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NEWS CONFERENCE

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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 9:05 A.M. EST

JANUARY 20, 1977

THURSDAY

MR. NESSEN: I am going to do this a little bit out of order because I am still collecting the details, but I guess you want to know about what time the President got up this morning, where he had breakfast. That is being compiled. I will have it for you in a moment.

Let me, in the meantime, jump back to last night. The President took a lot of paperwork home with him to the residence and signed quite a bit of paperwork. We are going to have that beginning to come out at 10 o'clock this morning, just so you will know. There are a couple of disaster area declarations.

Q Can you say what they are for?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know what the States are. I think these are cold weather disaster relief declarations. We will have that at 10 o'clock. There is the joint resolution concerning Secret Service protection for Dr. Kissinger and others and some other transmittals to Congress.

Then, as you will see when I get to the end of the breakfast, the President went back to his office at about ten minutes of 9:00 and is there now working on whatever else remains, so we could be having some paperwork coming out right up until departure time.

Q You mean the Oval Office?

MR. NESSEN: Right. Let's go to the breakfast.

The President arrived in the State Dining Room at about seven minutes after 8:00. There were, I would guess -- I didn't count the people -- 75 people there, Cabinet Members and members of the White House staff. The President circulated.

In the center of the State Dining Room was a buffet table on which were two coffee urns, trays of orange juice and trays of pastry and sweet rolls.

The President arrived at seven minutes after 8:00 and circulated through the room, chatting briefly and shaking hands with most of the people there.

Q Mrs. Ford did not accompany him?

MR. NESSEN: That is right. At about 20 minutes of 9:00, at the north end of the room -- that is, the room toward the Pennsylvania Avenue side of the White House --

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Vice President Rockefeller tapped on something to gain attention and spoke briefly, saying, "Mr. President, this is the proudest moment of our lives."

Q Is that direct?

MR. NESSEN: Yes. The Vice President then talked about the accomplishments of President Ford, which he referred to as the restoration of faith and pride brought back to this country.

Q These are quotes?

MR. NESSEN: Those three words "restoration of faith" are quotes. Then he also spoke of "pride brought back to this country."

Then Vice President Rockefeller said it was typical of your thoughtfulness to have us to breakfast. At that point a gift to the President from his staff was brought in and the gift was his Vice Presidential chair from the Cabinet Room, the chair that had been at the Cabinet table with his little plaque on the back of it during his time as Vice President. This was in the GSA storage area.

You will probably ask why not his Presidential chair? That has already, I understand, been purchased for inclusion in his library.

Q Who bought that? Do you know, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know.

Q The plaque on the back of the Vice Presidential chair has his name on it?

MR. NESSEN: The name and date he became Vice President. It doesn't have names on it. It says "The Vice President." The date is December 6, 1973.

Then the President responded by saying -- I am paraphrasing now-- I am not good at putting words together on an occasion like this.

Q We know that. What did the President say? (Laughter)

Q You are paraphrasing?

MR. NESSEN: I am paraphrasing. He said, I tried to thank you all in person or by letter, or both.

Q Can you give us quotes?

MR. NESSEN: They are pretty close to quotes, Myra, but I don't want to say that every last word is exact.

Q Could you repeat the last thing you said?

MR. NESSEN: I am trying to thank you all in person or letter, or both.

He said, I have enjoyed the White House mainly because of the fine people. The days were long, but they were lightened by the people.

Q Still in direct quote?

MR. NESSEN: No. These are pretty close.

Q Semi?

MR. NESSEN: Semi-accurate quotes. They are pretty close.

Q The days were long, but what about the people?

MR. NESSEN: But they were lightened by the people. "Lightened" is a quote.

You all contributed to an administration I think was good and which history will treat kindly. I hope to see you all again. I believe the friendships we made here will go well beyond January 20th.

By then the President began to walk toward the door, shaking hands with a few last people who were near the door. He waved, said goodbye everybody, thank you all very, very much, and then he rode down the elevator to the ground floor, walked over through the portico with Terry and Dick Cheney and myself, Kennerly, and went into the Oval Office where there was a briefcase on the desk and some papers that he still will deal with this morning, and is dealing with this morning.

Q He walked outside?

MR. NESSEN: Yes.

Q Can you give us any flavor for the aura of nostalgia in that meeting?

MR. NESSEN: Again, Walt, I think the atmosphere is not one that this is writing any kind of finish to the President's public career. Certainly, he is leaving Washington for the time being, but there is no feeling that Gerald Ford will never be heard from again. So that, I think, perhaps makes the mood somewhat less nostalgic or even sad than you might expect.

Q Did the President show any emotion when he was speaking to the group, similar to the State of the Union address when he choked up a bit?

