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NEWS CONFERENCE

#532

AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 12:00 NOON EDT

JULY 13, 1976

TUESDAY

MR. NESSEN: Let me give you some details on the trip today. The press check-in at Andrews is 5:00. The press plane leaves at 5:30 and arrives at Philadelphia International Airport at 6:15. The President will take off by helicopter from the South Lawn at 5:55, depart Andrews at 6:15 and arrive at Philadelphia International Airport at 6:45.

The plan is to go directly to the stadium and participate in a brief reception, which will include representatives of each of the Major League baseball teams. The President then will visit the locker rooms of the American and National League All-Stars and then will throw out the first ball to the opposing catchers at about 8:30.

The President will take a number of guests with him to the game. They will meet briefly in the Oval Office and then go by helicopter to Andrews and then on to Philadelphia.

They are Ernie Banks, the former baseball player, and Joe Garagiola, the former baseball player.

Q Is he also taking some sportswriters?

MR. NESSEN: At the stadium the President is going to have other people with him in the box, including the baseball Commissioner, Bowie Kuhn; Warren Giles, the President of the National League; Joe Cronin, the President of the American League, Hank Aaron; Mrs. Julius Stevens and her son, who are Babe Ruth's daughter and grandson--our advance people don't have their names--Roone Arledge of ABC; Governor and Mrs. Byrne of New Jersey, and several sportswriters, whose names I can't give you at the moment.

The President will throw out the first two balls, as you know, and he will be handed the balls by Bob Lemon and by Robin Roberts, former baseball players who are the most recent inductees in the Baseball Hall of Fame. The one pitch will go to Johnny Bench, who is the catcher for the National League All-Star team, and the other to Thurman Munson, who is the catcher for the American League team.

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I think you know that tomorrow is the President's 63rd birthday. As part of this, he is having his semi-annual routine physical examination in the White House Medical Office at 8:00 in the morning. I think you know that the way this works is that the President has the full physical once a year, in January, and then the half-yearly shorter examination on his birthday in July.

That is tomorrow morning at 8:00. It is expected to take 30 or 40 minutes. It consists of an EKG, laboratory tests and the physical examination portion. Dr. Lukash will conduct it, and I expect by briefing time we will be able to give you a report on it.

Q Can we have that today? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: It is a kidding day on the briefing front. (Laughter)

On Friday night the President will go to Baltimore to attend a reception given by Chancellor and Mrs. Schmidt aboard the German tall ship Gorch Fock. The President will go there by helicopter, leaving the South Lawn at about 6:00, and will be back shortly after 8:00.

The press will go by bus, with the buses departing the Southwest Gate at about 4:00.

Q Will there be a pool at all on the chopper?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Aboard ship?

MR. NESSEN: We will have a sign-up sheet posted following this briefing. The coverage plans are that there will be an expanded pool, which will be actually aboard the ship, and for anybody else who wants to go, it is going to be dockside coverage, which is open coverage but on the dock.

I think we will be able to get a few seats, probably something like the Charlottesville plan, for going on the helicopter with the President.

Q Ron, do you anticipate there will be toasts at that dinner?

MR. NESSEN: No, it is a reception.

Q He is not having remarks at all, then?

MR. NESSEN: Thursday night is the State dinner for Chancellor Schmidt. This is Friday night.

Q Schmidt is not entertaining him at dinner aboard the ship?

Q Is this a reciprocal?

MR. NESSEN: It is possible that there could be some brief remarks there.

Q How long will he be there?

MR. NESSEN: He leaves the South Lawn at about 6:00 and gets back a little after 8:00, so he will be gone about two hours altogether, so probably an hour on the ship.

Q Is Schmidt going on the helicopter?

MR. NESSEN: No, Schmidt will be there to greet him. I have not got the exact plans yet.

Q What is he doing tomorrow night on his birthday?

MR. NESSEN: There are no plans to announce right now.

Q Is he going to be here in the Residence?

MR. NESSEN: As far as I know, he will be.

Q Watching television?

Q How about entertainment or some kind of party?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any plans for tomorrow.

Q Ron, you said at one time this President was one of the most athletic in recent times. Did he ever play baseball?

MR. NESSEN: He watches baseball.

Q When was the last time he went to a game?

MR. NESSEN: He threw out the opening ball in April in Texas, so that would have been about two and a half months ago was the last time he was at a baseball game. Of course, he threw out the ball at the opening of the season in 1974 and saw Hank Aaron hit the 714th homerun at that game. That was in Cincinnati. Then, it seems to me, he went to another game after that, before the opening of the season, down in Texas this year.

Q Do you know if he played in high school, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know whether he played any baseball or not. I have not heard him say that he played baseball.

Q Did he watch the Democratic Convention last night on television?

MR. NESSEN: What he did was, when he went up to the Residence, he turned on the TV -- as he often does -- and kept the sound down low while he did about an hour and a half's worth of paperwork. That is what he normally does each night, is to turn on the TV and look at it if it interests him and also go through his paperwork. That is what he did, and he said that really he concentrated mostly on the paperwork.

Q Did he hear the keynote addresses?

MR. NESSEN: He didn't really turn up the sound.

