

March 17, 1975

POOL REPORT NO. 2

Michiana Regional Airport to University of Notre Dame:

Air Force One arrived on schedule. The President, wearing a navy blue overcoat, white shirt and traditional green tie, was greeted by Governor Bowen, both United States Senators, Congressman John Brademas, Father Hesburgh, and various local dignitaries.

The President worked the crowd for approximately 10 minutes. The pool estimated the airport crowd at 1,500 spread out along 300 yards of frontage. The crowd was enthusiastic, but not boisterous. There were one or two signs; the pool saw no negative sentiments expressed thereon.

Early on, the President's right cuff link was worked loose by the enthusiastic handshaking. The President paused momentarily, removed his cuff link and dropped it in his right coat pocket before continuing to work the crowd. One teenaged youth said to Ford: "May the Lord bless and keep you Mr. President." The President thanked him and continued on.

Approximately 10,000 persons lined the motorcade route, most of them near the airport and in the downtown area of South Bend. There were several thousand persons along Main Street, and the top of the Presidential limousine was removed so Ford could stand and wave to the overwhelmingly friendly crowd, many of whom were waving small American flags. At least one dozen high school bands from South Bend, Elkhart, and neighboring communities lined the downtown area.

On Jefferson Boulevard, whose name had been changed to O'Ford Boulevard for the day, the President got out of his limousine and worked the crowd for a couple of minutes. Before resuming the motorcade, he used a portable loudspeaker to thank the crowd for an "unbelievable welcome." The President added, "God bless you all on St. Patrick's Day."

At one point along Jefferson Boulevard, a handful of negative placards were hoisted. They read, "Lower utility rates;" "Adequate pensions for all;" "Ford, we can't afford you;" "And who elected you?"

In my judgment, the South Bend reception was the largest and most enthusiastic since Topeka, Kansas.

Tom DeFrank, Newseek