

The original documents are located in Box 39, folder “Ford, Gerald - Children” of the Sheila Weidenfeld Files at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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1

PRESIDENCYFord Interviewed at White House

President Ford was interviewed Monday at the White House by ABC correspondent Harry Reasoner.

Reasoner: Since Jimmy Carter's religious views have attracted so much attention, what about the Ford religion?

Ford: I and my family have a very deep dedication to the Christian faith, and I personally, through my Episcopal church, have a relationship with Jesus Christ. And I would add this: That in my daily life, whether it's in public or in private, gives me the opportunity to carry out this faith and this relationship. I don't talk about it a lot, but I feel very strongly and very deeply about it and it's something that I've held for a good many years.

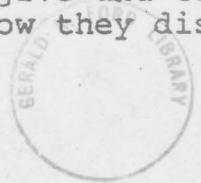
Reasoner: A couple of years ago, when you had been in office about six weeks, I talked to you and I said apart from the awesome responsibilities of the office, weren't there some enjoyable things about being President, and you said you loved it. Has the two years done anything to that feeling, Mr. President?

Ford: Not at all, Harry. I still thoroughly enjoy the responsibilities, the challenges, the opportunity to try and do things constructively in the office as President of the United States. It's a wonderful experience for a person like myself, who had no consuming ambition to be President -- never intended to seek the office -- the challenges because I was free of any personal ambition gives me more latitude, gives me more flexibility in the things I want to do and hope that I can do.

Reasoner: You said, I think, within a couple of weeks after you had become President, one of your children said something in disagreement with something you said. You said you never tried to tell either your wife or children what to say or what to think, didn't think you could have if you tried. Has that changed any, are they still independent spirits?

Ford: They certainly are. As a matter of fact, I think they've got more assurance, they've become better informed. They know the differences and at our family dinners, as a matter of fact last night at the White House, we had all of the children and our daughter-in-law, and we had a real family dinner that was probably one of the most enjoyable we've had in a good many years. And let me assure you the discussions were very much give-and-take. They had no hesitancy whatever to tell their father how they disagree or how they think things can be run better.

Reasoner: Have they ever changed your mind?



Ford: Yes, they have had an impact, as a matter of fact. Each of the children are specialists in a certain way and in those areas where they think they have an expertise, they're very vocal. And on several occasions, I'm glad to say, they gave me a different perspective, a broader view, particularly the view of young people, and there has been a change in a decision I was about to make.

Reasoner: I had a feeling, knowing Mr. Johnson fairly well, that it was terribly important to him to be elected in '64 -- that he never really felt the office belonged to him until he got it from the people. Do you have a feeling like that, sir?

Ford: Certainly, it would be very, very helpful for me to actually be elected in 1976. I came to this very important office through the most unusual circumstances. I haven't let that fact bother me and as a matter of fact in some respects it's probably been helpful because I had the endorsement of the Congress, and certainly I've gotten the support of the American people during some very trying experiences. But to do things affirmatively, and I have a number of things in mind that I feel must be done in the next four years, being elected, getting a mandate from the American people in November of this year, would give me a greater impact on the Congress, a greater capability to move ahead in these areas, particularly of quality of life for all Americans.

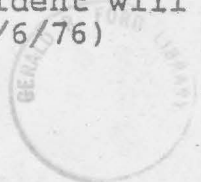
Ford Has Working Labor Day

President Ford met with Peking Ambassador Thomas Gates Monday who reported on China's recent earthquake disaster. Then he wound up his morning at a meeting with Secretary Coleman and staff members to talk about efforts to cut down the noise of commercial U.S. aircraft.

Jim McManus noted that the meeting was presidential but was not "high-powered" strategy designed to compete with the launching of the Carter campaign. McManus added that Ron Nessen said that Ford's personal pollster said he is only four points behind Carter in New York. (CBS)

Robert Pierpoint said the Ford strategy is to work at the White House in full public view with an occasional political appearance. Accordingly, the President planned a busy Labor Day and the invitation was sent out for media pictures, Pierpoint remarked

Pierpoint noted that if this strategy does not narrow the Carter gap by early next month, aides say the President will then try something else. AP, UPI, CBS Morning News -- (9/6/76)



Here is the way I look at it: in the first place, both of us counsel Susan, obviously, not to have an affair before marriage. Number two, if she did come to one or both of us, my position would be precisely this -- I would, of course, be disappointed, but I would think that disappointment wouldn't result in my telling Susan to "get out of the house, don't come back."

I think you have to have a feeling of an understanding parent. If she made a mistake, we ought to talk with her and try to resolve the problem. I don't think you solve anything by telling a child who has made a mistake to "get out of the house, we don't want to see you again." Our love for her transcends any interim mistake that she might have made. Our feeling is very deep for her and we would try to work with her in a solution of the problem.

In the case of Jack who admittedly in some interview said that he had tried marijuana, I strongly disagree with his using marijuana. I think the tests so far are such that you can't be sure that marijuana doesn't have a harmful affect on your health. Therefore, I disagree with his using marijuana.

