

POOL REPORT # 4

Picnic at Kirchgoens, Germany
July 27, 1975

The President arrived at 2:20 pm and spent 1 hour 30 minutes at the picnic site. He was greeted by the Brigade Commander, Colonel Louis C. Wagner, and by General Alexander Haig and Mrs. Haig, who was given an enthusiastic kiss by the President.

The President was wearing a blue windbreaker with the Presidential seal on the left breast.

The pool estimates approximately 4,000 to 5,000 people at the picnic, which was held on the brigade parade field and was reminiscent of a country fair, or carnival atmosphere.

As the President made his way through the crowd, the scene was hectic as the servicemen and their families pressed in to shout a greeting or shake his hand. The President eventually worked his way to a small tent where a number of families were eating a meal. Then he made his way to a volleyball game and watched for several minutes. The games on that court and an adjoining court were held up from time to time because of all the spectators and press following the President.

Then the President and his party made their way to a larger tent which served primarily as a beer garden. The President spent several minutes inside shaking hands and occasionally sipping from a beer. He then walked across the width of the parade field to a line of military vehicles on display. He climbed aboard a M-60 American tank, chatted with the crew, and leaned over the turret to get a look inside. He also asked several questions about the characteristics of the tank. One of the poolers saw a trooper hand the President another beer, which he sipped from time to time.

Then the President walked a few yards to a platform, where he made his remarks which generally followed the advance text, and were translated into German as he went along. There was a huge roar when he gave the brigade tomorrow off under his powers as Commander-in-Chief.

When he completed his remarks, he made his way about 200 yards to the waiting helicopter and shook a few more hands before leaving.

John Mashek
Tom DeFrank

Addition to pool report:

A couple of added color notes: The President climbed aboard an armored personnel carrier and asked Sgt. Ealey of Natchez, Mississippi and Private Connie Williams of Jackson, Florida, what kind of fire power it had. They answered it was a 50 calibre machine gun and gave it a strong swing to show its ability to rotate on the turret. The President ducked barely in time and it just missed his head by a couple of inches. But he didn't lose his poise and they went right on talking about the specifications of the tank.

The Presidential party at times was a herd stampeding through the picnic ground. It came upon one family seated on an Army blanket eating lunch. Although most of the people in the Presidential entourage managed skillfully to walk around the picnickers, some stepped through, and by the time the group had passed the family had a somewhat glazed look.

The President got a detailed explanation of a German tank from its crew and the German Defense Minister, who explained that it was able to maneuver under or in high water. The President drew a laugh when he noted to the Germans that they were "submariners".

Larry O'Rourke