

Mrs. Ford Sees Designer Instead of Doctor

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Aug. 8— At 3 P.M. today the Secret Service ordered a roadblock placed on Crown View Drive, a quiet suburban street in Alexandria, Va., where Vice President Ford lives.

But Mrs. Ford's secretary, Nancy Howe, who was beckoned out of the Fords' modest brick home into the rain several times today by reporters standing on the sidewalk, insisted that "it's just a normal day" in the home of Gerald R. Ford.

The neighbors, however, didn't seem to think it was an ordinary day as they gathered in the street to watch television crews mount their equipment on the sidewalk, telephone installers rig wires across the street, and policemen rope off a band of soggy reporters from the Ford house.

Late this afternoon, Mrs. Ford, sheltered by a black umbrella held by the family chauffeur, strolled out onto her front sidewalk to wave to the cameras. She had little to say.

"How do you feel about being First Lady?" a reporter asked prematurely.

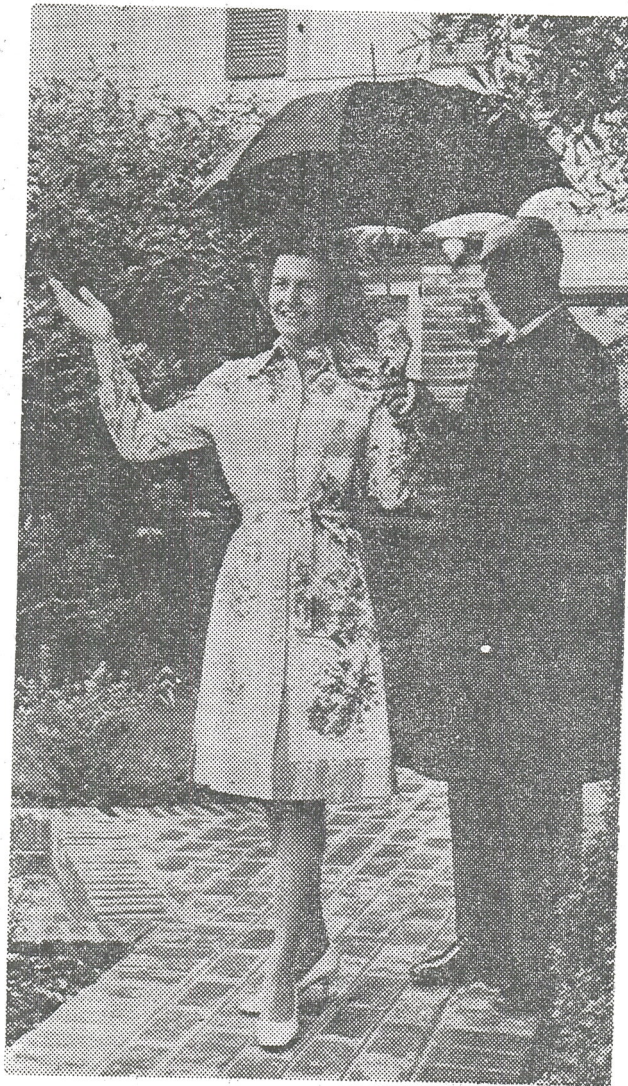
Mrs. Ford, looking startled, ignored the question by smiling and saying, "Really good to see you."

"Have you heard from your husband?" another reporter asked from under the pin oak on the lawn.

"No, I haven't," she said, shaking her head. She denied having received any word on the President's decision.

The day was obviously not as ordinary as Mrs. Howe said it was. Mrs. Ford, instead of keeping an appointment with a foot doctor, invited a local designer, Frankie Welch, to her home.

Mrs. Welch said Mrs. Ford had not chosen a dress for any swearing-in ceremony.



The New York Times/George James
Mrs. Gerald R. Ford, escorted by the family's chauffeur, outside her home in Alexandria, Va., yesterday.

"We were just fitting some things," she said.

"You know Betty Ford is so calm and cool always," said Mrs. Welch, when asked to describe Mrs. Ford's mood.

Mrs. Ford was receiving all her information on the day's developments from friends who telephoned, Mrs. Welch said.

The two Ford children who

live at home seemed nonchalant.

Susan Ford, a blond 17-year-old, donned her levis and went shopping with a friend and a Secret Service agent. When Steven Ford, 19, arrived home in his yellow jeep after a day's labor mowing grass for the Park Service, he displayed no surprise when he heard of the President's move.

Asked about his plans for the evening, Steven brushed his dirty trousers and said, "Tonight I'll probably write a letter to Duke University and tell them I won't be coming for freshman year."

He explained that he was not planning to spend his time in the White House. He wants to spend a year cattle-ranching in Montana.

Then he left with his friends Kevin Kennedy and Daniel McManus to listen to Led Zeppelin recordings on his stereo.

Another of the Ford children, Michael 24, left early this morning to return to Massachusetts where his is a second-year student at the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Late in the afternoon, Mrs. Ford's secretary said that the Fords' 22-year-old son Jack, a Ranger for the summer at Yellowstone National Park, was flying home.

"I don't know why he's coming home," said the secretary.

Around dinnertime, it was announced that Mrs. Ford was off to do some "publicity work for one of the churches in town," and her chauffeur whisked her away in a Lincoln Continental.

Her secretary said that, while she did not know for sure, she expected Mrs. Ford home in time to watch television with her husband as the President delivered his 9 P.M. address.

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