

Ford Becomes 38th President, Promises Openness and Candor

By Jules Witcover
Washington Post Staff Writer

Gerald Rudolph Ford Jr. took the oath of office as 38th President of the United States at noon yesterday and assured a nation torn by the ravages of the Watergate scandal that "our long national nightmare is over."

Mr. Ford, alluding to the fact that he thus became the first American President not elected to national office by the people, asked them "to confirm me as your President with your prayers" and pledged "that I will be the President of all the people."

In a conciliatory address he labeled "just a little straight talk among friends," the new President asked that "as we bind up the internal wounds of Watergate, more painful and more poisonous than those of foreign wars, let us restore the Golden Rule to our political proc-

Warren E. Burger, dressed in black judicial robes, administered the oath as Mr. Ford placed his left hand on a Bible held by his wife, Betty.

"I do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of the President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States, so help me God."

Then he turned and kissed Mrs. Ford on both cheeks and stood, his arm around her, acknowledging the applause of the audience, which included former Speaker John W. McCormack, Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield, and many other senators and congressmen, and one figure prominent in the Watergate scandal, Rose Mary Woods, President Nixon's personal secretary.

After taking the oath, Mr. Ford pledged "an uninterrupted and sincere search for peace" and a policy of

ess, and let brotherly love purge our hearts of suspicion and hate."

In asking for the nation's prayers, he requested them as well for the departing President, Richard M. Nixon, and his family, who were flying to their San Clemente, Calif., home aboard the Spirit of '76 as Mr. Ford spoke.

"May our former President, who brought peace to millions, find it for himself," Mr. Ford said, speaking emotionally, his voice cracking at one point. "May God bless and comfort his wonderful wife and daughters whose love and loyalty will forever be a shining legacy to all who bear the lonely burdens of the White House."

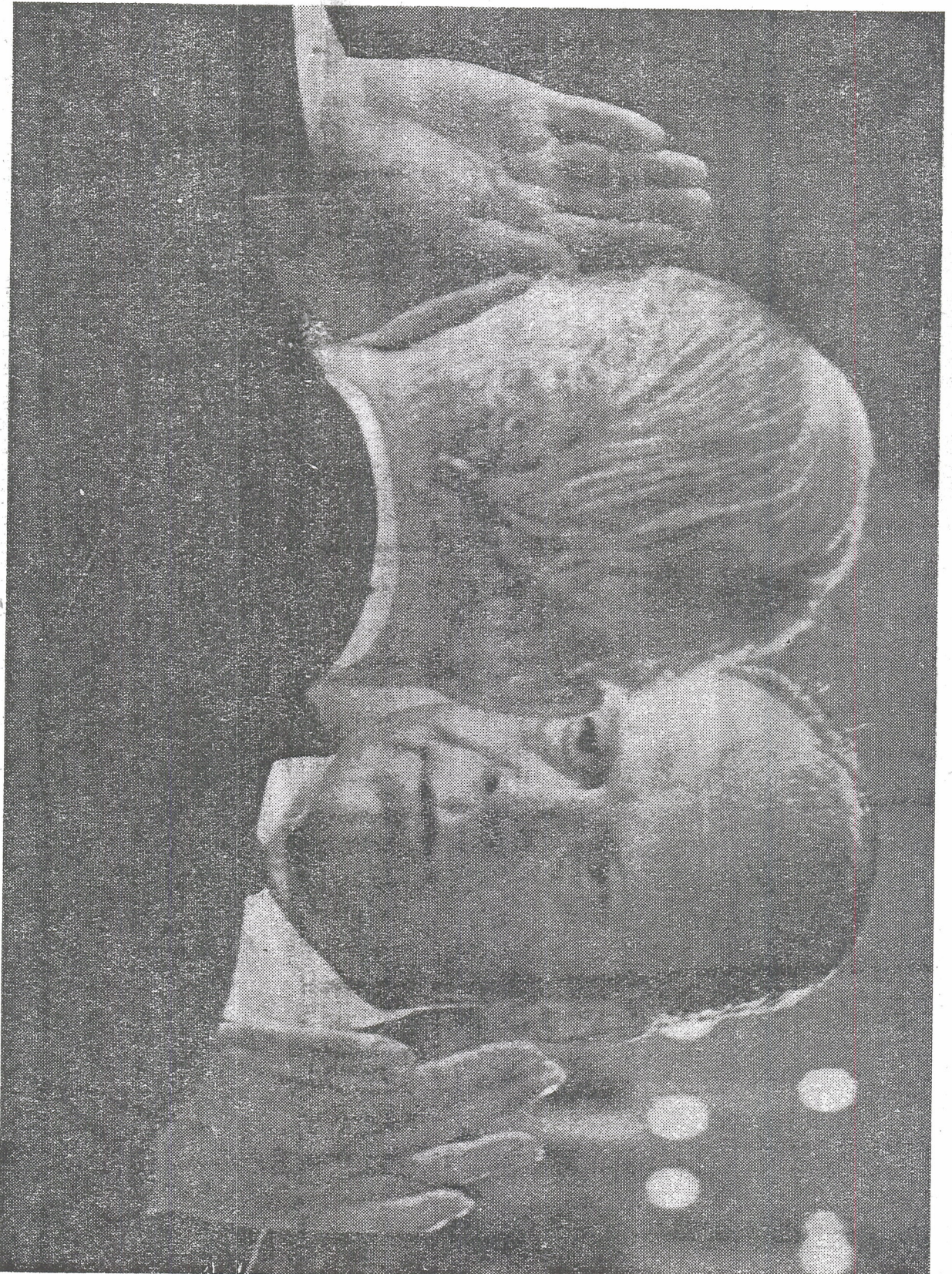
The new President was sworn into office in the East Room of the White House at noon, when the resignation of Mr. Nixon, the ultimate political casualty of Watergate, was to take effect. The Chief Justice of the United States,

