

"A Conversation at Camp David"
THE REASONER REPORT
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Part I

HARRY REASONER:

Mr. President, tell me a little bit about this place. How big is it?

PRESIDENT FORD:

Well, they tell me it's roughly 200 acres, Harry. It's...was land that was acquired some years ago, developed primarily, or initially I should say, by President Roosevelt, but expanded in facilities and much more used by President Eisenhower and that's where it got the name Camp David named after his grandson, and I think it's a very appropriate name. It seems to fit. That's correct.

HARRY REASONER:

These are guest quarters or.....

PRESIDENT FORD:

No, this is the place where the commanding officer, it's under the jurisdiction of the military, that's his residence. Not a bad assignment for a Navy commander.

HARRY REASONER:

I've seen worse ships.

HARRY REASONER:

They each have a name. That's Cedar. That's....

PRESIDENT FORD:

Rosebud. You can see they're all in the same style of architecture which fits in really beautifully with the trees and the whole set-up that's built here.

HARRY REASONER:

It seems to me that you are unique...certainly in our lifetime...in the way you got to the Presidency and in the fact that obviously you weren't scratching and climbing to get there most of your life. When you come into that and get all the problems, the well-known awesome responsibility, but you also get things like Camp David. Is it kind of fun sometimes?

PRESIDENT FORD:

Harry, it might be very hard to believe, but I really enjoy it. The things like this, of course, are awfully nice. I must say it's nice living in the White House, but the challenge of the problems I also enjoy. It's great to have the opportunity to make some decisions. Hopefully, I trust they're good, but as Harry Truman once said, "The buck stops here."

HARRY REASONER:

Why do you suppose through five previous presidents it was kept sort of mystical? Was it security reasons, do you think?

PRESIDENT FORD:

It's my understanding that when World War II came along and they started using it and again after President Eisenhower took over, they decided this was a very appropriate place. It was handy to Washington for the purpose of transportation, that it could be used as sort of an alternate emergency White House and the net result is it's really a...

HARRY REASONER:

You can run the country from here.

PRESIDENT FORD:

You actually can. There are some very appropriate security measures but also communications. Hi, dear.

MRS. FORD:

Hi dear. How are you?

PRESIDENT FORD:

You know Harry Reasoner and....

HARRY REASONER:

Hello. How are you? Nice to see you.

MRS. FORD:

Good to see you.

HARRY REASONER:

Who's your friend?

MRS. FORD:

This is Liberty

HARRY REASONER:

Liberty, How are you?

MRS. FORD:

Sit.

HARRY REASONER:

This must be paradise for a dog.

PRESIDENT FORD:

It's her first visit here.

MRS. FORD:

She just took off after the doe, well, the doe was faster than she was.

HARRY REASONER:

She never saw a deer before, I suppose.

PRESIDENT FORD:

No. No. I was wondering what her reaction....

MRS. FORD:

She was chasing chipmunks and....

PRESIDENT FORD:

...would be.

HARRY REASONER:

How do you like it up here, Mrs. Ford?

MRS. FORD:

Oh, beautiful. Just love it. I really do.

PRESIDENT FORD:

It's a nice place to get up here and..

MRS. FORD:

Unwind.

PRESIDENT FORD:

Unwind. Right. I got eight hours sleep last night which is the first time in...

MRS. FORD:

Marvelous.

PRESIDENT FORD:

A couple of weeks and it's hard to get up even after eight

HARRY REASONER:

Yeah, I can imagine. Now, the presidential families live in what, in Aspen?

PRESIDENT FORD:

Aspen, right. And we'll walk down there. It's..... as I understand it, it was the original lodge. It's been expanded but it overlooks the valley there. It's a beautiful view.

REASONER:

You've got the swimming pool in back...

PRESIDENT FORD:

(Laughter) Very handy.

HARRY REASONER:

Place to make your own English muffins or have you given that up even up here?

PRESIDENT FORD:

Well....

MRS. FORD:

That's a good joke. (Laughter)

PRESIDENT FORD:

I used to, but not anymore.

PRESIDENT FORD:

I like that first hour, Harry.

HARRY REASONER:

I do too.

PRESIDENT FORD:

And I think Betty likes that extra hour's sleep.

MRS. FORD:

Well, I found out that he enjoys the newspaper more than anything else.

HARRY REASONER:

First thing in the morning.

PRESIDENT FORD:

Are you going to bring Liberty down here with us or...

MRS. FORD:

We thought we'd go up and look at the trampoline.

REASONER:

We'll see you later.

PRESIDENT FORD:

Okay.

MRS FORD:

Fine.

PRESIDENT FORD:

Bye, Betty.

REASONER:

How many people, if you were going to have an international conference, or a domestic summit, how many people could you conveniently.....

PRESIDENT FORD:

Oh there are ample quarters for a good many people. There's a fine conference center.

I think they're roughly 40, well, there's availability for about 40 people to stay here, and of course they can come and go very easily, either by helicopter or driving. And here's another one of the quarters for people who are staying overnight. It's called Birch. It's a very attractive place. I came up here several times in the last five years just for part of a day and stayed over at Birch when I did.

HARRY REASONER:

Mr. Nixon stayed here more than any other president, didn't he?

PRESIDENT FORD:

That's my understanding, and he and Mrs. Nixon like it. I can see why.

REASONER:

Now this is your place.

PRESIDENT FORD:

This is where Presidents stay. It's the nicest place on the Camp David site. It's a place where you can really live as a family, Harry.

REASONER:

Is it big enough to bring all your kids there, or I suppose they could use another cottage.

PRESIDENT FORD:

I think the children would prefer to live off by themselves, but there are enough bedrooms so that you could have at least two other, well actually four, because they're twin beds in two bedrooms.

REASONER:

Sir, you talked about enjoying the challenge of the Presidency. How about your kids? They had some mixed feelings?

PRESIDENT FORD:

Well, they had, you know, it was an abrupt change, Harry, and I think they've adjusted well. They, I think they're proud of the fact that their old man is in the White House, but it hasn't changed their lives materially and they adjusted, as I said, to the fact that the Secret Service are with them.

Two of them are in school out of town. Susan is living with us and Steve's out on a ranch and that's what they wanted to do and were doing. We hope to get together with them in Vail, Colorado, at Christmastime in a typical Ford family Christmas period which we've always done for the last 10 or 15 years.

REASONER:

President Kennedy said, I think, to Mrs. Kennedy after he got to like this place and they were building another house, he said, "Why build a weekend house when we've got this for free?" Is that essentially what you think?

PRESIDENT FORD:

I think that's my reaction.

It's a total complex, and it's so comfortable and so beautiful, and it's so handy with all the facilities that you need as President, I really don't think we ought to go beyond it.

REASONER:

Every president should have one.

PRESIDENT FORD:

Well, it's a great spot.

PRESIDENT FORD: (cont'd)

Here's an interesting pool which I didn't know existed. It's a pool with some beautiful gold fish that they take out at the wintertime and bring back in the summer. Apparently, the fish would have some difficulty in the wintertime.

REASONER:

They aren't sacred carp from the Emperor of Japan or any kind of state gift?

PRESIDENT FORD:

Not that I know of, Harry. But isn't that beautiful up there with the water coming down and the flowers. One of the nice things that whoever designed the houses and the environment made a beautiful little extra spot here.