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Nessen Will Host Satirical TV Show

Washington

White House press secretary Ronald Nessen said yesterday that he will appear as a guest host on a weekly TV show that regularly satirizes President Ford's alleged klutziness.

Nessen agreed to be the host of the April 17 edition of "NBC's Saturday Night," a highly rated late-night program that has won a wide following especially among young adult viewers. The most recent "Saturday Night" show ended with an actor playing President Ford falling off a psychiatrist's couch and crashing through a wall.

"Despite what you may have read, we do have a sense of humor over here," said Nessen. "I don't know if the President has seen the 'Saturday Night' show; but I do know he says he laughs off those cartoons about him in the papers. He has a little cubbyhole off the Oval Office and it's lined with cartoons, many of them critical but funny."

Nessen said he did not check with the President before agreeing to be on the show, but did confer with legal counsel Philip W. Buchen about accepting payment. Nessen said he will either waive the payment or donate it to charity. NBC—where Nessen worked as a reporter from 1962 to 1974—will pay only his expenses, Nessen said.

The idea of Nessen appearing

on the show began when he watched a "Saturday Night" comedy sketch written by series regular Chevy Chase and guest-host Buck Henry. In the sketch, Henry as Nessen prepares Chase as Mr. Ford for a press conference.

"Mr. President, you can expect a lot of tough questions," says the Nessen character. "Do you think there'll be any math?" asks the President nervously.

"When we first talked about this I told them, I can't do anything truly embarrassing or in bad taste to the White House," Nessen said. "And they agreed there would be nothing like that on the show."

Each week on "Saturday Night," Mr. Ford is depicted as an absent-minded bumbler. One week he fell off a platform. Another week he stabbed himself with a fork while at dinner. Nessen said he considers the show "very pointed satirical humor" and that he has "never seen anything that's gone over the line."

"When I'm home on Saturday nights, I almost always watch it," Nessen said.

"When you look back in history, you see that the jokes about President Ford are mild compared to what they said about Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman. I think most of the humor on 'Saturday Night' is really pretty good-natured."

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