"openness and candor" in dealing with the American people.

"I believe that truth is the glue that holds government together, and not only government but civilization itself," he said. "That bond, though strained, is unbroken at home and abroad. In all my public and private acts as your President, I expect to follow my instincts of openness and candor with full confidence that honesty is always the best policy in the end."

Ford said he was making "an unprecedented compact with my countrymen" to engage in "straight talk," especially because he was "aware that you have not elected me as your President by your ballots"—a reference to his selection as Vice President by Mr. Nixon under the 25th

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Chief Justice Warren E. Burger administers presidential oath of office to Gerald R. Ford in the East Room of the White House.

By Frank Johnston—The Washington Post

PRESIDENT, From A1

Amendment last October, when Spiro T. Agnew resigned in disgrace.

"If you have not chosen me by secret ballot," he told a packed room of government leaders, White House staff, and the nation of television viewers beyond, "neither have I gained office by secret promises. I have not campaigned either for the presidency or the vice presidency. I have not subscribed to any partisan platform, I am indebted to no man and to only one woman—my dear wife, Betty—as I begin the most difficult job in the world."

Mr. Ford said, "I have not sought this enormous responsibility, but I will not shirk it." Referring to Mr. Nixon's trials, he said, "I can only guess at those burdens, although I have witnessed at close hand the tragedies that befell three Presidents and the lesser trials of others."

He pledged to "uphold the Constitution, to do what is right as God gives me to see the right, and to do the very best I can for America. God helping me, I will not let you down."

As a demonstration of his determination to cooperate with Congress, Mr. Ford said he would ask Speaker of the House Carl Albert (D-Okla.) and Senate President pro tempore James O. Eastland (D-Miss.), who were in the audience, for permission to address a joint session of Congress on Monday.

The speech drew a warm response from both parties in Congress. Senators and representatives later used such words as "magnificent," "superb," "eloquent" and "reassuring" to describe it.

