President in the elevator, the weekend would be done. He entered the elevator first and was followed by the children. I can remember watching the doors start to close and saying "Thank God!" Keiser and I started to step away when from the back of the elevator, the President said, "Thank you, Bob. Thank you, Dick." Before any response was possible the doors had closed. That he was able and thoughtful enough to say thank you under those conditions, at that time after what we had put him through, was incredible. ~~\*\*\*~~



Elevator Operator in Los Angeles: In the Century Plaza Hotel, the President and his entourage were moving from the Presidential Suite on the 19th floor to a floor below the lobby where he was scheduled to give a taped interview. The elevator was supposed to go directly to the lower floor. Due to complications, the elevator kept on stopping at different floors and then return upwards. Everyone became rather quiet and the panic on the face of the hotel elevator operator was evident. The President said, "Don't worry about it. It'll work out. You'll get us there."

Birthday parties Aboard Air Force One: There is no differentiation among White House personnel, high level staff or little guy. If it's known that it's someone's birthday, there's a cake and the President makes a point of warmly conveying his best wishes.

Boarding or Departing Aircraft: The President never fails to stop to say hello to the crew upon boarding either Air Force One or the helicopters. When leaving after a trip, he habitually says thanks and takes a little bit of time to comment on the trip, etc. He has also gone forward and occupied the guest seat in the cockpit on Air Force One during a take-off. The effect this has on the morale and appreciation of the crew is immeasurable.

Helicopter Couldn't Fly from Andrews to White House: Upon returning from Detroit, the weather got so bad that it was necessary to drive from Andrews to the White House. The helicopter and its pilot, Lieutenant Colonel Dave Pirnie were located in their usual position in front of Air Force One. As he was moving to the car, the President saw Colonel Pirnie and walked over to him to tell him not to be disappointed about not being able to fly. Pirnie was truly amazed that he would take the time to do what he did.

Visit to France in Chateau Roumboullet: The President upon seeing his accommodations at the old chateau asked if they were the best. I advised him that they were far and away the best in the Chateau. Then with concern for the rank of everyone in the Chateau, he said, "Well, better not invite anyone over for talks or drinks."

Liberty Had Accident in Vail 1974: Liberty was still<sup>6</sup> young pup and was suffering a little from the airplane ride from D. C. to Colorado. Just as the President and his guests sat down for a Christmas night dinner, Liberty had an "accident". The stewards rushed to assist but the President would not allow it. He cleaned it up himself saying, "Nobody should have to clean up after someone else's dog."

Staff Walking the Dog: As it works out a lot of people like dogs and are very comfortable giving a little bit of attention to Liberty in the form of a walk, etc. The President, while not frowning on this, doesn't want any perception created that such activities are required.

Generally speaking the President rarely directs or orders. Rather he will say "Could I...," Is it possible, please....? Though it's been used more than a dozen time, the response is, "Hell! You can declare war. What do you want?" He still laughs at this. It points up the total unpretentiousness of the man.



THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

NOTE FOR: *Bob Barrett*  
FROM : RON NESSEN

*What am I  
supposed to  
do with  
this?*  
RAN



November 5, 1976

CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM TO:                   RON NESSEN  
FROM:                               HARRY WALKER

The U.S. Jewish Appeal is having two major national conferences on Saturday evening, January 22nd in Palm Springs, California and the other one on Saturday evening, January 29th in Houston, Texas. They would be honored if President Ford would accept both engagements at a gross fee of \$7,500 plus all expenses for him and Mrs. Ford for each engagement or a total of \$15,000 for both engagements plus all expenses less our commission, of course. Please discuss with the President and phone at your very earliest convenience.

HW/mcb



November 8, 1976

MEMORANDUM TO:           BOB BARRETT  
FROM:                    RON NESSEN

These photographs were taken during the President's recent campaign trip in California by Joe Kennedy of the Los Angeles Times.

Kennedy is here now covering the President's vacation trip and delivered two photographs to me. He would like the President to have one as a gift and he would like the other autographed and returned to him sometime during this week.

If the President does autograph one of the photographs and you get it to me, I will see to it that it is delivered to Kennedy.

Thanks.

Attachments



November 12, 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR BOB BARRETT

FROM:       RON NESSEN

A real estate saleswoman named Mrs. Segall phoned and said she has the perfect house for the President if he wants to move to Palm Springs. I told her I would pass on her name to you.

Her phone number is: 323-4828.



THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

NOTE FOR: *Bob Barrett*  
FROM : RON NESSEN

*Do you want  
to handle this?*

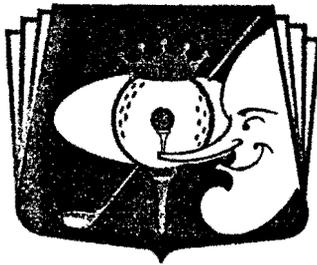
*RAN*

*11/17/76*



## THE BOB HOPE

Suite 100, Probst Professional Building  
Eisenhower Medical Center, 39000 Bob Hope Drive



## DESERT CLASSIC

Post Office Box 775  
Palm Desert, California 92260

Telephone (714) 346-8184

November 12, 1976

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Mr. Ron Nessen  
Presidential Press Secretary  
The White House  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Ron:

Pursuant to our telephone conversation, I have enclosed the President's page from the 1976 Bob Hope Desert Classic program for your guidance in preparing a President's letter for the 1977 program.

