

Wednesday, April 28, 1976

POOL REPORT

AIR FORCE ONE POOL - Barksdale Air Force Base to Longview; Longview to Sheraton Inn, Tyler.

Wheels up 10:50 p.m.; down 11:10 p.m.

Nothing on plane.

Ford went from plane to fence and crowd of several hundred after greeting Senator Tower, who met him at airport, and Gregg County officials, and holding short news conference with local press.

Only remark of general interest came when he was asked whether Humphrey would be his opponent. Ford said, "that depends on Pennsylvania." He said he was told Carter was leading in Pennsylvania and then said: "If Carter wins in Pennsylvania, I don't see how the smoke-filled rooms in the Democratic Party can take it away from him." (Wires carried slightly different version, but foregoing is from Hal Walker's recorder.) He was asked which he'd rather run against, Humphrey or Carter, and answered: "I don't really think it makes any difference."

He gave his standard answers when asked about Panama Canal negotiation; if he thought himself underdog in Texas -- "we'll give 'em a real tough fight. We'll try."

He said the success of his economic policies "eliminates my opponent" evidently meaning, eliminates economy as issue between him and Reagan -- "because he didn't have anything to do with it." (sic).

After making entire fence, end to end for about 200 feet, shaking hands with many in crowd, including many children, he motorcaded from Longview airport to Tyler, arriving exactly on schedule at 12:15 a.m. edt. He went straight to crowd of some 200 in front of Sheraton, shook hands with most of line, again including many children, then with another hundred or so in Sheraton lobby. Seeming to enjoy every minute of it, he vanished toward elevator after turning to face lobby crowd and waving with both arms.

Tower said at Longview airport Ford supporters working for maximum turnout Saturday and maximum crossover of Democrats to Republican primary, reasoning that the bigger the vote the wider cross section it would represent and that would help Ford because majority of populace is for him.

Jeff Antevil - New York Daily News
John Osborne - New Republic