

NOVEMBER 1, 1974

POOL REPORT

Air Force One Pool Report

President Ford visit with
Former President Nixon

The President left Century Plaza via underground entrance at 9:32 am, arriving at the Federal building parking lot . . . turned helipad at 9:43 am. The President left at 9:45 in a Marine Huey helicopter, arriving Long Beach airport at 9:57 a. m. Motorcade arrived Long Beach Memorial Medical Center at 10:07, where he was met by Dr. John Lungren, former President Nixon's physician.

There were about 300 spectators at the hospital entrance. The President was very subdued but smiled and waved and shook a few hands before taking an elevator to the seventh floor.

At 10:10, the President entered the Cardiac Care unit, Rooms 701-708, through gray double doors and was greeted by the Nixon family. Pool was not allowed inside but through the doors we could see a very emotional and fervent, though apparently not tearful, greeting. The President hugged Mrs. Nixon, then kissed her. He kissed Julie and Tricia in turn, and then spread his arms wide and hugged all three of them simultaneously. "It's great to see you," Ron Nessen later reported the President telling Mrs. Nixon. ". . . I talked to Betty this morning."

Mrs. Nixon was wearing a powder blue suit with paisley lapels. Tricia was wearing a white dress with white boots; Julie had on a red blouse, scarf, and black skirt.

At 10:12, according to Nessen, Ford entered room 704, two doors down from the Former President, and talked with Mrs. Nixon and the girls for five minutes. At 10:17, he went to the end of the corridor to Room 706 and began his visit with the Former President. He was taken in by Lungren, who stayed only briefly. The past and present Chief Executive talked alone for eight minutes.

Nessen later said that the visit was essentially a surprise to the Former President, who was told about it about three minutes before Ford walked in the door.

The Former President was fully conscious and wearing a white hospital gown. He was propped up in the bed, which had been elevated about 30 degrees. The President, who referred to his predecessor as "Dick" during the conversation, sat in a chair on Mr. Nixon's left. Nessen said monitoring equipment was visible above the bed and was told by Ron Ziegler that bottles of fluids were also nearby. None of the tubes which we've heard about were visible emanating from the Former President.

Nessen, who peeked in the room briefly, said that Mr. Nixon had no difficulty talking but that "his voice was husky." He added, "His hair was mussed, he was clearly drawn, and he had lost weight." But Nessen did not report not think the Former President appeared haggard.

Ford asked Nixon, "How do you feel?" Reply unknown, but at another point Nixon was asked, "Did you have a good night?" Nixon replied, "None of the nights are too good."

MORE

As he got up to leave, Ford exhorted Nixon to "be well" then took the Former President's right hand in his right hand and patted it with his (Ford's) left hand. Ford left the room at 10:25 and went back to Room 704 to talk with the Nixon girls for about two minutes before leaving the seventh floor; None of the Nixon family accompanied him from the Cardiac Care suite.

At 10:33, Ford emerged from the hospital after shaking a few more hands in the lobby. He took a microphone which was hooked up to a public address system and spoke for about sixty seconds. The President was very subdued as he spoke.

"I spent approximately eight minutes with the President (sic). Obviously he's a very very sick man but I think that he's coming along very, very well."

Ford said Nixon was interested in a discussion about the upcoming Ford overseas trip as well as the travels of Henry Kissinger which Ford briefed him about.

"The President was very alert, he was very interested, but it was very obvious to me he had been very, very ill. But he showed a great deal of strength, mentally and physically..." Ford told him he had talked with Betty earlier that day and that "all of our family are praying for his full and complete recovery."

DeFrank

Adendum

Prior to the arrival of the President, Rep. Robert Mathias talked briefly with poolers.

"It looks good to me, we're going to win," he said of his race. He explained that it is more difficult this year because of redistricting: "I've never had Fresno before."

Asked if Ford's visit will help he said: "I think the enthusiasm of the President being in the area is helpful. Everybody's excited about it. We'll have a good crowd. People disagree with Ford on certain things but he's the President and they want to see him. He's a plus in the campaign."

Asked if the President's visit to Long Beach will revive the issue of the pardon, Mathias said: "No, I don't think it will. I think people understand that if Nixon is on the critical list it is a sympathetic type of thing."

He said reaction to the pardon in his district was "mixed." "50% of the people disagreed with it, I mean with the timing more than anything else," he said. "For about a week or 10 days after that, that's all I got, what do I think of the pardon. Then it stopped. It's not an issue."

Mathias said Ford agreed to appear at a \$100 .per couple reception when he was Vice President. That was converted to the airport rally after Ford became President. Mathias said Rep. Charles Wiggins will substitute for the President as the "star" of the fundraiser.

Mathias and Wiggins were already aboard when the Presidential party arrived shortly before 11 a. m.

Before boarding Air Force One, Ford stopped by a display set up by the "Simi Valley Jaycees" as part of a WIN button project. Ford stamped out two WIN buttons and thanked the operators.

Wheels up for flight to Fresno at 11:16 a. m. PST.

Kempster/Boyd

#