Again, we would like this as a personal letter to Bob Hope. The Classic has now raised in excess of \$5-million for the Eisenhower Medical Center and other local charities. It would appear appropriate for the President to commend Bob and the Classic Board of Directors for this tremendous fund-raising accomplishment. Incidentally, the Hope Classic is the largest charitable fund-raising tournament on the PGA Tour.

You might consider it appropriate, in a humorous vein, for the President to comment that since he will now have more time to devote to his golf game, that he is delighted to accept Bob's invitation and is looking forward to playing in the 1977 Classic.

The dates for the Classic are February 9-13, 1977, and this will be the 18th annual Bob Hope Classic. Because our program is printed well in advance of the tournament, I would appreciate receiving the President's letter unfolded and protected by cardboard by December 15.

You also asked that I remind you of selecting an appropriate date, probably sometime after the first of the year, to make the announcement that the President will play in the Classic. I will call you after the first of the month to discuss this subject.

We greatly appreciate your cooperation, and should you have the opportunity to be on the desert during the tournament or on any other occasion, we would welcome the opportunity to see you.

Kindest regards.

Sincerely,

*Cliff Brown*  
Cliff Brown  
Public Relations Director

CB/bw



THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

November 7, 1975

Dear Bob:

The annual Bob Hope Desert Classic offers unexcelled opportunities for having a good time while serving a noble cause. The tournament is one of professional golf's finest. It has immeasurably assisted the work of the Eisenhower Medical Center and other deserving institutions. I salute all who take part in the exciting competition it offers.

May it be a most enjoyable week for participants and spectators alike.

Mr. Bob Hope

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Nov. 29, 1976

12/1/76

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

NOTE FOR:

*Bob Barrett*

FROM:

RON NESSEN

*Are you handling,  
acknowledging,  
arranging interview  
requests for after  
Jan 20?*

*R.N.*

Dear Ron:

Our request ~~was~~ for an  
interview with the President  
AFTER -- not BEFORE -- Jan. 20.

Can you check it out with  
him again, please, and see if  
he finds this more agreeable?

Thanks very much,



Robert S. Boyd

Mr. Ron Nessen  
Press Secretary to the President  
The White House  
Washington DC

1/5/77

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

NOTE FOR: *Bob Barrett,*

FROM: RON NESSEN

*It's your turn now!*

*This guy wants  
to be President to  
write a Column,*

*R.N.*



VIRGIL M. PINKLEY

EDITOR AND PUBLISHER, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

December 30, 1976

*My dear Ron Nessen:*

It was most kind and thoughtful of you to write as you did on November 12.

You are correct in listing the outstanding qualities of President Gerry Ford. You had a great experience working with him and it is something you will treasure all your life.

I have written several letters recently to the President, and I will be most grateful if you will see that these reach his desk. I am especially interested in trying to work out some arrangement whereby I could come to Washington to interview him; and to discuss the possibility of handling any articles he might desire to be syndicated on a nationwide basis. Obviously we would put a tremendous promotional and selling effort behind them and work closely.

Should he decide to spend considerable time in Palm Springs it would be easy to get together frequently to go over all of these matters.

Thank you for being so loyal to the President and helping him so extensively.

I trust 1977 will be the best one ever for you, and I will be anxious to learn of your new association.

Cordially,

*Virgil*

Virgil Pinkley  
Editor and Publisher,  
Chief Executive Officer

Mr. Ron Nessen  
Press Secretary to  
the President  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500



1/5/74

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

NOTE FOR: *Bob Barrett*

FROM: RON NESSEN

*I think this  
is post - Jan 20*

*RN*



THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Date: January 4, 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR:                   RON NESSEN  
FROM:                               WILLIAM W. NICHOLSON  
SUBJECT:                           Arthur F. Marquette of Santa Barbara, California

The attached is for your appropriate handling.

Thank you.



*Also requests aid re preparation books*

*6 sent Audience (other than with)*

ARTHUR F. MARQUETTE  
881 SAN YSIDRO LANE  
SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA 93108  
December 31, 1976

A/C 805  
969-2100

President Gerald Ford  
The White House  
Washington, D.C.

T/D \_\_\_\_\_  
MEDILE BD. \_\_\_\_\_  
DATE RECEIVED  
JAN 4 1977  
MESSAGE \_\_\_\_\_  
MAKERS BUREAU \_\_\_\_\_  
IER *Kim Ross*  
ATTEN-

My dear President Ford:

The quid-pro-quo is nothing new in politics, but I'll wager this one takes a cake.

I will gladly remit \$100.00 to your personal request to me for funds to combat the Democratic national legislative program if you will do one small favor for me.

I am documenting the words which passed between incoming and outgoing Presidents of the United States as they ride together down Pennsylvania avenue at the time of the inauguration. My story will start with the earliest Presidents and come down to date. These conversations will serve to trace historical climaxes in our country's history and, more important, emphasize the even continuity of our government. Nothing but a short quote which you think epitomizes the meeting with President-elect Carter will suffice.

My qualification as a historian is a volume entitled. "Brands, Trademarks & Goodwill",



ARTHUR F. MARQUETTE  
881 SAN YSIDRO LANE  
SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA 93108

A/C 805  
969-2100

A History of The Quaker Oats Company, McGraw-Hill, 1967, a company in which you have many, many loyal supporters.

I hope your schedule will permit you to grant my request.

Incidentally, sometime when you are in Palm Springs, I believe it would be of interest for you to have a visit with Christopher Nicholas, our Santa Barbara Republican County Chairman for many years.

Time after time under his guidance this county goes Republican even though the registration is 50% or even more, Democratic.

Sincerely,

*Arthur F. Marquette*

