

John Stiles, Ford Friend, Aide, Dies

By Jean R. Halley

John R. Stiles, 59, one of President Ford's closest friends and a campaign aide since 1949, was killed early yesterday in an automobile accident near Grand Rapids, Mich.

Mr. Stiles had managed present was serving as delegate monitor in the presidential campaign at President Ford Committee headquarters here.

He had left Washington last Friday to travel in Indiana in connection with the campaign. He had stopped in Grand Rapids to check his business affairs there and was scheduled to fly back to Washington last night.

Mr. Stiles was found dead early yesterday morning beside his wrecked car on a northwest Kent County road. Sheriff's deputies said the car apparently struck a metal post, went out of control and plunged 12 feet off the opposite side of the road, before overturning in a shallow stream.

They said Mr. Stiles, who was alone in the car, apparently was killed instantly. On learning of the death of his longtime associate, President Ford issued this statement: "I am deeply saddened by



JOHN R. STILES

the tragic death of my dear friend and valued associate, Jack Stiles. Jack's loyalty and friendship have been constant since our University of Michigan years.

"He was devoted to this country and served it well in war and peace. I shall miss his unvarnished counsel and untiring help.

"Betty and I share the grief of Jack's family and many friends."

Mr. Stiles was born in Grand Rapids, the scion of a prominent family that had

been in building supplies and construction for three generations.

While he further developed the building business, he became known for his literary accomplishments at the University of Michigan.

It was there that his long and close association began with President Ford. Both were members of Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity.

Mr. Stiles graduated in 1937, two years after Mr. Ford's graduation. He spent a year traveling in France, then served in the Navy during World War II as a lieutenant commander. He saw duty in the Pacific.

After the war, Mr. Stiles returned to Grand Rapids and the building business. He and Mr. Ford resumed their friendship, and in 1946-47 worked together for better job and housing opportunities for veterans in Grand Rapids.

When Mr. Ford decided to try to unseat Rep. Bartel J. Jonkman in the Republican primaries in 1948, he chose Mr. Stiles to manage his campaign. Jonkman had been in Congress since 1940 and was considered virtually unbeatable.

But Mr. Stiles recognized that Mr. Ford had an outgoing personality and with it a considerable potential to

attract voters, a friend of both said yesterday.

"Get out and shake hands, Jerry," was Mr. Stiles' advice, the friend added. Mr. Ford did just that, won the primary and easily defeated a token Democratic candidate.

President Ford kept Mr. Stiles as manager of his congressional campaigns that followed.

While Mr. Ford served in Congress, Mr. Stiles remained active in politics in Michigan. During the 1950s, he was executive director of the Michigan State Republican Committee.

In 1960, served as field manager for former President Nixon's pre-convention campaign.

In 1964, while Mr. Ford was serving on the Warren Commission investigating the assassination of President Kennedy, he brought Mr. Stiles to Washington as his "special assistant" in connection with his commission work.

After release of the Warren Commission report, they collaborated on a book, "Portrait of the Assassin," a study of Lee Harvey Oswald.

Mr. Ford and Mr. Stiles said then that the book was intended for those who may not have "read and analyzed" the Warren report

and its 26 volumes of testimony and exhibits.

After he became President in 1974, Mr. Ford brought Mr. Stiles to the White House as a \$150-a-day consultant. He has remained here since then.

Mr. Stiles never was given a specific title. He was in charge of several projects but kept a low profile. He was outspoken in one area, declaring he did not think the government was treating the housing industry fairly, but he emphasized that he was not at the White House as a housing adviser.

Mr. Stiles was familiar with most of the museums of Europe and served in 1966 as cultural guide to the Fords when they visited here.

Because he had been involved in an earlier national campaign as well as Mr. Ford's earlier congressional campaigns, Mr. Stiles had been asked to join the President Ford Committee which has offices at 1825 L St. NW for the present presidential campaign.

He has served the committee in various capacities. He was involved in field operations and then was named delegate monitor.

Mr. Stiles lived at 3488 Martha Custis Dr., Alexandria. He is survived by two daughters.