

# Hard Worker,

# Straight Talker

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rarely eloquent and never flamboyant, Gerald Rudolph Ford is a man with a penchant for work and simple, straight talk.

That's won him immense respect from both sides of the aisle in 25 years of congressional service and nine months as vice president.

Richard Nixon would have preferred a more electric vice president, namely John B. Connally. But Republicans convinced him of useful qualities in Ford: personal likeability, a clean reputation, an unflappable disposition, a solid base of party support and a certain gray acceptability to almost everyone.

The Democrats, at first, found an additional reason to support him: they didn't think it likely he would run for President in 1976. Ford said as much himself.

One former Nixon adviser, Harry Dent, noted that "Ford fits the Republican Party like a glove."

Ford is an Orthodox Republican. He is also a devout Episcopalian who has attended church regularly throughout his adult life.

Ford's solidarity, whatever it lacks in color, is viewed by leaders of both parties as tailor-made for a nation yearning for a government it can trust.

Rep. Edward P. Boland, D-Mass., said, "Jerry Ford exudes the kind of confidence that I hope to see in a President. He could be the kind of President that Harry Truman became.

"The President has to lead by example, displaying the standards, morally, ethically and otherwise, by which most Americans live their lives."

But while Ford promises to lead, so too does he share the habits of the average man.

It is improbable that Americans will find him moving from one large coastal estate to another, for his living tastes are modest. Even when he became vice president, he chose to remain in his same Alexandria, Va., home — unpretentious except for a much-cherished

swimming pool in the backyard.

He is an open man, often holding forth with reporters several times a day. And his speechmaking averaged 200 appearances a year as House Republican leader, a pace he kept up as vice president.

If he became President, he told the Senate last fall, he would regularly seek advice from Congress and his cabinet. And he said he would try to halt the increasing concentration of federal power in the President.

To avoid a Watergate in his administration, Ford said, he would "thoroughly screen and carefully supervise" his top White House aides.

Ford set out several other views and promises on his presidency, if it came to that, in response to questions at the House and Senate hearings.

Calling himself a "conservative on fiscal matters, a moderate on domestic affairs and a liberal on foreign policy," Ford said no U.S. combat troops should be sent to the Middle East; he would insist on full enforcement of federal voting rights laws; keep the CIA under close scrutiny and control; and he would keep Henry

A. Kissinger on as secretary of state.

He said he would never authorize anyone in his administration to lie under oath and "only in the most extreme cases would I authorize even a temporary lie."

Ford, who spent most of his boyhood in Grand Rapids, Mich., was born with another name, Leslie King, on July 14, 1913 in Omaha, Neb.

His parents were divorced when he was less than a year old and his mother returned to her parents in Grand Rapids, where she later married Gerald R. Ford Sr. He adopted the boy and renamed him.

Ford was center on the University of Michigan's 1932 and 1933 national champion football teams — and then captain and most valuable player of the 1934 team which was one of the Wolverines' worst.

He got professional offers from the Detroit Lions and Green Bay Packers but chose to study law at Yale, working his way through as an assistant varsity football coach and freshman boxing coach. Sens. Robert Taft Jr., R-Ohio, and William Proxmire, D-Wis., were on his teams.

After World War II service in

Adm. William Halsey's 3rd Fleet in the Pacific, Ford went back to practicing law in Grand Rapids and became active in Republican reform politics.

Three years later he was elected to what was to become a 25-year career in the House of Representatives.

Ford beat Rep. Bartel Jonkman two-to-one in the Republican primary and then went on to win the election with 60.5 per cent of the vote, the lowest margin he ever got.

He had proposed to Elizabeth Bloomer, a dancer and fashion coordinator, earlier that year, 1948. She became one of his hardest-working campaigners and they were married shortly before the election.

Ford quickly established himself as a Republican team player in the House. He became an assistant GOP whip in just three years and acquired a reputation as an expert on the military budget.

In 1959 he joined a reform coup to replace aging House Republican Leader Joe Martin of Massachusetts with Charles A. Halleck of Indiana. Six years later, Ford took the job away from Halleck.

A group of Republicans who wanted new direction asked

Ford to run for the job. He agreed, and with characteristic lack of awe left for a ski vacation with his family.

After the vacation, he returned to Washington for two days of telephoning, buttonholing and cajoling for votes and unseated Halleck by what he cheerfully calls "a landslide margin of 73 to 67."

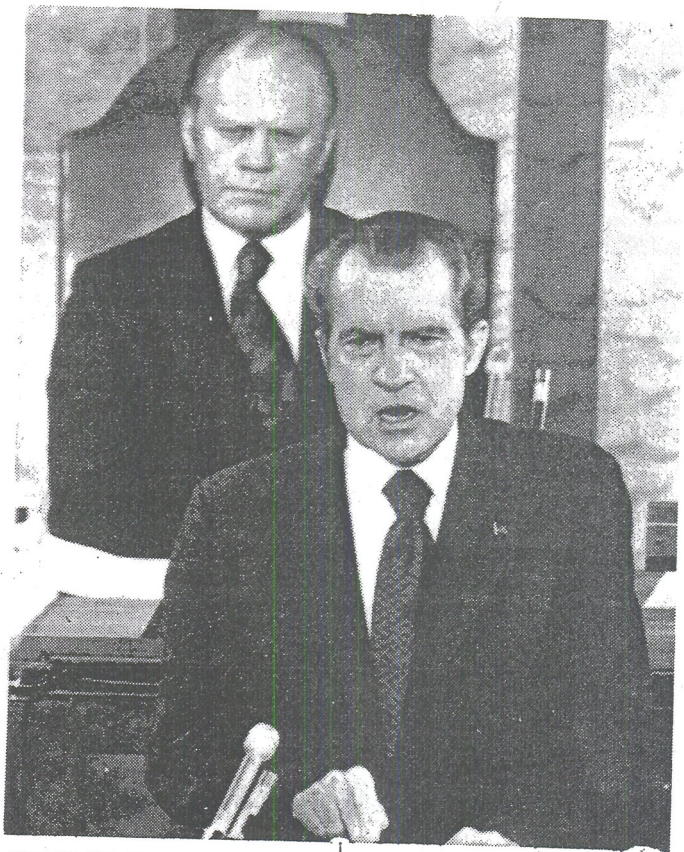
Ford set out the Republican alternatives the House reformers wanted, and wound up in a running name-calling battle with then President Lyndon B. Johnson.

In return, Johnson made remarks about Ford's brainpower that still hound him.

"There's nothing wrong with Jerry Ford except that he played football too long without a helmet," Johnson said.

Above the sniping level, there were substantial policy differences.

Ford and other GOP Leaders shaped Republican alternatives to Johnson's Great Society programs and included local revenue sharing — which Nixon was later to win from Congress — lesser Social Security increases and revision of the war on poverty.



**BEFORE THE CHANGE** — Richard M. Nixon is shown delivering a State of the Union message before a joint session of Congress in Washington in January, 1974. Vice President Gerald R. Ford (now President) is in the background. (AP Wirephoto)