After a reception in the State Dining Room for Cabinet members and their wives, other government leaders and the White House staff, the new President met briefly with the congressional leaders to arrange the joint session. He is to speak Monday at 9 p.m. EDT.

Less than an hour after he became President, Mr. Ford came down to the press briefing room in the West Wing of the White House and personally introduced his new press secretary—Jerald F. terHorst, Washington Bureau chief of the Detroit News since 1961.

terHorst, 52, like Mr. Ford, is from Grand Rapids, Mich., and was a reporter on the Grand Rapids Press when Mr. Ford began his political career 26 years ago. The President credited him with having a role in his first political success when terHorst "connived to help me get a little extra space" in the local paper, and they have been friends ever since. TerHorst was writing a biography of Mr. Ford when he was asked to take the job of press secretary.

The President also announced that Paul Miltich, his press secretary as vice president, and Bill Roberts, Miltich's deputy, would serve under terHorst.

Mr. Ford, in his press briefing room appearance, kidded the assembled reporters about the fact that the room had been built over the old White House swimming pool, by order of Mr. Nixon. He reminded them of "my great interest in aquatic activities" and hinted he might reclaim the pool. Later, terHorst confirmed that Mr. Ford was only kidding.

The President promised that "we will have an open, we will have a candid administration. I can't change my nature after 61 years. So, all I can say is thank you for your kindnesses in the past, your reporting, good and bad, mistakes and maybe a few pluses, and I say again, good luck to you, and thanks for the opportunity of seeing you this morning."

terHorst held his first-briefing two hours later and reported that Mr. Ford had appointed a four-man team to make recommendations to him on the transition, including White House staffing.

The four are former Gov. William W. Scranton of Pennsylvania, Secretary of Interior Rogers C. B. Morton, U.S. Ambassador to NATO Donald Rumsfeld and former Democratic Rep. John O. Marsh of Virginia, who was Mr. Ford's defense specialist on his vice presidential staff. The President met with the group for the first time late yesterday afternoon.

terHorst said Mr. Ford considered the nomination of a Vice President to fill the vacancy created by his own elevation his first major order of business and hoped to have a name to submit "in a week or 10 days."

The new press secretary also announced the appointment as counselor to the President of Robert T. Hart-

mann, 52, who had been Mr. Ford's chief of staff as Vice-President.

He said Mr. Ford met with senior staff aides of the Nixon White House for about 20 minutes after the swearing-in ceremony and expressed the hope "many of them would stay on to assist him in his transition period."

Alexander M. Haig Jr., Mr. Nixon's chief of staff, speaking for the staff, pledged that they would do so, and that "the same loyalty that was given President Nixon would now be President Ford's," terHorst reported.

During his first afternoon in the Oval Office, President Ford also met with his chief economic advisers and with a number of ambassadors.

In the meeting on economic policy, terHorst said, Mr. Ford emphasized that the problem of inflation was to be approached "as a high and first priority" of his administration.

The terHorst briefing also surfaced questions about Watergate-related matters. The press secretary confirmed that Watergate Special Prosecutor Leon Jaworski would stay on, as would Mr. Nixon's Watergate defense lawyer, James D. St. Clair, for a time.

terHorst said all subpoenaed White House tape recordings and other materials remained in the White House, under Mr. Ford's jurisdiction. Asked if conversations would be taped under the new administration, he replied: "No, tapes will not be used in the Ford administration."

In response to questions, he said Mr. Nixon had not pardoned himself or granted clemency or immunity to himself or anyone else involved in Watergate before having left office, nor had Mr. Ford since taking over.

The new President spent last night in his Alexandria home, and he and the family will not move into the White House resident quarters until after the weekend, terHorst said.

Mr. Ford is to meet with the Cabinet, all of whom are staying on, at 10 a.m. today. More staff appointments possibly may be made over the weekend, the press secretary said.

