

December 1, 1975

POOL REFOOT NO. 6 - Travel Pool - Guest House #18 to the Great Hall and return.

The highlight of pool #6 was President Ford's careful descent of the many steps in the Great Hall. Half-way down as he alternately looked at the floor and smiled at Teng Hsiao-ping, who was walking beside him, Ford recalled how he once slipped while making a similar journey. It was in Austria last year he said, "It was raining very hard and I was helping Mrs. Ford and I lost my balance and fell." Ford smiled and after the interpreter relayed the remark, Vice Premier Teng smiled also. Nothing else was heard until Ford and Teng parted outside with Ford saying a polite "Good-bye". The motorcade back to the Guest House #18, which resembles a two-story spruced-up Min Zu Hotel, was uneventful. The President was inside by 10:14 p. m.

Ford left the residence at 7:20 p. m., five minutes later than anticipated without saying anything. Before his arrival in the lobby, Ron Nessen described an earlier meeting at the Guest House. He said President Ford asked Mrs. Chou En-lai about her husband's health noting that "I remember well my conversations with him in 1972." Nessen said Mrs. Chou En-lai declined to respond directly and instead mentioned that she herself had not been in good health. Dick Solomon, who was also present at the meeting gave a slightly different version which Nessen did not dispute. Solomon said the subject of Mrs. Chou En-lai's health came up when, responding to Secretary Kissinger's remarks that it was good to see her, she said: "Yes, I'm not in all that good health. I don't do much diplomatic work anymore except for special occasions. Of course, a visit by Secretary Kissinger is something special."

Both Nessen and Solomon recall Mrs. Chou En-lai saying that she and her husband are the same age, "We're both 71."

JIM SQUIRES - CHICAGO TRIBUNE

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