

October 30, 1976

Press Pool Report - #52 - Marriott Hotel to Houston Music Theatre to KTRK-TV

The President did not kiss any babies, but he did hug a dog. More later. Outside Marriott hotel, Bill Greener releases anticipation of 1.2 million potential viewers in Texas and Louisiana for nine stations for Joe and Jerry hookup tonight. Predicts 1.35 million for eight stations in New York hookup Sunday.

Greener also announces that the President will vote Tuesday at Wealthy Elementary School, 2018 Wealthy Street, East Grand Rapids, Michigan. He votes by paper ballot. Polling place is in front of school auditorium. Time of voting not announced.

There were perhaps 100 people lined up outside the Marriott to meet the President who emerged about 11 minutes later than anticipated. Walking out with him were John Connally and Mrs. Connally who rode in his car from that point on. Waiting to greet President were three members of U. S. International Ski Team: Dick Andrews, Park City, Utah; Andy Mill, Aspen, Colorado; who is top downhill skier from U. S. and was sixth in last winter olympics, and Jana Hlavati, a Czech native whose private bill making her a citizen was signed by President the day before she left U. S. to compete in last winter olympics as a member of U. S. team. The three skiers were in Houston for a fundraising party last night and delivered invitation to Ford to participate in Park City, Utah, Celebrity event in April. Miss Hlavati noted this will be her first Presidential election as a citizen. "For whom is she voting?" "Oh, what a question!", she said.

Ford shook hands along the line of people and to his great surprise was confronted with a black poodle wearing a blue doggie coat with white trim, held by its owner who thrust the dog forward to the President and said, "Shake his hand." "It was not clear whether the man was speaking to the dog or the President. The next thing we know is the President is hugging the dog. We do not know whether he reached to take the dog or whether the dog was thrust upon him. If you do not believe a black French poodle could ve toenails painted red, you missed a sight. Owner is John P. Hart, a businessman from Dallas, in Houston for a convention. We moved on before he could give us the name of his business, which he asked us to plug. Mr. Hart said to President, "I guarantee you five votes right there." The dog was a black French poodle named Jet. It was not a toy; unsure whether it was a standard, but believe so. Noted that is appeared to be dressed in a Republican cloth coat.

Motorcade to Music Hall was uneventful. Very few people along route, logically due to Saturday. You heard the noise and the speech. On way in, President shook hands and appeared to kiss cheeks of many beautiful young women dressed in (a) cowgirl costumes, (b) red-white-blue costumes which appeared to have no particular motif. The girls shrieked and screamed and some turned red with unimagined ecstasy. President worked crowd fairly thoroughly on his way to the platform. You may have heard calls for doctor that interrupted Connally introduction. The report we hear, unconfirmed, is that someone fainted in the back of the crowd. We also hear that two people had fainted earlier--unconfirmed. President worked crowd for a very long time, possibly 20 minutes, after his speech. Crowd estimates are 12,000 attributed to Captain W. A. Stotten of Houston police. Your pool is skeptical and is of the impression crowd was not that large; St. Louis may have been larger, but this crowd was visably enthusiastic.

As he worked the crowd, the President shook hands so vigorously that cufflink was torn loose from his left sleeve and left dangling. He hugged several children including grandson of John Connally, John P. Connally, IV. They popped the top and Ford rode atop the limousine, in standard fashion, addressing crowds on the car PA all the way from side of Music Center, through parking lot, under the expressway, and to the access ramp, where he went back inside the card and motorcade proceeded to the television station. At one point, while he was still on top the car, he shouted, "Let's go, let's go, let's go" to the crowds as he made a cheerleader type jecture, thrusting right fist forward. Other typical remarks, "Thank you, thank you, thank you." At TV station, where only a few at gate to greet him, your pool again denied access to taping, but we have been led to believe that we may have briefing by Nessen. President's voice still sounds hoarse today; we hope to ask about that.

Jarriel --ABC; Dyckman--St. Petersburg Times