

May 30, 1975

**Mrs. Ford's Luncheon at the  
Luns' Residence  
and her visit to  
Chapelle Ste. Anne**

Mrs. Gerald Ford had lunch with 13 other ladies at the home of Mrs. Joseph M. A. H. Luns, wife of the Secretary General of NATO, Friday, May 30 at 1:00 p. m.

The other guests and the menu have previously been posted.

Mrs. Ford was wearing a grey suede, two piece sleeveless dress and a beige silk jersey blouse with a rollneck and a beige and grey tweed coat with beige accessories. Mrs. David K. E. Bruce, wife of the American Ambassador to NATO was wearing navy blue suit (wool crepe) and a white blouse. Mrs. Leonard K. Firestone, wife of the Ambassador to Belgium was wearing a blue and grey Chanel type tweed suit and patent leather accessories. Mrs. Donald Rumsfeld was wearing a pale olive green knitted suit and a beige blouse. Mrs. Pierre Trudeau was wearing aqua and white flowered dress.

On the table were three bouquets of pale pink roses, Cambodian silver fish and silver birds. Mrs. Ford was seen chatting animatedly with Mrs. Trudeau on her left and Mrs. Helmut Schmidt to her right.

After lunch at the red brick house on Franklin D. Roosevelt Avenue, in Brussels, Mrs. Ford, Mrs. Firestone, and Mrs. Rumsfeld drove to the Chapelle Ste. Anne on the edge of the Val Duchesse in Auderghem on the outskirts of the city. They were met at the gate by L'Abbe Mignot who calls himself a hermit of the 20th century and pointed out that he wears shoes and has no beard. The Abbott who was a parish priest for 32 years gave his collection of medieval sculpture to the kingdom of Belgium and so gained the right to live with his sculpture on this beautiful old property.

The chapel was built in the 11th century with its 12th century bell tower which was greatly admired by Mrs. Ford. The Abbott told her the bell tower still chimes every quarter hour and she admired its sound, saying it was very pretty. He then told her that it was the parish church of the locale (Auderghem) for 800 years before falling into disrepair. During the 19th century a farmer and his family lived in the chapel. The farmer's father slept where the altar now is. It was reconsecrated in the chapel in 1917 and the present beautiful frescoes and painted coffered ceiling restored. The Abbot's collection of sculpture includes a 14th century virgin with a mushroom, a 15th century retable of the death of the virgin, a 15th century St. Pierre with especially beautiful hands and various examples of 13th and 14th century wooden polychrome sculpture, all dramatically spotlighted against the pale beige sandstone walls. There is a carved wooden door which is the smallest sacristy in Europe. The Abbot told Mrs. Ford that Paul Henri Spaak, former Belgian Foreign Minister thought it was a confessional but the Abbot pointed out that it was too small for the rotund gentleman.

On either side of the chapel are stone benches where medieval pilgrims stowed their baggage.

Noting that he said Mass in the chapel daily, the Abbot announced tomorrow Saturday's Mass would be in honor of all those present. He then said a Pater Nostre and an Ave Maria. Asking Mrs. Ford in which language she preferred the prayers, the First Lady diplomatically replied in Latin, thereby not offending any of Belgium's three language groups -- French, Flemish or German.

(MORE)

The Abbot said he was 73 and was looking around the chapel for a burial place and had chosen a spot lit by the afternoon sun. Mrs. Ford said "you have a long time to go." "You don't look more than 53."

Mrs. Ford and her party toured the grounds and admired the 14 meter deep well. The Abbot asked her if she had been to Brussels before and she said, "Yes, 12 years ago. It is a joy to be back."

The Abbot then showed her his house in the old former stables and his collection of greek vases and more medieval sculpture.

Meeting informally with the press at the door of the Abbot's house, Mrs. Ford said "Yes, Mr. Ford is envious of my trips around Brussels." But, he is working very hard." in response to a question. Asked if she felt it was worthwhile for statesmen's wives to be well informed, she replied emphatically, "yes". Queries about what she had spoken of at lunch with the other guests, she replied "Our families and recent events." Asked if she and her husband discuss policy, she said, "Certainly, and he listens politely to my advice. Her most recent advice on this trip was to work very hard and he is. She also said that she felt the President was making great progress.

She said she had enjoyed hearing Larry Graham, the American finalist play Thursday night at the Queen Elisabeth Music Contest and was rooting for him.

After leaving the chapel at 4:00, Mrs. Ford and her party drove for 25 minutes in Brussels Foret de Soignes, which is part of a vast forest which covered Europe in the Middle Ages.

Sara Wright, Brussels Times

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There is a radio tape of the informal interview which is available through the network radio pool.