Q You don't have any reaction to the keynote address then from the President?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q So, based on your statement of what his style is, he found nothing last night that interested him?

MR. NESSEN: That is correct.

Q The same way with Nixon. (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: Now there is an honest man.

Q What else is new?

MR. NESSEN: Not much. What's new with you, Rudy? (Laughter)

I don't have anything else.

Q What is he going to say this afternoon to these foreign exchange students?

MR. NESSEN: I haven't looked at the text of that, John.

Q Will that be on schedule so we can cover it and get to Andrews?

MR. NESSEN: 3:15 -- Yes, I think he will do that on schedule.

Q What about Saturday's schedule?

MR. NESSEN: Saturday's schedule -- I have not gotten the exact arrangements yet, but it is going to be an awfully early departure.

Q Approximately what?

MR. NESSEN: 5:30 or 6:00 a.m.

Q Leaving 5:30?

MR. NESSEN: Yes, because he is going up there for a breakfast.

Q Do you mean 4:30 for us?

MR. NESSEN: No, no, I am saying press departure about 5:30 or 6:00. The President will probably leave about a quarter to 7:00, go to breakfast and some other events connected with the convention in Hartford, and then will be back shortly after the beginning of the day.

Q Who is he going to breakfast with?

MR. NESSEN: I have not got the exact details.

Q Sounds like fun.

MR. NESSEN: Doesn't it?

Q Can we go to the Officer's Club and get drunk in Salem? (Laughter)

MR. NESSEN: It is all right with me. I don't have any problems.

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Q Ron, may I have your reaction here to the Philippines establishing diplomatic relations with Vietnam and Thailand, as reported?

MR. NESSEN: I don't have any comment on the establishment.

Q In that connection, then, has the Administration satisfied itself yet that any steps are being taken on the MIAs that would encourage normalization relations between the U.S. and Vietnam?

MR. NESSEN: I think you know that there has been some communication back and forth but no progress to report.

Q Anything to report on the IOC?

MR. NESSEN: Well, I would only say this, John: My understanding is that the IOC is meeting this afternoon at 2 o'clock to consider the Executive Committee decision of yesterday. I would say that the American position or the White House position is that politics have no place in the Olympic Games; that we believe the Olympics are a sporting event; that the participants in the Games should be determined by the International Olympic Committee.

The role of the host country is solely to provide facilities for the Games and the host country should not stipulate political or other considerations for participation in the Games.

Q Has the President relayed this feeling to Trudeau or anyone else in the Canadian Government?

MR. NESSEN: There has not been any direct contact with the Canadian Government.

Q Ron, based on this attitude at the White House, it seemed to me that the President is at this point -- if it continues -- of the attitude to recommend that the U.S. team not participate.

MR. NESSEN: Phil, I just don't want to project that far ahead. The IOC is meeting today. The President still hopes that this will be resolved in a way that athletes can compete freely without their participation being determined on political grounds.

Q Ron, does the President have any reply to the charge by the External Affairs Minister of Canada that the President has engaged in political interference because of your comments yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: The President does not have any response to that, no.

Q Do you have any?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q You say there has been no direct contact with the Canadian Government?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Any indirect contact?

MR. NESSEN: No.

Q You were using that phrase to rule out any contact?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q In other words, your only way of letting Trudeau know how the President feels is through the media and through the American Olympic Team?

MR. NESSEN: Well, there certainly has been no direct communication with the Canadian Government in this.

Q Has the President suggested or has the President discussed any of this matter of Taiwan and Montreal with his Commission Study on the Status of Amateur Sports in the United States?

MR. NESSEN: Let's see. Mike Harrigan, I believe, is the head of that committee. Mike Harrigan has participated in meetings at which this matter was discussed.

Q This week?

MR. NESSEN: This week and the latter part of last week, yes.

Q Ron, Krumm will be in attendance at the IOC meeting this afternoon.

MR. NESSEN: That is correct, yes.

Q Will he deliver to the IOC the statement you just delivered to us?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know whether he will deliver the exact statement. The United States Olympic Committee is a private organization unconnected with the Government. I just recall to you the President's phone call to Krumm yesterday in which he urged Krumm to use his influence to have the Executive Committee decision overturned. So, Krumm will have to make his own presentation. He is not under any sort of Government control, but he certainly knows how the President feels based on the phone conversation.

Q I gather he shares the President's feeling on this subject.

MR. NESSEN: Well, I can't speak for Krumm. I don't know. You will have to wait and see what he does at that meeting today.

Q Ron, on another subject, in the Post today there is a story here on Bob Mead and it reports you as having said that you saved Mead several times and Mead says: "I don't know what he is talking about. I would like for him to say on the record when he saved me and why he was unhappy."

I wonder if you would respond to that.

MR. NESSEN: Phil, I think if you were here yesterday you know that I called attention to Bob Mead's public remarks that he wanted his resignation to be handled in a quiet and personal manner and I respect his wishes and I told him that on the phone yesterday and I intend to conduct this in the same manner that Bob has, which is to do it in a quiet and personal manner.

Q Well, he is quoted here as saying that he wants you to say publicly where you saved him.

