

September 5, 1975

POOL REPORT #10

About the only thing I can add is to give you a brief description of what happened immediately after the incident. I don't think that any of us in the pool saw it. We were behind the President on his right and this all happened to the President's left.

I did hear someone who I did not -- I didn't know who was talking at the time -- but I did hear someone and it later turned out to be one of the agents, yell "get down, let's go." And I was later told in the State House by another source that "let's go" is some sort of a typical Secret Service code word or trigger word, and when an agent says "let's go," that means we have a serious problem and literally let's get out of here.

As soon as the agent said, "let's go," there was a kind of football huddle thing, the agents around Ford came and clustered him for about two or three seconds. The two agents who were nearest him on each side literally grabbed him physically, put their arms around him and clutched his clothing and literally hustled him out of there at a trot and we were about 100 yards from the entrance to the State House.

These agents grabbed him, didn't actually lift him off the ground but hustled him out at a trot. The President, right after it happened, turned around and looked back at the spot and it was clear, to me at least, he was aware of what happened. He seemed to me stunned, bewildered, dazed, something like that, and it was clear that he knew what had happened.

He did not say anything until we got to the steps and when we got to the steps, Steve -- I will let Steve tell you about this -- Steve asked him something like, "Mr. President, are you all right?" And I think he said something like, "Sure."

You can hear my question on video tape which has audio privileges. And then you hear me say, "The President looking grim, nodding that he is all right." That is on tape and we will try to get it from New York if you want it. All I can add is that I just watched the video tape replay from our camera and you see the President moving along, everything is normal, you can see a woman in a red dress who is immediately behind two other people who are closest to Ford, and Ford actually passes this red dress and appeared to be two or three persons past when suddenly you see agents going behind and just knock their way through the edge of the crowd and then the two agents nearest to Ford, as Tom described, did pull him out. He also went down nearly to his knees. Their first motion was to come in from both sides like this. They knocked him down and forward, so that he was down almost to belt buckle height for several seconds before he came back up, and they were clustered about him as they moved on out of there.

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As we got up to the steps, he looked very grim and stunned. I am not sure I would share in bewildered, but stunned is there, and he looked toward me and I yelled out, "Mr. President, are you all right," or something like that, and I did not hear any words. It did look as if his mouth was forming a word, and it was very grim, tight, a little grim.

This was Ford. Somebody said he looked kind of pale at the breakfast this morning.

I don't want to characterize that. We did talk to an eye witness, a young woman, whose name I'll get later. This young woman did describe to a number of reporters what she saw, and she said that the suspect asked a local policeman several minutes before Ford arrived if that was the route he would take and that the policeman gave an evasive answer but that the girl remained with the crowd along the edge of the sidewalk.

This girl also saw the gun. She said that Fromme had on a very striking red dress and appeared to be very friendly and outgoing prior to Ford's arrival.

--Tom DeFrank
Newsweek