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JERALD F. TERHORST FILES, 1974

Collection Type

White House Office Files

Extent

1.2 linear feet (ca. 2,400 pages)

Record Type

Textual

Access

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Processed by

Barbara J. White, May 1983

Biography

Jerald Franklin terHorst

July 11, 1922 - Born, Grand Rapids, Michigan

1943-46 - Officer, U.S. Marine Corps

1946-51 - Reporter, Grand Rapids Press

1947 - B.A., University of Michigan

1951-52 - Officer, U.S. Marine Corps

1953-57 - City and state political writer, Detroit News

1958-60 - Washington correspondent, Detroit News

1961-74 - Washington Bureau Chief, Detroit News

Aug.-Sept. 1974 - Press Secretary to the President

1974-81 - National affairs columnist, Detroit News/Universal Press Syndicate

1981-present - Washington director of public affairs, Ford Motor Company

Scope and Content Note

Jerald terHorst was named Press Secretary to the President on August 9, 1974, the day Gerald R. Ford became the 38th President of the United States. He was Ford's first presidential appointment. TerHorst was a Michigan newspaperman who had covered Ford's political career since the 1948 Congressional race.

As Press Secretary to President Ford, terHorst was responsible for conveying information on the President's programs and activities to the press. Each morning terHorst met with the President and top White House staff members, including Alexander Haig, Brent Scowcroft, Henry Kissinger, Robert Hartmann and Donald Rumsfeld. Afterward he prepared for his weekday and occasional Saturday briefing of the White House press corps. Les Janka, National Security Council, provided terHorst with press items and briefings on foreign affairs and defense related matters. John G. Carlson, assistant press secretary, provided information on domestic issues. The President's schedule and other information, such as texts of presidential messages and remarks, personnel lists, biographical data and arrangements, were posted. During the press briefing, terHorst would first review the details of the day's schedule, make announcements, then answer questions from the press.

TerHorst's tenure as press secretary lasted one month. On Sunday, September 8, 1974, Ford granted a full pardon to Nixon and terHorst presented his written resignation. He rejoined the Detroit News as a national affairs columnist and Deputy Press Secretary John W. Hushen became acting press secretary.

The terHorst files cover only the period from August 9 to September 8, 1974 when he served as press secretary. The most significant portion of the collection is the

press briefing background materials, which are useful for viewing the administration's handling of the news media during this period of transition. They contain extensive guidance on current issues, but the information was often provided to the press only when requested. Therefore, some of this material is not available in the transcripts distributed after the briefings. These files are also valuable for tracing the procedures followed daily by the press secretary in preparing for press briefing.

The majority of the first two series in this collection, the chronological and personal files, contain terHorst's responses to letters of congratulations. The two series frequently duplicate each other. The final series, the subject file, contains Q's and A's and other press guidance background information. Materials reflecting his duties other than serving as spokesman for the President through the daily press briefings do not survive.

Related Materials (May 1983)

Related materials include the files of his successor, Ron Nessen, especially the press briefings series which contains the transcripts of terHorst's briefings; the Ron Nessen papers; and the files of staff members of the Press Secretary's Office.

Last Modified Date

2025-03-06

Chronological File, 1974.

Box 1, 0.4 linear feet)

White carbons of outgoing correspondence to general public, professional acquaintances and others concerning issues such as vice-presidential candidates, views on policy, requests for Presidential interviews, and congratulations to terHorst.

Arranged chronologically.

Box 1 - Chronological File

Status	Title
OPEN	8/74-9/74

Personal File, 1974.

(Boxes 1-2, 0.8 linear feet)

Correspondence exchanged with the general public, professional acquaintances and others, including letters of congratulations and invitations to terHorst. There are occasional draft handwritten replies. Responses dating September 9-12, 1974, are signed by John W. Hushen.

Arrangement is alphabetical by first letter of name of correspondent and chronological thereunder.

Box 1 (Continued) - Personal File

Status	Title
OPEN	A - L

Box 2 - Personal File

Status	Title
OPEN	M - Z and Invitations

Press Briefing Materials, 1974.

(Boxes 2-3, 0.8 linear feet)

Press announcements, memoranda, schedules, agendas, notes, White House press releases, news wires and newspaper clippings compiled by terHorst in preparation for daily press briefings. The majority of memoranda are from Les Janka (NSC) and John Carlson (Press Secretary's Office) for briefing and guidance. Topics include the transition, President's schedules and meetings, staff changes, resignations, domestic and foreign affairs.

Arranged chronologically by date of press briefing.

Box 2 (Continued) - Press Briefing Materials

Status	Title
OPEN	8/9/74-8/23/74

Box 3 - Press Briefing Materials

Status	Title
OPEN	8/26/74-9/6/74

Subject File, 1974.

(Box 3, 0.4 linear feet)

Q's and A's, memoranda, correspondence, transcripts and speech texts routed to terHorst for background and guidance. Q's and A's and press guidance memoranda cover both foreign and domestic topics.

Arranged alphabetically.

Box 3 (Continued) - Subject File

Status	Title
OPEN	Q's and A's - Domestic Policy
OPEN	Q's and A's - General
OPEN	Q's and A's - International Policy
OPEN	Press Guidance - Domestic
OPEN	Press Guidance - Foreign
OPEN	White House Privileges