But I admire his frankness and his honesty and we have tried to bring our children up to be very frank with us and then we can sit down and talk about how to solve the problem rather than to adopt the adamant attitude, "you are wrong and, therefore, you aren't wanted."

We want our children and the best way to keep them, in my opinion, is to work with them and not to be as harsh as some people have been.

MS. KING: We talked to other candidates whose children have been very, very involved in their campaigns, and in organizing, and I know Susan campaigned for you recently in New Hampshire. But, some of the other children really haven't and haven't taken any part in it.

Do you wish they would play a more active role?

THE PRESIDENT: I am very proud of all four of them, and I think they would be a big asset. Our son Mike, who lives while he is in school in Ipswich and is going to Gordon-Conwell, is totally preoccupied with getting his education to become a minister or a counsellor.

He is somewhat shy about participating while he is going to school. I think he would be a great asset, and maybe the fact that he is a little reticent is somewhat helpful.

Susan is more the extrovert, and she enjoys it, and I think that she was helpful and I am sure she will participate more.

Jack has a new job, and he is pretty much preoccupied with the new job, so he may not be able to help very much, but occasionally he has participated.

Steve is out in California and I think will in his own unique way. He is a great horse lover, and he is going to school and working in a stable. We talk to him all of the time, and I think he will participate, but he will do it in his own way and so I am happy and pleased with that.

MS. KING: In some of your campaigning, you are being portrayed in the press very often as having accidents and stumbling around. Does that upset you?

THE PRESIDENT: It doesn't bother me, really, Sharon, because I know it is inaccurate to say that I can't do this or I can't do that. I am an active person. Whenever you participate in something you are bound to slip and fall or you are bound to have something else happen to you.

If you sit in a chair all of the time, inevitably nothing is going to happen. I like to play tennis. I like to play golf. I ski. I swim, and I do a lot of other things, and inevitably when you are active you are bound to have something happen.

MS. KING: I have seen you with bandages.

THE PRESIDENT: It doesn't bother me at all except to say that I know it is untrue and I just have it off and let it go at that.

MS. KING: I have one further question today.

What is the main reason you would vote for yourself in this election?

THE PRESIDENT: I believe that I am the best qualified person to do the job that is needed and necessary as President of the United States. I have had the experience, 25-plus years in the Congress, where I dealt with issues every day, and I have voted some 4,000 times on many, many Federal issues.

I have had the experience of working here in the White House for 18 months and the continuity with the experience I think is vitally important.

As I look at any of the other candidates and add up the plusses and the minuses they have -- and I have both plusses and minuses -- I think I am the best qualified to carry out the international policy of peace through strength and a healthy and prosperous economy with less inflation and more employment.

MS. KING: Thank you. It has been very challenging to have an interview with you. We will be back right after this break.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you.

END (AT 10:55 A.M. EST)

February 11, 1976

INTERVIEW OF THE PRESIDENT
WITH
SHARON KING
WBZ RADIO
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

THE OVAL OFFICE

10:38 A.M. EST

MS. KING: We have invited all Presidential candidates to appear on this program, and we have President Ford with us today.

We thought we would start off by asking the same questions we have asked all of the candidates, in '76; that is, why you want to run for President. I know you have a unique perspective on it, being the incumbent and all, but why is this a job that you really want?

THE PRESIDENT: I believe that the policies we have tried to implement domestically, as well as internationally, can best be done by me, and I happen to think they are in the best interest of the country.

The continuity of the two and a half years that I will have had in this office, plus another four years, would give me an ample opportunity to continue what we are trying to do to control inflation, to lower unemployment, to continue the policy of peace.

I think it can be best done by someone who has some continuity in office and, therefore, I am seeking the nomination, as well as the election.

MS. KING: What is the thing that you like best about being President?

THE PRESIDENT: The every-day challenge, Sharon. I walk into this office at 7:30 or quarter of eight every morning, and I have a long list of appointments. Every one of them is a new challenge as it affects the economy, as it affects international relations or affects appointments or affects dealing with the Congress.

Every minute of every day is a new challenge, and I have always enjoyed competition and a challenge, and that is why I enjoy every day.

We don't always solve every problem every day, but at least it is something to look at and work on, and it has always been my life.

MS. KING: Besides what you like, there has to be something that you really hate about being President.

THE PRESIDENT: I really can't say there is anything that I totally dislike. My family enjoys it. We don't have quite the freedom that we have had all of our lives, but it isn't too bad, and I think the children, as well as Betty, have become accustomed to it, so we don't really object to that anymore.

MS. KING: You never get up in the morning and say, "Oh, no, I have to deal with "X" today"?

THE PRESIDENT: Some problems are tougher. They get into personalities, and that is difficult because I may have two good friends on opposite sides of the aisle, and then if you agree with one, you disagree with the other, and occasionally that leads to some hard feelings.

But, other than those kinds of little incidental matters, I really enjoy it.

MS. KING: What do you think is the best achievement of your Administration so far?

