



CONVERSING WITH SENATOR GOLDWATER

loudly by his old friends from both houses of Congress that the President turned and said to his old friend Speaker Carl Albert, "You're wasting good TV time." Later he seemed determined to shake every hand in the House. "You know," Albert told him, the microphones picking up his aside over the roar of applause, "I'm afraid I might have called you Jerry instead of Mr. President last night." The President laughed.

His manner was clearly that of a Chief Executive who did not see himself as a caretaker President. He spoke of "my Cabinet officers" and "my White House staff." He declared, with little regard for the sensitivities of his deposed predecessor, "I began to put my Administration's own economic house in order starting last Friday." He even said flat-out, "God willing, I will have at least three more chances" to make State of the Union addresses—that "at least" being the strongest indication yet that he has abandoned his earlier contention that he would not seek the presidency in 1976. Senate Minority Leader Hugh Scott declared that Ford will have little choice but to run for re-election in 1976, because "the party will demand it."

**Open Door.** In his 32-minute speech Ford promised to work with his old friends as coequals: "My motto toward the Congress is communication, conciliation, compromise and cooperation . . . I do not want a honeymoon with you—I want a good marriage." He pledged to avoid some of the most grievous failings of the Nixon presidency. "I intend to listen," he said, not just to members of Congress but "to the people themselves . . . I want to be sure that we are all tuned in to the real voice of America." He will be as approachable as ever, he promised. "My office door has always been open, and that is how it is going to be at the White House"—providing, he added wryly, "you don't overdo it."

There were other words of reassurance. He paid tribute to "the absolute necessity of a free press." He pledged that "there will be no illegal tappings, eavesdropping, buggings or break-ins by my Administration" and thereby drew

## Chatting with Betty and Susan

"This house has been like a grave," Betty Ford, the new First Lady, remarked to TIME Correspondent Bonnie Angelo in an interview soon after her initial tour of her new home at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. The comment was made not in criticism but compassion for the Nixons' long ordeal there. "I want it to sing," Mrs. Ford said of the White House, adding that while she greatly admires Pat Nixon, she is going to be a different kind of First Lady. "I expect to be very active. Pat Nixon did many, many things with groups inside the White House. I expect to be a more public person."

While some commentators hoped that the new First Family would not be subjected to the usual near-royal publicity (see THE PRESS), the Fords' refreshing easy charm proved highly attractive. During her inspection of the White House, Betty Ford was asked by a staff member whether she would like to have stereo in her suite. "Not for me," she declared. "I couldn't stand it."

Would the President join her for lunch in the mansion, as Lyndon Johnson used to do with Lady Bird? "I can't imagine that," she replied. "He's too busy." And then, with a smile, she added: "I don't want him for lunch. If I don't have anything scheduled," she continued, "I'll call up friends and have them come for lunch. After all, that's what [the mansion] is for."

Mrs. Ford was delighted with the two-bedroom suite used by presidential couples, though she frankly declared, "We have shared the same bed for 25 years and we're not going to change that." But now, she said, "Jerry can get dressed in a room of his own. For years I've tried to sleep while he's getting dressed: now he won't have to tiptoe."

"He's always been an early riser. That's the part of the day he really enjoys. He gets his breakfast and reads the papers and gets ready for the day. I wouldn't dare intrude. Even when he gets [Son] Steve's breakfast, they eat separately and read the papers. They don't talk. I can't imagine anything worse than starting off the day with conversation."

The First Lady is intent on ensuring that the White House is a lively home for her family, but this year only her daughter Susan, 17, will be living there with her parents. The Fords' eldest son, Michael, 24, is married and attending a theological seminary. Son John, 22, is working at his summer job as a forest ranger in Yellowstone National Park. Steven, 18, has decided to wait a year before entering Duke University and will work on a cattle ranch in Utah. "Dad probably wasn't too hot on that," Susan remarked. "but he would

never object so strongly that he would tell Steve not to go." For himself, Steve, who has been tooling around Ocean City, Md., in his yellow Jeep, remarked: "I'm still trying to get used to the idea that the man I think of as my Dad is the President of the United States."

But Susan is eagerly looking forward to the move. Last week she and her boyfriend Gardner Britt, 17, the son of a Ford auto dealer in Virginia, brought her belongings to the White House and installed her two dozen potted plants in the third-floor solarium. For their dating, "I'm looking for a back stairway for Gardner, so he won't have to go through all that stuff," Susan says. After surveying the mansion, Susan picked a suite on the third floor and asked that it be repainted yellow.

Mrs. Ford reminded her daughter that she must still take care of her potted plants. "Don't I always?" Susan retorted. "And when I'm away, well, I'll find somebody. Maybe Mr. Harriston, he's so nice . . ." Mr. Harriston, a White House doorman, is probably never near the third-floor solarium, but Susan's enthusiasm may prove irresistible.

Like her parents, Susan seems to resist any suggestion that living in the White House will change the Fords' lives. "I'll never throw away my blue jeans," she vows. She is also determined to continue to baby-sit for the family of Congressional Aide Peter Abbruzzese, which lives across the street from the Ford home in Alexandria. In fact, says Susan, she told Mrs. Abbruzzese, who is expecting her third child, "that when she goes to the hospital to have that kid, she should drop her other two at the White House and I'll take care of them. That will take some of the stuffiness out of the place." Susan is also musing, apropos of White House entertainment, that "it would be great to have a party with the Beach Boys or Bette Midler."

MRS. FORD PACKING BOOKS IN ALEXANDRIA



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