

Ford Called an Avid Reader

Newspapers, Periodicals and a Book a Month

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When President Ford was asked on a nationally televised CBS interview Monday about his reading habits and whether he had read books about Indochina, he replied that he had read "four or five books" on the area and now has time to read about one book a month.

White House press secretary Ron Nessen the next day supplied a presidential reading list, noting that while the President is not an avid book reader he is an avid newspaper, magazine and reports reader.

The President also has made a habit of reading a variety of newsletters from labor, business and educational organizations—a habit he began in the House of Representatives to keep up with issues his constituents were concerned about.

Unlike one of his heroes, Harry S. Truman, who was at home with books and particularly those on American history, Mr. Ford, although a rapid reader, is far from a bookish President, by all accounts.

But aides say he does read more books than many persons might think, and one aide quoted Mrs. Ford as saying that the President always has a place to keep books near at hand that he is reading.

Nessen said he asked the President what books he was referring to on the CBS interviews, and Mr. Ford replied that on Vietnam he had read two widely known books by Bernard Fall—"Street Without Joy" and "Hell in a Very Small Place."

The latter is the story of Dienbienphu, the French citadel that fell to the Vietnamese Communists in 1954.

The President also read David Halberstam's "The Best and the Brightest," an account of Kennedy administration

involvement in Vietnam, Nessen reported.

Among the other books Mr. Ford has read recently are George Reedy's "The Twilight of the Presidency," "The Palace Guard" by Dan Rather and Gary P. Gates, "The Man Above the Title" by Frank Capra, "The Making of the President: 1972" by Theodore H. White, "Gerald Ford and the future of the Presidency" by J. F. ter Horst, and the Congressional Directory, Mr. Ford added with a smile.

Only this week the President read "Hiroshima," John Hersey's account of the effects of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima at the end of World War II. Hersey recently spent a week at the White House observing and interviewing the President for a long article in The New York Times.

Nessen said also that the President recently had "dipped into" several volumes on Thomas Jefferson and had read Gore Vidal's "Burr."

Calling the President "an omnivorous newspaper reader," Nessen said Mr. Ford starts his day at 5:15 with The Washington Post. He then reads a news summary and intelligence reports prepared by his staff.

At breakfast, the President reads The New York Times, with television news turned on at low volume, Nessen said.

Later in the day, the President reads The Washington Star, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and the Grand Rapids Press. He frequently reads parts of The Baltimore Sun, New York News, Chicago Tribune and Christian Science Monitor, and always has local newspapers on his plane when he travels, the press secretary reported.