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Mrs. Nixon, on 7-State Tour, Shuns Politics

NYTimes

By NAN ROBERTSON

Special to The New York Times

LOS ANGELES, Sept. 22—Mrs. Richard M. Nixon stood on the windswept aerospace base in Northern California, encircled by reporters and obviously eager to get back to the mother ship. Yards away loomed the awesome Presidential jet—a Boeing 707, silver and pale blue, with "United States of America" leaping out in black capital letters the length of its fuselage.

QUESTION: "Mrs. Nixon, do you think you are helping your husband politically?"

MRS. NIXON: "I don't come to places like this for political reasons."

QUESTION: "Don't you regard this as a political trip?"

MRS. NIXON: "Anything you do at this time of year is political."

The President's wife was midway through a six-day swing across the country that, when it ends tomorrow, will have taken her and her entourage of 30 reporters and cameramen, six crew members, five stewards, six Secret Service agents, nine White House employes and one hairdresser from Elizabeth Arden 5,500 miles through seven states.

Advance Army

An invisible army of other persons preceded Mrs. Nixon, arranging airport welcomes, motorcades, rallies, policing, credentials, hotel rooms and a thousand additional details.

During this trip, an unusually prolonged one even for a Presidential candidate, Mrs. Nixon was seen by roughly 15,000 Americans, perhaps one-third to one-half of them not old to one-half of them not old enough to vote.

She made no speeches—"remarks" would be a better word—mentioned the accomplishments of her husband's Administration just once, gave no interviews, held one impromptu news conference at the very beginning that she lived to regret and did not repeat, and never, never talked politics.

For example, Ed Reimers, the master of ceremonies for an American Cancer Society dinner honoring Mrs. Nixon last night, warned off reporters and photographers gathered beforehand to see her.

"It's not a press conference," he said, "and I have been

asked to announce that the only question we will entertain is: 'Can we take another picture, please?'"

Hazards of Touring

Is it written into her job requirements that a First Lady must endure freezing rain, gale-force winds, sleet, snow, hail and temperatures ranging from 23 to 102 degrees, all of which Mrs. Nixon endured this week? Couldn't she brag a little bit about her husband, what he has done and wishes to do if elected?

Mrs. Nixon gave an answer satisfactory to herself last Monday, the first day of her cross-country tour. Moving with all the panoply and power of the Presidency, she was showing the flag or, to put it in her own words, "I'm taking the White House to the people."

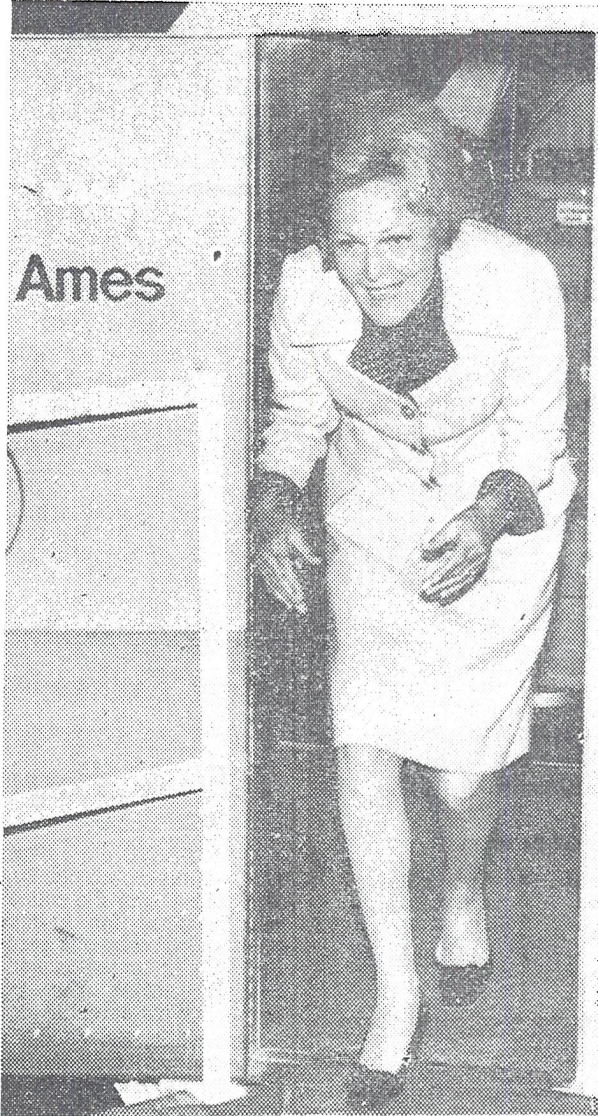
At airports in Billings and West Yellowstone, Mont. and Idaho Falls, Idaho, she worked slowly along chain-link fences holding back the crowds, clutching at their hands with both of hers while they called out "We love you, Pat?" and "Four more years?"

She sat, along with 1,500 other, spectators, through an outdoor dedication of Yellowstone National Park's "Second Century" that was mercilessly pelted by freezing rain, hail and snow. To the end, she wore her best "carry on" face while Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton finished his speech.

Most Wondrous Day

Despite the weather, with ev the band scampering for cover, it had been "a most wondrous day," she told them.

Only once on this long journey was Mrs. Nixon forced to tackle, or at least parry, the issues. At a "press coffee" in Chicago that turned into a press conference, she turned tense and anxious as she was asked about the war, abortion, am-



Mrs. Richard M. Nixon emerging from a flight simulator at Ames Research Center in Mountain View, Calif.

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nesty, the Watergate bugging, equal rights, Martha Mitchell's woes and other thorny topics.

It was, everyone who has followed Mrs. Nixon for years agreed, the toughest grilling she has ever undergone. Her discomfort was obvious. So was her relief when a reporter asked the type of question that has usually been her lot: "Mrs. Nixon, how do you keep your vitality?"

Political Tinge

In Chicago and Los Angeles, the most populous cities she visited, her plane avoided the main airport terminals—with the possibility of big welcoming crowds, or hecklers, who were not seen this week—and taxied instead to remote buildings.

Mrs. Nixon did not mention her husband's programs until yesterday in Riverside, Calif., a town with 30,000 retired citizens on the desert's edge.

This rally, a dedication of a cornerstone to the memory of

Hannah M. Nixon, the President's mother, had a distinctly political excitement.

There were costumed "Nixonettes," a Republican state senator and local United States Representatives. Gov. Ronald Reagan sent a telegram. The Rev. Ber Turner, a Southern Baptist minister, shouted, forefinger in air, that Mr. Nixon "is a great President! His name will go down in the history of the United States of America!"

The President's wife then stepped forward.

"Under the Nixon Administration, the senior citizen is not forgotten," she said. "Instead, he is the remembered one. So far, there have been improvements in every segment."

Under the Older Americans Act, she said, "Federal funding has increased eightfold."

Applause, a few "amens," Nixon placards hoisted.

In three minutes, for the first and only time on her trip, Pat Nixon had made a partisan political statement.

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