

DECEMBER 22, 1974

POOL REPORT  
ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE - WASHINGTON TO VAIL

This is the first part of what is expected to be a two-part pool report. We hope to have a manifest listing all travelers. With the President and Mrs. Ford are their son, Michael 24, and his wife, Gayle, who recently arrived in Washington from Essex, Mass., where he is a seminary student; Susan, 17, and her friend, Barbara Manfuso, who is 18 today. Barbara attends Holton Arms with Susan and has been her friend since the 9th grade. Jack, 22, and Steve, 18, will meet their family in Vail. Jack already is in Vail, according to Sheila Weidenfeld, and Steve will arrive shortly.

Also aboard were Liberty, a golden retriever; Donald Rumsfeld and family; Ron Nessen and family; Dr. William Lukash and family.

Weidenfeld said the family would exchange gifts early because they always give each other ski gear. "Special gifts" are opened Christmas eve and family members draw names and fill each other's stockings which are plundered on Christmas morning. "But the big gift for everybody is always the trip to Vail," she said.

She said Christmas dinner probably would be a private, family gathering and would probably be turkey, as will New Years Dinner. She will have additional information later on gifts, menus, parties, etc.

The poolers talked briefly with Rumsfeld shortly before departing Andrews. He said he hoped to ski some but "there are more than 150 peices of legislation to be addressed" so he didn't know how much time he would have. His wife, Joyce, went to the University of Colorado and is quite a good skier as are his children. Nicholas, 7, has been skiing since he was four.

Nessen said Ford spent a short time in his office this morning, gathering materials for the trip. When he emerged from his helicopter at Andrews he was dressed in a brown suit, without a top-coat and carried a sheaf of papers in his hand. Mrs. Ford wore a brown fur coat over a short red dress. Air Force One departed Andrews at 8:57 a. m.

At 10:05 a. m., Ford came back to the press compartment and spent about seven minutes with the pool. A transcript follows.

Following is a partial transcript of President Ford's chat with the pool aboard AF One.

Q. Are you all ready for skiing?

A. Well, I hope maybe we can get an hour or two in this afternoon. I understand that the weather may be such that the choppers won't be able to fly from Grand Junction to Vail. We may have to drive. If it's possible we look forward to it.

Q. Have you ever had to drive before -- you always had to drive before?

A. . . . we always drove up from Denver which is about 120 miles.

Q. Do you view this as a vacation?

(MCRE)

- A. No. I've got about 150 bills to sign and a few other matters to work on. So I think there'll be about two or three hours of work a day and probably three hours of skiing. Might even be more work than skiing. We're trying to organize it.
- Q. Are you going to give the people a tax cut?
- A. I'm getting a lot of good advice.
- Q. Do you plan to make a decision on that while out here?
- A. I would think sometime after we get back.
- Q. Will you be considering any staff changes or further cabinet changes while you're out here. . . you have, for instance, the transportation job to fill.
- A. I'm looking at some alternatives as far as transportation is concerned. I wouldn't want to comment on any other changes.
- Q. Mr. President, are you going to hold off on energy decisions 'til you get back, too?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Mr. President, did you see the story on the CIA in the --
- A. I read it very hurriedly. I got a call on the plane this morning from Bill Colby reassuring me that nothing comparable to what was stated in the article was going on over there and I told him that under no circumstances would I tolerate any such activities under this administration.
- Q. Are they allowed to have any internal intelligence activities?
- A. They have a very specific charter and they should live up to the charter.
- Q. He was asked whether he had learned of this activity before it appeared in the New York Times.
- A. I had some partial information.
- Q. Had he done anything about it?
- A. Well, at that time I indicated what I've said here, that this administration would not tolerate it and I was assured it did not exist.
- Q. Are you a good skier?
- A. Well, I'm an intermediate, but I enjoy it.
- Q. Have you bought any new ski clothes.
- A. I've worn the same ski pants for six years... there's a change of style and I thought I ought to have a little... well, wait and see.
- Q. Do you think the American people will get upset about your being on a holiday?
- A. I think the fact that I'm working about half the time, that I have worked I think seven days a week, 10 to 12 hours a day, I think they understand it, and I think you're the best witnesses, aren't you?

Also one of the first people to greet the President was Bill Brown, who is manager of Slopes and Trails at Vail. And they got to discussing what the ski conditions were. He told them that there was a 15 to 20 mile an hour wind and near zero temperature on the slopes, and Ford said that was all right with him. And he made arrangements to ski at 2 o'clock.

Ford said, "I am looking forward to it," and according to Nessen, after the amenities, he went into the house and there was a buffet set up with sandwiches and soup and Ford didn't tarry. He went down to the basement and tried on his red ski boots.

He also, as you can see by the pool report, has a new ski outfit and he is very anxious to try it out. It is his first new ski attire in 6 years and he wouldn't tell us what color it was. He said, "Why don't you wait and see?"

Mrs. Ford, despite the fact she has been ailing recently, said she hoped to try some cross-country skiing. She said she doesn't know if she will or not, but she said, "I feel much better," and that she intends to make use of the sauna baths here.

She also said that they still have a lot of Christmas shopping to do and that she brought along some books and has just about finished Upstairs at the White House by former White House usher Bernard West.

She also pointed out that this is the first time the Fords ever have come here by helicopter. They always drive and the trip takes something like four hours from Grand Junction to here. They cut off 1/4 of the time.

They have a tradition of going to church on Christmas Eve, you will be happy to know. And then they go back to the house and open their Christmas gifts. We gathered that everybody knows what they are getting before hand -- lots of ski wear.

Then on Christmas morning -- by this time they have all drawn a name and each one fills one of the Christmas stockings, and these stockings were made when each child was one year old, or for the first Christmas by Ford's mother who is now dead -- red felt stockings which I gather they hang on the mantle.

Their son Jack has been in Aspen and he is coming here. He should be here already probably. Steve is already here. I guess he came from Montana where he is on a ranch working.

So after we had left, Nessen said that the President is preparing to go skiing at 2 p.m. and that it is 6 degrees on the slopes. His ski instructor is Dennis C. Hoeger, and the ski run is called Simba.

Among the friends who greeted them at the house were Mr. and Mrs. James Brown, whom we already mentioned, from Utah; and Mr. and Mrs. Ted Kindel, who are now at Vail but they come from Ford's home town of Grand Rapids.

Mrs. Ford also said that she was a little nostalgic when she drove by their old condominium -- that they weren't going to be staying there. She said to herself, "gee I wish we were going to our place." She said it made packing a little bit difficult. She had to remember all sorts of things to take along, like bandaids. They normally have a lot of belongings in their condominium year round and they would be here when they arrived.

Rumsfeld is supposed to come over to the house at 8 a.m. tomorrow and start working with Ford. They have 150 bills and lots of other work.

Happy skiing!!!!

Fran Lewine / Helen Thomas

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