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7 Old Friends Offer Blunt Advice to Ford

*Unofficial Critics, at His Invitation,
Try to Help Him Keep Perspective*

6-23-75 By JAMES M. NAUGHTON

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, June 22. friends, matters of con-
Gerald R. Ford's best friends. ture. At least for now, both

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7 Old Friends Periodically Hand President 'Very Blunt' Criticism

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ductive flattery and physical insulation that can lead Presidents to believe their own hyperbole.

One reason for Mr. Ford's relative openness is that he has what Bryce N. Harlow describes as "a group of old friends who sit down and tell him like it is, unblemished.

Mr. Harlow, once counselor

nished conversation. Refreshments, as one participant noted with regret, are limited to a choice of coffee or iced tea.

"I'm always surprised when he reconvenes the thing," said Mr. Harlow. "I wonder how helpful it is to him. He calls us back together, so he must think it is."

The President has wondered aloud himself, in a

grams. The kitchen cabinet watched the President cut a practice videotape. It was his first use of a television prompter. His friends were aghast at how wooden Mr. Ford seemed. They encouraged—"insisted on," said one—more rehearsals and some humanizing gestures. When he went before the nation, Mr. Ford had a fire burning, wandered around the White House library, and

