

NYTimes  
Ford and Albert Deal  
With Deep Problems

NOV 3 1973

NOV 9 1973

By MARJORIE HUNTER

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Nov. 2— You might pass them on the street without a second glance — one a tall and trim but now older football hero, the other a bantam-sized wrestling champion who became a Rhodes scholar.

They are, to all outward appearance, middle America.

Yet, with one stroke of fate, either of them could become the next President of the United States: President Carl Bert Albert, President Gerald Rudolph Ford.

The dizzy succession of events of recent weeks — the resignation of Vice President Agnew, the widespread demands for the impeachment of President Nixon — have placed Carl Albert and Gerald Ford in highly unusual situations in American political history.

As Speaker of the House, Mr. Albert, a Democrat, now stands next in line to the Presidency. He is trailed, day and night, by a large detail of Secret Service agents.

As Mr. Nixon's nominee for Vice President, Mr. Ford, the House Republican leader, will replace Mr. Albert in the Presidential line of succession if he is confirmed by Congress. He, too, is surrounded by large numbers of Secret Service agents.

#### Antagonists and Friends

While political antagonists throughout their years in the House, the two men are close personal friends and they confer daily — sometimes laughing and consoling one another over the tight security now surrounding them.

"I'm not jealous of him, and, obviously, he's not jealous of me," Mr. Ford said recently.

Yet, they find themselves caught up in a tangled web involving the confirmation of Mr. Ford and the possible impeachment of President Nixon.

The situation has posed deep problems for both men — politically, socially and personally.

Mr. Albert is concerned

that any undue delay in the confirmation of Mr. Ford might be viewed by the Republicans — and Americans — as an effort on his own part to capture the Presidency if Mr. Nixon resigns, dies or is impeached.

Yet, the Speaker is equally concerned that speedy action on the Ford nomination not appear to be what he calls "an act of cronyism."

"I've told Jerry, and he agrees, that it's far more important that he go into the Vice-Presidency with the country feeling comfortable about him," the Speaker said.

The cries for impeachment of the President after his dismissal of Archibald Cox, the special Watergate prosecutor, has also posed problems for the Speaker and Mr. Ford.

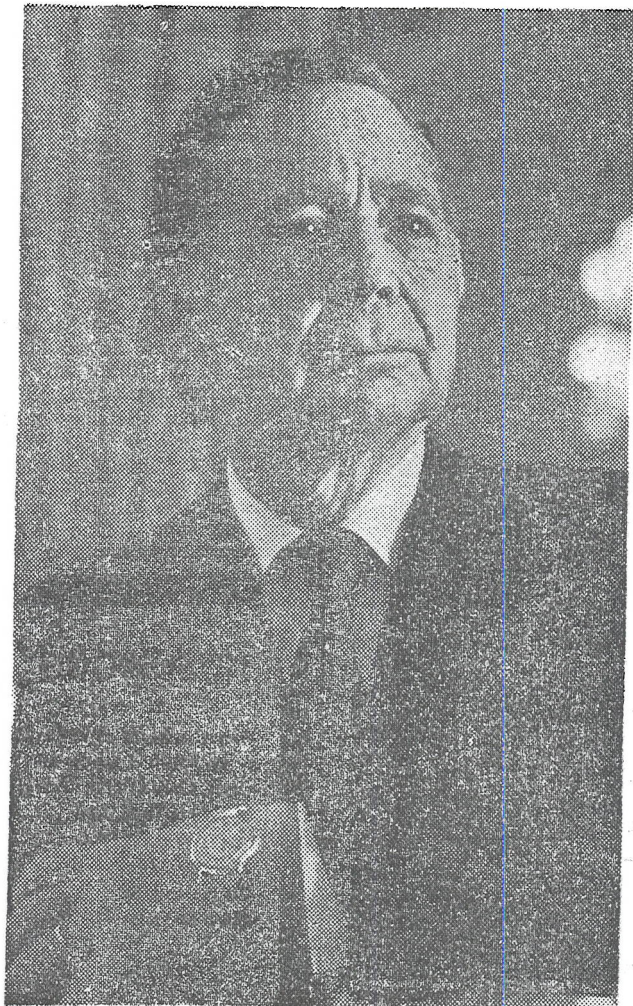
#### 'A Narrow Road'

Again, the Speaker was concerned that impeachment action might be viewed as an effort by the Democratic controlled Congress to oust a Republican President and replace him with a Democrat — in this case, the Speaker himself.

To fend off prompt impeachment proceedings, Mr. Albert endorsed a preliminary inquiry by the House Judiciary Committee into whether the President had committed impeachable offenses.

Possible impeachment of the President has proved troublesome — both personally and politically — to Mr. Ford, too. While firmly against impeaching his old friend, Mr. Nixon, Mr. Ford agreed to the inquiry in order not to antagonize those Democrats who might otherwise have held his own nomination as hostage.

"It's a kind of narrow road to follow," Mr. Ford said thoughtfully one night last week as he flew home from a Republican rally in Wisconsin. "I'm sort of torn between my inclinations and my personal desire to support the President on the



Photographs for The New York Times by GEORGE TAMES

Speaker Carl Albert, first in line of succession to the Presidency, in his Capitol office. He said, "I've geared my whole political life to the speakership."