MR. NESSEN: Well, Bob and I have talked and I think that is the way to handle this matter.

Q How long is he going to stay?

MR. NESSEN: He will stay for 30 days beyond the date of his resignation.

Q Why?

MR. NESSEN: That is the normal way of doing it.

Q When will he leave, then?

MR. NESSEN: August 8. His resignation was dated July 8, so his departure will be August 8.

Q Ron, along that line--if this has been asked earlier--

MR. NESSEN: He will probably take some vacation time during that period.

Q Has the Senate Interstate Commerce Committee given any assurance that Margita White's nomination will be in fact taken up?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know about that, Bob. I will have to look into that.

Q Ron, was the timing of the GOP Convention an influence in Bob's departure?

MR. NESSEN: You have to ask Bob, because he submitted his resignation last week and I don't know what his considerations were in submitting it.

Q He indicated he would be willing to stay on until August 31 after the Convention, but this suggests that the White House does not want his services during the Convention.

MR. NESSEN: Well, this is a fairly normal manner in which to handle resignations -- 30 days of service beyond the date of the resignation.

Q Ron, you are probably aware that the Public Broadcasting Service telephoned Bob yesterday and offered to send a letter to the President indicating that they would take the entire blame for the broadcast, the telecast of the Queen's dinner. I am wondering if you have apologized personally to Bob for the letter which you sent?

MR. NESSEN: Phil, as I say, I am going to accede to Bob's wishes and handle this matter in the quiet and personal way that he, himself, has asked for.

Q Ron, you know, I saw a whole weekend of quotes. It is a little late to be handling it in a quiet and personal way. I mean, hasn't that boat sort of left the dock?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, Aldo. I know I am going to respect Bob's wishes and do it this way.

Q Starting yesterday?

Q Then, it is fair to say that you do retract your weekend statements where you said that you had saved him for six months?

MR. NESSEN: I am not entirely clear of what your goal in this is, Phil.

Q My goal is to find out the truth.

MR. NESSEN: Well, my goal is to accede to Bob's wishes that his resignation, for whatever reasons, be handled in a quiet and personal way, and I intend to do that, as I said yesterday and today.

Q Why didn't you accede to his wishes over the weekend when you were making comments about what a terrible job he had done?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know that I said that to anybody, Fred.

Q I certainly saw it quoted by UPI.

MR. NESSEN: Well, I would like to be responsible for my own remarks and --

Q Were you misquoted on that?

MR. NESSEN: I am going to handle this the way Bob suggests. It is a man's life and career and I think that Bob has a right to have it treated in a, as I say, quiet and personal way. I am going to live up to that --

Q It most certainly is --

MR. NESSEN: -- as I told Bob on the phone yesterday.

Q It most certainly is his career, and you were quoted over the weekend as saying that you saved him for six months, that a lot of people wanted to fire him and that you personally saved him -- this time you decided to step aside.

Our question has nothing to do but with, are you admitting that you made those statements?

MR. NESSEN: Phil, as I said, Bob yesterday asked that this be handled in a quiet and personal manner. I told Bob on the phone that I was going to handle it in a quiet and personal manner, and I am going to.

Q Do you regret that you made those weekend statements?

MR. NESSEN: I am going to handle Bob's resignation in a quiet and personal manner, as Bob suggested, and as I told him I would.

Q So, you are stonewalling my question.

MR. NESSEN: I told Bob on the phone yesterday that I was going to handle his resignation in a quiet and personal manner, as he suggested, and I intend to keep my promise to Bob.

Q Do you regret you made those statements over the weekend?

MR. NESSEN: Phil, I can repeat my position on this for quite a long time, but I think we are probably not going to get very far doing it.

Q Your position is untenable unless you make a statement that you wish you had not made those remarks over the weekend, or whether or not it is true or not you would like to wipe the board clean. I mean, you can't handle this in a quiet and personal manner.

MR. NESSEN: I can handle it the way Bob and I agreed it would be handled, which is in a quiet and personal way, as Bob requested, and I intend to do it that way.

Q The previous comments stand, though, unless you retract them.

MR. NESSEN: Well, I don't know what previous comments you are talking about, John. I am going to handle it the way Bob and I have agreed to handle it.

Q When did he ask you to handle this in a quiet and personal way?

MR. NESSEN: Well, as you know, yesterday we talked about that appearing on the UPI wire and I later talked to Bob during the day and I said that is the way I preferred to handle it also, and so we agreed --

Q Why can't you show courtesy to the man and answer our question of whether or not you made those statements and you stand by them or, number two, you made them and you regret that you made them? Now, one of those two things is a courtesy to Bob Mead.

MR. NESSEN: Phil, Bob yesterday asked that his resignation be handled in a quiet and personal manner. I talked to Bob on the phone yesterday and I said, "I agree with you and that is what I intend to do," and that is what I do intend to do.

Q You don't consider this a hit-and-run tactic on a man's career?

MR. NESSEN: I don't, Phil.

Q That was a serious question.

MR. NESSEN: I know it was a serious question, and my answer was a serious no.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END

(AT 12:22 P.M. EDT)