

POOL REPORTS

The President Skiing
December 24
1974

View from Site 1 -- Eagle's Nest

Site 1 is at the head of Simba trail, an intermediate trail 2,000 feet above the village, about 10,000 feet altitude. On skis, it's about 3 miles from the village (2 miles as the crow flies). Powder snow dusted lodgepole pines; sun through snow shower looking very wan. Temperature said to be twelve below zero.

10 a.m. --

Ford appears wearing a blue parka, dark (black?) pants, a red-white-blue wool cap with ski goggles up over his forehead. With him were ski instructor Dennis Hoeger and half a dozen young men who appeared to be agents from the way they surrounded the President.

There was the following brief interview:

-- Good morning, Mr. President. Are you cold?

F: No; it's wonderful. How long have you been out here?

-- About half an hour.

F: Didn't they feed you up there and everything?

-- O yeah --

-- How have you found the skiing, Mr. President?

F: It's been super, really. It's been cold, but the snow is ideal. It's been just right.

-- Are you all limbered up?

F: Well, I was a little stiff this morning.

-- Do the cameras make you nervous, Mr. President?

F: No. I just concentrate on skiing.

-- How long are you going to be out today?

F: About three hours.

-- Does the minus 12 degree temperature affect your skiing at all?

F: No; you work hard enough to not mind it, really.

-- Thank you, Mr. President.

He started down, looking pretty good, with Hoeger and the SS crew in his wake. Then came a flight of about 20 civilian skiers.

Ford was back up to Eagle's nest at 10:30. Your pooler was in position on the slope and does not know what happened for the next 15 minutes. (Temperature considerably warmer; powdery snow still falling).

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- 10:45 -- Word that he was through the gate.
- 10:55 -- Ford shoves off surrounded by about 20 others, including a young lady in bright poison green, said to be Susan Ford. About 50 skiers followed.

There was the following dialogue between photographers:

Photo 1: Did you get some good stuff?

Photo 2: My camera froze.

Irwin

Site 2 -- First Run

President was wearing a blue ski jacket... blue ski pants... and a red-white-blue knit ski hat.

Coming down Simba the President was trailed by several people... some ski patrolmen... some skiing Secret Service agents and Susan.

Mr. Ford skied up to pool and stopped. His face and cheeks were red, and he was puffing a bit. He stood for photographs and answered a few non substantive questions. The transcript is attached. We were told the temperature was about 12 degrees... new snow started falling... before the Presidential arrival machines had groomed the slope.

After about five minutes the President said he would see us all later. He moved out and for the story from the next vantage point we switch to pool #3 located at the bottom of Simba.

Jones-Gittines - and others

Ford's remarks to newsmen at site #2 during his first run down the mountain December 24. The pool was along the Simba trail, about a half-mile from the summit.

Q: Is your family with you this morning?

A: Susan's around here some place.

Q: You've got a Santa Claus with you, too. Is he part of the Presidential party?

A: (none audible)

Q: Mr. President, was that you taking a spill up there?

A: No, knock on wood, I haven't taken one this morning.

Q: Was it a good run, Mr. President?

A: Yeah, it was great, it really was.

Q: Were a couple of days practice enough to get ready for this?

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A: Yes, it helped a great deal.

Q: How are your legs this year?

A: I was dead tired yesterday but they come back fast. I felt real good this morning.

Q: Is it better this year than in previous years?

A: I've worked harder on it.

Q: Are you able to keep up with Susan, or does she ski circles around you?

A: I haven't skied with her until this morning. Where is she? (looking around at the people with him). Hi, Suze, come here.

Q: What are the family plans tonight?

A: We're going over to Ted Kindel's for our annual Christmas Eve party which we've done for three or four years.

Q: Will there be church tonight?

A: I'm sure there will be...

Q: Any Christmas presents yet?

A: There're lots of them underneath the tree. We'll open them tonight.

A spectator told the President at this point that "we're really proud to have you here in Vail."

A: "You make me justice of the peace and I'll quit" (being president).

Gene Risher

The Bottom of the Hill

Ford told reporters he had a "good run -- a real good run."

Asked how his skiing was coming, the President said: "It's improving."

His first ski run took 15 minutes, slower than the usual average skier.

Ford said he intended to ski about three hours today. (He actually stayed out about 2 1/2 hours) and he said "Rumsfeld's got about four hours of work for me."

A crowd of about 50 skiers had gathered after seeing reporters and photographers around the President at the end of the Simba trail.

Other skiers wished Ford a "merry Christmas." A youngster said: "Can I shake your hand."

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Asked about his Christmas plans for Christmas Day, Ford said: "Skiing and working and having a family Christmas dinner."

Asked what he did with the stockings (the Fords have a tradition of hanging up red felt stockings with their names on them and draw lots for who is to fill whose). He said "Have some fun with them."

Ford also told of the plans to go to midnight church services, and to attend the Christmas party at the home of Ted Kindel which he said is a traditional for the Fords.

Ford ended the slopeside press conference by pointing out: "I'm holding up the line of skiers."

Actually, Ford was accorded VIP treatment at the Gondola site, and was moved ahead of the line to get into the gondola for his ride up the mountain.

Lewine - AP
Thomas - UPI

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