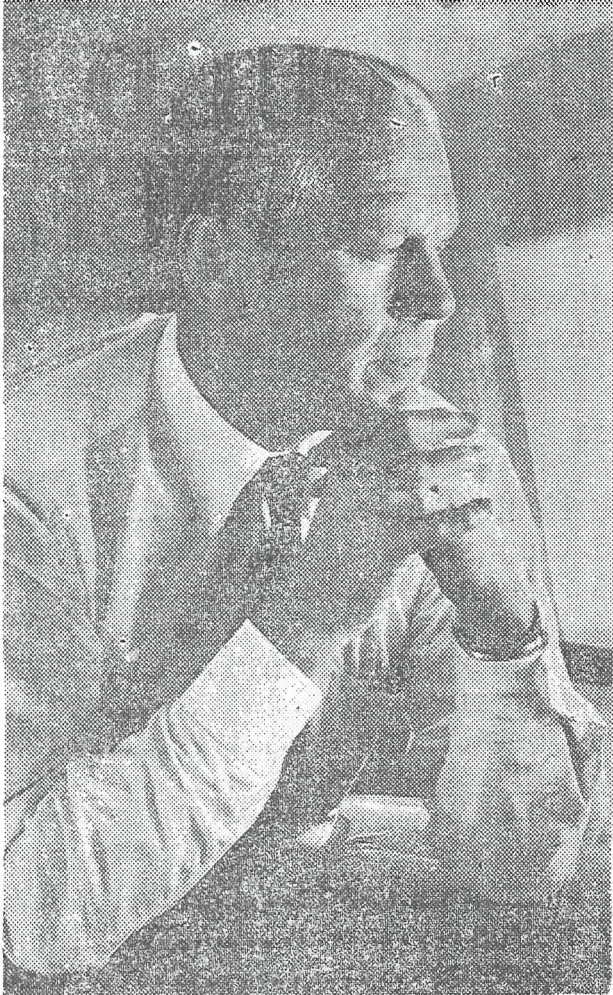
one hand, yet on the other hand not wanting to antagonize or irritate the situation between myself and some of the people in Congress on the other side of the political fence."

He said he thought that both the President and "my Democratic friends" understood his dilemma and would not "give me the devil for equivocating, which I've never done in the past."

The changes in his way of life were in evidence that night. Instead of hopping a commercial airliner, he flew to and from Wisconsin in one of the White House's smaller planes, a turbo prop.

Silhouetted against the darkening sky, as Mr. Ford arrived at a motel for a brief rest, was a uniformed policeman. Other policemen





Vice President-designate Gerald R. Ford in a White House turboprop plane on his way last Friday to a testimonial dinner in Waukesha, Wis.

and his own Secret Service agents formed a cordon through which he entered the lobby.

"I used to be a lone wolf," he observed later. "If I traveled, I traveled alone. If I were at home, I was alone with the family. If I walked around the Capitol I was alone. This is all new to me."

Four to eight Secret Service agents are stationed around the Ford home in suburban Alexandria, Va. A similar number of them guard the lobby and hallway of the Albert apartment in Washington's Embassy Row area.

#### Agents in Galleries

Agents ride with both men in their limousines; others follow in cars behind them. Agents stand guard outside their Capitol offices, follow them through the corridors, leaving them only when they enter the House chamber. And, even there, they are under the watchful eyes of agents stationed in the galleries above.

A confirmed worrier, Mr. Albert looks even more perplexed these days as crisis follows crisis. He has confided to associates that he feels that his possible succession to the Presidency would further divide a troubled nation.

Furthermore, he has no desire to be President, now or later.

"I want to stay on as Speaker," he said recently. "I've geared my whole political life to the Speakership. The House is my life."

Yet, he says that if he has to become President, "I would assume the responsibility. I'm trying to be alert and make sure I do everything I should do. I'd stick it out if I could help the country."

Despite the turmoil of the past weeks, he says: "I sleep better than I ever did in my life. Why sometimes I go to bed at 9:30 and sleep like a baby."

Mr. Ford, too, disclaims any ambition to be President, saying "I really would not like to be. I wasn't even anxious to be the Vice-Presidential nominee." Furthermore, he believes that Mr. Nixon will serve out his term.

He insists that the present turmoil, while troublesome, has not caused him any loss of sleep.

"I've always been able when I go to bed to forget my troubles of the past day and not worry about the ones that are coming up the following day," he said. "I sleep well, I go to sleep quickly, and I sleep soundly and get up feeling real well."

#### 'The Most Unique'

He admits that he can't help but wonder, from time to time, "what one's fate might be under the most unusual circumstances." He said that both he and the Speaker "wonder what would happen if something totally unexpected transpired. The situation could even become more unusual."

Asked in what way, he replied: "Well, it's even hard to write a script so I just don't think I should, but it is the most unique situation in the history of the United States."

Mr. Ford brushes aside the comments of critics that he is an unimaginative plodder and hardly Presidential timber.

"Oh, I've read all those comments and I don't deny that I'm a hard worker, that I don't have a lot of the so-called charisma that others have, but I never had any different style, whether it was in school, or in athletics, or in politics.

"I've always felt if you did a job, that if you were in the right place at the right time, you might get recognized."

Then he grinned and added: "I guess I was in the right place."