

Press Pool Report on Nassau Coliseum
to Akron-Canton Airport

Oct 31, 1976

Nothing happened. Color follows.

Ford left the main arena, shaking hands, waving, wishing folk good luck, and went to small room beneath the stands where he chatted with Dick Rosenbaum, Joe Margiotta and all the business and labor leaders listed on the bible except the Laborers Union man. Nessen later said he didn't even know one was missing. Stuart (on bible) should be Shuart. Local reporters say all of them usually back the GOP.

During photographs at start of that meeting, before we were ushered out, Ford did all the talking. They sat in easy chairs grouped around two glass tables. Copper ashtray on one and copper and a silver ashtray on the other. Cigarette, but not cigar butts, in two of the three, but none were smoking while we were there.

Ford told them he was on his way to ask "my good Ohio State friends to support a Michigander."

Ford asked pool to relay message to traveling press: "Tell 'em we'll knock off the fun early Monday, so we'll get up bright and early Tuesday." His companions were amused.

Ford, as same brisk pace he used all rest of the night, came a few minutes later into a reception room on that same (arena-floor) level of Nassau coliseum. Blond panelling, square pillars with stone facing, statues along one wall of greekish figures, white marblish, doing sportive things, including shotput, boxing, discus, javelin.

Bob McDonald, press secretary to Margiotta's executive assistant, Don Woolnough (who was screening invited guests at the door) said 300 people were at the reception, sponsored by the Nassau County Republican Executive committee, and not a fund-raiser, just a chance for people to mingle with Ford.

Candidates, wives and elected officials joined platform guests there. Reps. Norman Lent and John Wydler and House hopefuls Vincent Balletta (running against Lester Wolff) and Tom Hogan (running against Jerome Ambro) were there too.

President spoke in remarks we understand were piped into the press room. If not, Talbott has tape. Every state should have a Nassau County GOP organization; he expects a two-hour parade in Grand Rapids, Monday, etc. Introducing Ford to the guests, Margiotta said: "This is the lifeblood of the Nassau County Republican committee assembled here...We know we're going to do the job on election day."

Ford talked to Margiotta, with Rosenbaum trailing, as they spiraled up gray concrete ramps to ground level, with Ford working the crowd before climbing into Marine One. Two helicopters followed. Third was press helicopter, whiney monstrosity so noisy that most people put orange spongy earplugs that taste like grits, but have fibers running through them, in their ears.

At Islip airport he twice (CQ) worked the entire fence, greeted crowd about two-thirds the size of the arrival crowd. On Air Force One, Nessen wandered back two minutes before landing to say "The chicken soup seems to have done it" in answer to Ford throat query. No comment on Carter's church or the Buffalo bishop's letter. Taping is finished on election eve show, Nessen says, with 20 min. of campaign highlights followed by ten minutes of President talking, not a talk-show format. For the rest Nessen said the press would have to wait until Monday night. Credits for this report shared with Westinghouse, which lent a typewriter to novice pooler who left his at the reception back on Long Island. AF One has Presidential seal on matches, even cigarette packs. (Mollison-Cox; Talbott-Time)