

POOL REPORT

Mrs. Ford visits outdoor museum on island

July 31, 1975

Mrs. Ford's activities during the day were planned for wives of heads of delegations of CSCE and other members of the delegation.

"We must have broken all speed limits" (from the Market place to the island) Mrs. Ford said when she arrived at the open air museum on the Island Seurasaari.

The island contains buildings and groups of buildings from every province of Finland, representing typical local cultures and histories. Most buildings in this "outdoor museum" date from the 18th and 19th centuries. Included on the island are farmsteads, a watermill, a country store, a granary, and church. There are samples of Finnish housing from a country cottage to a farmhouse to a manor dwelling. .all made of wooden logs, in various shapes and sizes.

Each house was taken apart piece by piece, numbered, and reconstructed as it originally stood with furniture and utensils (except for the animals).

The bus which brought Mrs. Ford to the island took the "prettier" route. It was winding and narrow. It passed a red clay tennis court, an inlet with dozens of colorfully painted boats tied at piers, a low-lying wooden school, the "organ pipes" memorial to Sibelius (to be discussed later), an old hospital, a new hospital (glass structured which the natives refer to as "The Hilton".)

The bus passed "Talbo", the Prime Minister of Finland's summer place on the water's edge. Across the water inlet of the Bay of Finland on the horizon were smoke stacks which belong to "Alko" the liquor monopoly.

Near the white wood narrow bridge which the bus crossed slowly -- (because the boards rattled) were wild brown ducks and white seagulls, most of them floating and preening in the warmth of the brilliant sun. A small variety of bamboo grew along the edge of the water.

A log cabin (child's size) on stilts was used to store food from wild animals years ago. They said there were wolves (not human ones) which went after the food.

Many log cabins, passed on the way, had sod on the roof which sprouted grass and weeds to the height of 18 inches (approximately).

Mrs. Ford chatted for about 5 minutes with a group after she got off the bus. (The poolers were not allowed near).

When she did come closer she said she had stopped to shop for gifts. "I have a daughter and she has many friends. I bought trinkets . . . many earrings, bracelets, and necklaces to take back to them so they wouldn't think I had forgotten them when I was away, "Mrs. Ford said.

"Are you going to buy skis?" asked one man.

"They like us to ski on America skis," she replied.

The mats she had purchased on her first trip to the open marketplace she said "will be going to our skiing lodge in Vail (Colorado, USA).

MORE

She had "noticed" a 4-year old little girl, Mira Tokisolo, who was in a child's swing made from wooden logs. This little girl's madonna-like exquisitely beautiful face was radiant with joy as she was pushed back and forth on the swing by her mother. Another child near-by is a day-boarder with Mrs. Tokisolo. His mother is a newspaper employee. She pays 300 Finnish marks a month for his care (5 days a week). He stays from 8 am to 5 pm. (Mrs. Ford did not go near them.)

Mrs. Ford wore a red and white polka dotted, shirt-waist dress with bow at neckline and buttons on blouse; a white jacket (she took it off later because it was very warm. The Secret Service agent held it for her); and black and white spectator shoes.

Another twosome Mrs. Ford "noticed" was on a flat log placed over a smaller round log. One boy jumped hard onto one end of the log, bouncing the girl up into the air. She repeated the action causing the boy's side to bounce him into the air. It resembled a tetter-totter, but it had trampoline action.

Mrs. Ford remarked about the weather. "It is absolutely marvelous... a beautiful day like this...it's lovely."

Then she added: "I really expected it to be cooler.. so I am very pleased with the lovely sun."

Mrs. Ford said she hoped to do more shopping if "I get the time."

Suddenly the bus which brought the other wives arrived.

While Mrs. Ford walked to the first house she spoke about "my daughter.. Susan.. as a photographer worked on a newspaper.." (It was difficult to hear because she spoke so softly.)

She entered the square courtyard of the farmhouse. The reason there was construction with houses on four sides and a courtyard in the middle was to keep wild animals out.

In the courtyard a group of dancers began their folk rhythms accompanied by two violinists, a flutist, and an accordian player. The dancers wore costumes traditional of various parts of Finland. The men: navy blue knee-breeches with colorful wool binding under the knee; white knee socks; black shoes; white shirts. When asked if she would join the dancers she said, "I don't know the steps" and laughed.

The women wore colorful calf-length skirts; sleeveless vests (black) and white blouses. Some wore small hats (only married women wore hats), and some wore ribbons (unmarried girls wore ribbons in their hair).

Mrs. Ford was escorted into the wooden farmhouse which had been painted with a special reddish paint (probably creosote (?).)