MR. NESSEN: I think in the beginning when he said that he was not good at putting words together on an occasion like this, he obviously was moved. But I didn't see any tears, for instance, in the room.

Let me back up a little bit. The President rose at 6:00 this morning. That is a little later than he normally gets up. He exercised. His morning exercise is normally --

Q Did he do push-ups?

MR. NESSEN: Sometimes when he travels and he doesn't have his exercise equipment, he runs in place.

Q Is that what he did this morning?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know. Have they taken the exercise equipment away?

MR. ROBERTS: I think they told us he had.

MR. NESSEN: Then he must have run in place.

Q When did he take his last swim in the White House pool?

MR. NESSEN: I know he swam late yesterday afternoon. That could have been his last one.

Q You don't know whether he swam this morning?

MR. NESSEN: He doesn't normally swim in the morning. He did not swim this morning.

Q Does he take this exercise equipment with him?

MR. NESSEN: He does, he will, he already has. It is his stuff. He paid for it. It is not GSA exercise equipment.

Q Ron, when did he swim yesterday, and for about how long?

MR. NESSEN: It was late because it was when we were waiting for that last batch of stuff.

MR. ROBERTS: Between 6:00 and 7:00 or later. I can check it.

MR. NESSEN: It was about 7:00.

Q The length of time?

MR. NESSEN: He normally swims 20 minutes.

Q What are you going to say, 6:00 o'clock, 5:00 o'clock?

MR. NESSEN: Getting up?

Q Last night's swim.

MR. NESSEN: Bill is checking. He got up at 6:00, did his exercises, looked through the papers, had his usual breakfast, which is grapefruit and tea and English muffins. At 7:20 --

Q Didn't he listen to the electronic media, Ron, during his exercising we understand?

MR. NESSEN: If he did, Les, it doesn't show on the log or the schedule that I have.

Q Did he fix his own English muffins?

Q How many Cabinet Members were there? Which Cabinet Members were there?

MR. NESSEN: I saw all of them, actually; Henry was there; Rumsfeld; Simon I did not see; Coleman was there; Elliot was there; Usery was there; Carla; Richardson; Kleppe.

Q You think all but Simon?

MR. NESSEN: I did not see Levi. I think he came in to see the President the other day with his family for his own private farewell.

Q What are the papers on the President's desk? I don't mean every item. But what are the last papers he is dealing with?

MR. NESSEN; We have ready to hand you -- let me clean up this. I know you want to get going here. The President took his swim last night at 5:45 p.m. and returned to the office at 6 p.m.

He did not swim this morning and I don't anticipate he will swim today.

Here is what we have ready to hand you in the way of paperwork that the President signed last night and I would just like for you to stick around here closely because we will try to keep this flowing out on a fairly regular basis. I will just run through it quickly. It is written down.

It is the Joint Resolution that involves Secret Service protection after January 20th for the Vice President, Secretaries of State and Treasury and their families.

Q For how long?

MR. NESSEN: The President sent a letter to the Congress asking that the predator program be transferred from Interior to Agriculture. I know for a fact that Agriculture has prepared a lot of background on that decision.

The President declared the State of California an emergency because of drought -- and the paper will give you a phone number for additional details as well as giving you some additional details; also the State of Utah declared a disaster because of the impact of drought, background on that; a letter to the Hill that has to do with special consideration given to the Congo as far as foreign trade goes under sections of the law of the Trade Act cited here.

Q On the President's control transfer, is that legislation which requires Congressional approval or is that an Executive edict?

MR. NESSEN: This is a notification that he is submitting legislation to transfer.

Q Ron, would you tell us why Sheila Weidenfeld was put on the International Investment Commission?

MR. NESSEN: Tell you why she was?

Q There she is. Maybe she can tell us.

MR. NESSEN: It was the President's judgment that he wanted Sheila to serve in that capacity.

MS. WEIDENFELD: It was shortly lived, I think. I now have another one. I am not on that. I came in with a mistake. I ended with a mistake -- no.

Q What is your commission?

MISS WEIDENFELD: My commission is the Historical Preservation.

Q Ron, when was the last time that the President drove a car, to your knowledge?

MR. NESSEN: He has driven golf carts. Does that count?

Q I mean has he?

MR. NESSEN: You mean internal combustion engine?

Q I mean an automobile.

MR. NESSEN: As opposed to battery operated.

Q He hasn't driven one since he has been President?

Q He had a chauffeur on the Hill as Minority Leader for years.

MR. NESSEN: I don't know, Les.

Q Does he expect to? I asked John. He said he would investigate because I wonder, you know.

Q Do you have anything else, Ron?

MR. NESSEN: Not right now, Fran. I will shuttle back and forth.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END

(AT 9:22 A.M.EST)