THE PRESIDENT: I think you have to differentiate between domestic policy and foreign policy. On the domestic side, when I took office roughly 18 months ago, we had inflation of 12 to 14 percent per year. We were on the brink of a recession with rapidly increasing unemployment.

The fact that we have been able to turn it around and to cut the rate of inflation in half and to make some decided improvements in the employment side and also to start the right trend on unemployment with unemployment going down, I think that has been the biggest domestic achievement.

On foreign policy, when I took over we still were involved in Southeast Asia and Vietnam. We extricated ourselves from that traumatic experience. We have strengthened our alliances in Europe and in the Pacific. We are making headway in our relations with the People's Republic of China.

We are working very hard to put a cap on the nuclear arms race, and we are at peace.

I think we have a great opportunity to have a permanent peace if we operate from a position of strength, which we have, and work conscientiously and I think constructively with both adversaries as well as friends.

MS. KING: You recently proposed some Medicare and Medicaid legislation, and would you expect by the end of your Administration we would have national health insurance or national health programs for everyone?

THE PRESIDENT: That is somewhat difficult to be precise about. Right at the moment, if we were to institute a total national health insurance program, the cost would be horrendous and it couldn't be properly financed. It would put a tremendous burden on the taxpayers.

Furthermore, in some countries where they have national health insurance the service to the patient, the medical care has not been as good as it has been under our kind of medical care.

So, there must be some consideration of how to handle the cost problem, and also how to improve the patient-doctor relationship.

Now, what we are trying to do is to put a cap on doctor costs, as well as nursing home and hospital costs. That is a must at the very outset, and I am trying to do that in the budget I submitted for next year.

If that can be done, then we could take another look at a national health insurance program, but with the emphasis on the private sector being the delivery system.

MS. KING: Would you expect that ERA would be passed by the end of the next Administration?

THE PRESIDENT: I would hope so. I voted for it when I was in the House of Representatives and, of course, my wife Betty is a great proponent of it.

But, let me tell you why I am for it. I think that is something that oftentimes is missed.

There should be equality under the law as far as a man and a woman are concerned. It is a very fundamental right, and under our system fundamental rights ought to be in the Constitution and not dependent upon the variables of State or local action.

Therefore, when you want to solve a fundamental right and make sure and make certain that it is equal for everybody, it ought to be a constitutional amendment.

Therefore, I was glad to have voted for the resolution to amend the Constitution. I strongly support its adoption by the necessary number of States. I think to do it on a step-by-step basis with one State doing this and another State doing that or one community doing this and another the opposite, it is not the way to solve a fundamental right.

I think equality before the law for a man or woman is very fundamental and very constitutional.

MS. KING: Many women feel they have a right to abortion on demand. How do you feel about that?

THE PRESIDENT: I take a position which is somewhere in the middle, between the extremes. I do not think abortion on demand, as authorized, more or less, by the Constitution, is the right answer. On the other hand, I do not agree with those who advocate the most stringent constitutional amendment which, in effect, would preclude abortions. I think both extremes are undesirable.

I really and very strongly believe that on these personal moral issues -- and I think abortion is a very personal and a very moral issue -- there ought to be a recognition of the diversity in our country, ethnically, religiously, geographically, on this kind of a problem.

A philosophical moral issue ought to be decided not either by a rigid constitutional amendment on the one hand or abortion on demand on the other. I think it ought to be done at a State level rather than at a Federal level.

MS. KING: Are you considering any women as your runningmate?

THE PRESIDENT: I have said we have a number of very competent and very qualified women and I mentioned specifically Carla Hills, who is my Secretary of HUD. She has done an outstanding job. She has been an Assistant Attorney General before she took this office and she has done a superb job as the Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

But there are other very qualified women out of the 215 million Americans, so I don't think we should preclude a very qualified woman from being a candidate.

MS. KING: Are you supporting any individual for Vice President?

THE PRESIDENT: I am not supporting any individuals for Vice President. I think it is premature for that.

MS. KING: Your wife has been described in a lot of papers as very, very popular.

THE PRESIDENT: I am sure of that.

MS. KING: Sometimes she has showed more popularity in the polls than you. Does it hurt your feelings when that happens?

THE PRESIDENT: No, it is a little family joke and I am very proud of the fact that she does so well in the polls and I hope her popularity continues.

We travel together a good bit of the time, both in Washington and elsewhere, and she gets as much accolade, if not more, than I, and I am very proud of it.

MS. KING: What is it about her that appeals to so many, do you think?

THE PRESIDENT: Very down to earth frankness, deep sincerity and I think she also is very attractive, and the combination makes her very appealing not only to women but I can't help but notice a few men look at her, too.

MS. KING: She has been very outspoken about some specific things in regard to the children -- for instance, a feeling that parents have a responsibility for children who have tried marijuana, or responsibility if one might have an affair or something like that. How do you feel about those things?

THE PRESIDENT: Let me take the allegations concerning Susan. That developed in an interview that Betty had and the question arose of what would her reaction be if Susan came to her and said that she had had an affair.