Inside the house there was a paucity of furnishings.. a wooden mold to make reindeer shoes (the fur is turned inside); rocks for baking (they are heated like a sauna bath). Bread was baked two times a year. The bread was in the shape of a 12-inch doughnut and strung on a wooden pole near the roof. It gets very, very hard. (The bread is made of rye flour and water and sometimes potatoes are added to the bread.)

Antler horns were used as a device to wind wool or flax yarn for spinning. A large wooden tub was used to store salt. One wooden tub was used to store water. Rakes were three-pronged and made of wood, which is abundant. This house was considered "prosperous."

Outside there was a wooden balcony on the second floor. (Mrs. Ford did not climb up the ladder to reach the second floor.)

The master bedroom had a wooden clothes closet with birds painted on doors. A fireplace made of bricks, a small bed, two small wooden chairs, small table, a horn, curtains of linen, the walls originally had no coverings. . but now they are covered with smooth deerskin. There were wooden plates in one room, and a cupboard had two cups and one saucer (made of pottery).

A stove with metal door, a pair of hand-woven red and white wool gloves, and hand-made rug-runners were seen. A clock on the wall had no cover. There was a wooden rocking chair. (All furniture was hand made.)

Cattle had been kept on the other side of the square courtyard in a barn, but were brought into the main living quarters to keep the family warmer with their body heat. Mrs. Ford heard an instrument played -- a kentele which is played on a table like a zither or on the lap.

Small axes were stored on top of one door.

Outside in the courtyard again, Mrs. Ford saw five girls who wore different Finnish costumes.

At a small table covered with a white cloth in the courtyard, Mrs. Ford stopped to taste the refreshments. . . she was handed an open face sandwich made with fish, cheese, decorated with dill. She did not taste it. But she did eat a piece of ham (cube) on a toothpick. They served meade (a traditional Finnish drink made with raisins, sugar, water, lemmon and yeast non-alcoholic. (Other things go into this recipe.)

The Lord-Mayor of Helsinki accompanied Mrs. Ford around the open air museum. His name is Teuvo Aura. She told him she was having a "delightful time" . . and "it was very colorful".

She was served a "home-made brew" to which she said ". . um" . . . (it is non-alcoholic).

Inside the courtyard are lilac bushes and dainty white birch trees.

The roof of each of these houses is made of wooden shingles.

Suddenly. . . a white butterfly floated by in the bushes.

"This is one of the delightful parts," Mrs. Ford repeated. "It is very cheerful and beautiful, very festive."

Asked if this reminded her of any parts of the State in the northern mid-west back home, Mrs. Ford replied: "Well, I think perhaps Minnesota."

"Naturally it is only possible to get a closer feel of the country by spending more time. . . the other countries we were in. . we were in such a short time. . . it was practically from the airport to the palace wherever we were staying . . whatever occasion took place. . there was very little time for sightseeing," Mrs. Ford said.

Asking a native who attended about the impression she had of Mrs. Ford she replied, "She is absolutely lovely. . she is genuine. . wholesome. . the people reacted very warmly to her. She is such a beauty -- ravishing. . people would wish to see more of her."

On the way back to the pier where the women were to sail to an island for lunch... Mrs. Ford and the group stopped to see the Sibelius Monument which looks like organ pipes, is made of steel and resting on granite rocks. A metal sculptor of the head of Sibelius is nearby. The memorial was explained to Mrs. Ford by the grand-daughter of Sibelius, Mrs. Enckell. (Her husband is the Finnish Ambassador to France.) Eila Hildunen sculptored this monument in seven years... out of steel. She cast the metal, also.

Mrs. Ford stopped to have her picture taken with the Sibelius Monument in the background.

On the way to the pier, many people were on the sidewalk watching the caravan of cars go by escorted by motorcycle police.

At the boat, the press was not permitted to go on board.. only Sheila Weidenfeld, Mrs. Ford's press secretary, went on board with the wives of the heads of state.

We passed three ice-breakers in the harbor.. many small boats and some large ones.

A few photographers were permitted on board.

Saaristo is the name of the boat. Mr. Straus, Snellman, Counsel General at the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Mrs. Ford and group had luncheon at Valhalla Restaurant on Suomenlinna Fortress Island... a 40 minute ride away.. they viewed a fashion show after lunch. They were brought back to Katajanokka (?) Pier in the afternoon.

(The press was not permitted to follow in a rented boat or to be around.)

(Helsinki is a peninsula. The water is the Gulf of Finland. Directly East across the gulf is Esthonia... S. E. is Leningrad.)

Naomi Nover
Nover News Service

#