The day's first public glimpse of the new President came at about 6 a.m. when Mr. Ford appeared in a bath-



United Press International

Ford meets reporters to introduce new press secretary.

robe at the doorway of his two-story red-brick and white-frame house in Alexandria, picked up The Washington Post with its banner headline, "Nixon Resigns," and went back inside.

His son, Stephen, came out about a half-hour later and reported that his father had called him at 6 a.m., then made his own breakfast.

Two early callers were former Republican Rep. John Byrnes of Wisconsin, an old colleague and friend, and Philip Buchen, a law partner of Mr. Ford's brought to Washington by the Vice President to be executive director of a presidential commission on the right of privacy—an area of responsibility given to Mr. Ford by President Nixon.

At about 7:50 a.m., Mr. Ford came out the front door and headed for the black limousine in his driveway. But he then acceded to reporters' urgings and walked into the street to take some questions before television cameras assembled across the way.

He carried a black briefcase and a large manila envelope but turned them over to an aide before approaching the reporters, smiling and at ease.

He said Byrnes and Buchen had been "acting on my behalf for the last 48 hours as an outside transition group" to give him "some recommendations on certain activities, certain responsibilities."

Mr. Ford said he thought his old friends "could look in from the outside and perhaps give some sound advice that we on the inside might not see as we're kept pretty busy during the day." The results of the recommendations, he said, will be seen "in the next day or so."

Ford said he had had about 4 hours and 15 minutes of sleep and greeted the momentous day with "a feeling of sadness on the one hand and expectation to start to build on the other."

Taking over the presidency, he said, "does strike me as a terribly heavy responsibility which I'm going to try to work on and do our very best." He spoke with some solemnity, and admitted, "you can't help feeling" the awesomeness of the burden he was about to assume.

Reminded that President Harry S. Truman, who also had ascended to the presidency from the vice presidency,

had said he felt as if the sun, moon and stars had fallen on him, Mr. Ford replied:

"I think that's a very apt description, and I can tell you better after noon, when it actually happens."

Asked about his selection of a Vice President, which he must make under the 25th amendment first used by Mr. Nixon last year in selecting him, Mr. Ford said, "We're going to do it as quickly as we can in a thorough and I hope responsible way."

He said Mr. Nixon had told him of his final decision to resign at the meeting they held in the Oval Office late Thursday morning, but that Alexander M. Haig Jr., the White House chief of staff, had told him a day earlier it was a possibility.

Reminded that his wife, Betty, had wanted him to get out of public office, Mr. Ford seemed in his response to opening the door to running for a presidential term of his own in 1976. "She's just doing her best," he said, "and we'll wait and see about the other."

Mr. Ford arrived at the Vice President's office in the Executive Office Building at about 8:15 a.m. and met for nearly an hour with Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger for a review of the foreign policy situation facing the country during the transition.

Then he went to the South Lawn of the White House, along with Mrs. Ford, and escorted departing President Nixon and Mrs. Nixon to a waiting U.S. Marine Corps helicopter for their hop to Andrews Air Force Base and then to San Clemente, after Mr. Nixon said goodby to his staff.

Mr. Ford kissed Mrs. Nixon and shook hands with Mr. Nixon, and Mrs. Ford embraced both the Nixons. Then the Fords stepped back on the red carpet rolled down to the helicopter and stood with David and Julie Eisenhower, the Nixons' son-in-law and daughter, and waved as the helicopter lifted off, turned and flew around the Washington Monument and out of sight.

Then Gerald Ford, still Vice President for two more hours, turned with his wife and walked into the White House to prepare to take the oath of office, and the responsibilities that Richard Nixon would soon lay down.

Speaking in the East Room of the White House after being sworn in as 38th President of the United States by Chief Justice Warren E. Burger, seated right, Ford gives inaugural address.

By James K. W. Aherton—The Washington Post

