

Ford's Role as President Assessed

By Jack Anderson

What kind of President would Gerald Ford make? This is a question we are often asked, as the impeachment of President Nixon becomes more likely.

Ford would not be the brightest President to occupy the oval office, but he would be one of the most decent. There is nothing suave or subtle about him. He would bring an openness and a guilelessness to the White House. He could be trusted.

He would not have as keen a grasp of the paperwork of the presidency as Richard Nixon has. But probably more important, Ford would have a better feel for the human undercurrents.

There is also an all-American quality about him. He has the common touch of Harry Truman, the easy manner and engaging sincerity of Dwight Eisenhower.

Under Gerald Ford, the Oval Office would no longer be a storm cellar where the President is constantly engaged in plotting strategy to strike back at innumerable "enemies."

When an aide brought Ford the first news from a UPI ticker that the White House kept an "enemies list," Ford shook his head in disbelief. "If you have so many enemies you have to keep a list," he remarked, "you are in trouble."

He would bring integrity to the White House. He has always

refused to accept cash campaign contributions. He has insisted upon checks, which can be properly recorded.

He would be a partisan President, who would attend to his political chores. But he would be able to work in harness with Democratic leaders. As House Republican leader, he had a close working relationship with the Democrats, particularly Speakers John McCormack and Carl Albert.

Incidentally, the Vice President took the time in Boston the other day to place a quiet, kindly phone call to the ancient and lonely McCormack.

Watergate politics have put Ford in a squeeze. He gave President Nixon a pledge of loyalty before accepting the vice presidency.

But he also promised party leaders that he would spearhead the campaign for Republican candidates this year. They needed a leader whom Republicans could rally around. For the President has become a millstone around the neck of the GOP.

Ford, true to his pledge of loyalty, has tried to defend the President. Yet at the same time, he has sought to divorce the party from Watergate.

The President, according to our White House sources, has suggested to Ford that he tone down his criticism of the way the White House has handled

Watergate. The Vice President, in response, has tried to support the President, without completely swallowing the White House line.

Gerald Ford would not be a spectacular President. His style would be Grand Rapids, not Camelot. But he has the warm attributes, which would allow him to sit comfortably on the cold pedestal of power.

The Forgotten Sergeant — The Army's slick new advertising campaign, promising enlistees they'll be treated "with respect and dignity," doesn't mention what happened to Sgt. Charles Anthony.

He's a 14-year Army veteran with a wife and eight young children. His wife is seriously ill, and one of the children has a critical heart ailment.

He received a routine transfer from Ft. Gordon, Ga., to Ft. Belvoir, Va. He didn't balk at the orders until the condition of both his wife and child grew worse. The doctors said they couldn't be moved.

So Sgt. Anthony asked the Army's Compassionate Review Board to let him stay at Ft. Gordon. But the board, its name notwithstanding, was lacking in compassion. Despite letters of support from doctors at Ft. Gordon, the sergeant was turned down.

He was ordered to report to Ft. Belvoir or take a hardship discharge that would cost him

his retirement benefits. Woe-fully, he obeyed the orders and traveled the lonely 600 miles to Ft. Belvoir.

Still, he believed the Army he had loyally served would realize its mistake and send him back to his family. Instead, he was informed flatly that he was there to stay.

Dr. Peter Cranston of Augusta, Ga., the psychologist who attended the sergeant's wife, told us he warned the Compassionate Review Board that she might attempt suicide if her husband was forced to leave.

The Board wouldn't listen, and Mrs. Anthony attempted to take an overdose of sleeping pills just as the doctor had feared. Fortunately, she was stopped in time.

But the sergeant, alone and despondent 600 miles from the family who needed him, suffered an emotional breakdown. As we write this, he is hospitalized at the Army's Walter Reed Hospital in Washington.

Footnote: When we made inquiries at the Compassionate Review Board, we heard a loud voice in the background shout: "Don't answer that!" But later the board explained that Anthony was assigned to Ft. Belvoir because of job openings and the nearness of Walter Reed.

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