

POOL REPORT

DECEMBER 24, 1976

President Ford spent about 90 minutes shopping Friday afternoon, beginning about 2:00 p.m.

He made three stops--at Pepi's, at Gorsuch Ltd., and at The Alaskan shop. Lots of crowd followed him around.

The President made small talk as he walked. He was hatless, but wore his heavy fur coat that he bought several years ago in Alaska. He said it was just like the one he gave Brezhnev, after Brezhnev admired his coat. Then he picked up another one on the way back through Alaska.

As he would go into a store, the agents with him closed it off. They told would-be customers that the store was closed temporarily and then stood in front of the door to enforce their order.

The President told several people (we counted four) that he would go skiing tomorrow. He said his bruise was nothing. Said he felt good. No apparent limp.

When asked about his bruised hip, Ford jokingly offered to open his wolf fur parka and display the bruise, ala LBJ. "Want me to show it to you?" he cracked.

Pepi accompanied him on the tour and Ford made a skiing date with him for 1:00 or 1:30 tomorrow, as they parted.

En route back to the compound, Ford was intercepted by the NBC crew and had a brief statement.

Question: "Do you have a message for the people on Christmas Eve?"

Ford: "It's been a great year, and I hope 1977 is a very, very happy, healthy, and prosperous year for people not only in the United States but throughout the world. We made a lot of progress in 1976, and I'm absolutely certain that 215 million Americans can have a great, good Merry Christmas and a wonderful New Year.

Question: "And we haven't heard the last of Gerald Ford."

Ford: "I'll be around."

And he and his entourage walked off into the sunset.

Cochran and Beckman

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