

A Plea to Bind Up Watergate Wounds

By MARJORIE HUNTER
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Aug. 9—Gerald Rudolph Ford became the 38th President of the United States today, declaring that "our long national nightmare is over."

Calling upon the nation to "bind up the internal wounds of Watergate," he said, "Our Constitution works. Our great republic is a government of laws and not men. Here the people rule."

And then, his voice filled with emotion, he urged the nation to pray for his predecessor

The text of Ford's address will be found on Page 3.

and friend of a quarter century, Richard Milhous Nixon.

"May our former President, who brought peace to millions, find it for himself," he said.

Mr. Ford assumed the powers of the Presidency at 11:35 A.M., the moment that Mr. Nixon's letter of resignation was handed to Secretary of State Kissinger.

Then, at 12:03 P.M., he was administered the oath of office in the historic East Room of the White House by Chief Justice Warren E. Burger before an overflow crowd of friends, the Cabinet and former Congressional colleagues from both parties.

Wife Holds Bible

It was in that same room, scarcely two hours earlier, that Mr. Nixon said an emotional good-by to his Cabinet and top aides.

Raising his right hand, Mr. Ford rested his left hand on a Bible held by his wife and opened to one of his favorite passages, the fifth and sixth verses of the third chapter of Proverbs: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."

Then, in a firm voice, he took the oath of office: "I, Gerald R. Ford, do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States and will do the best of my ability to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."

As the heavy applause ended, the 61-year-old President began perhaps the most moving speech of his career. Speaking in his flat middle-western tone, but with what appeared to be a new sense of self-assurance, he said that he was assuming the Presidency under circumstances never before experienced by Americans.

Minds Are Troubled

"This is an hour of history that troubles our minds and hurts our hearts," he said.

"Therefore," he continued, "I feel it is my first duty to make an unprecedented compact with my countrymen. Not an inaugural address, not a fireside chat, not a campaign speech. Just a little straight talk among friends. I intend it to be the first of many."

As the first American to assume the office after the resignation of a President, Mr. Ford said that he was "acutely aware that you have not elected me as your President by your ballots."

"So I ask you to confirm me as your President with your prayers," he added.

He declared that he had not gained office by secret promises, that he had not campaigned either for the Presidency or the Vice-Presidency.

"I have not subscribed to any partisan platform," he said. "I am indebted to no man and only to one woman—my dear wife, Betty—as I begin the most difficult job in the world."

This was reminiscent of his earlier "I am my own man," a declaration that he repeated frequently in recent months as he sought to remain loyal to Mr. Nixon and at the same time hold himself above the spreading taint of the Watergate affair.

He said that while he had not sought the responsibility, he would not shirk it. He said that those who nominated him and confirmed him just eight months ago as Vice President were his friends from both

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parties.

"It is only fitting then that I should pledge to them and to you that I will be the President of all the people," he said.

He said that he would address a joint session of Congress Monday night "to share with my former colleagues and with you, the American people, my views on the priority business of the nation and to solicit your views and theirs."

The joint session, it was disclosed later, will begin at 9 P.M. Monday.

Search for Peace

Seeking to reassure the nation and the world that the United States had not been permanently damaged by the events of recent days, the new President pledged an uninterrupted and sincere search for

peace.

"America will remain strong and united," he said, "but its strength will remain dedicated to the safety and sanity of the entire family of man as well as to our own precious freedom."

Repeating words that he first used in his confirmation hearings for Vice President last fall, Mr. Ford said:

"I believe that truth is the glue that holds government together, and not only government, but civilization as well. That bond, though strained, is unbroken at home and abroad."

He pledged candor in all his public and private acts as President and then, with simple eloquence, spoke the words that Americans had once despaired of ever hearing:

"My fellow Americans, our long national nightmare is over."

In his only direct reference to Watergate, the new President said:

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

Asking for the nation's prayers for the Nixon family, he spoke feelingly of Mr. Nixon's wife and daughters



The New York Times
J. F. terHorst as he was introduced in the White House Press Room by President Ford as new press secretary.

"whose love and loyalty will forever be a shining legacy to all who bear the lonely burdens of the White House."

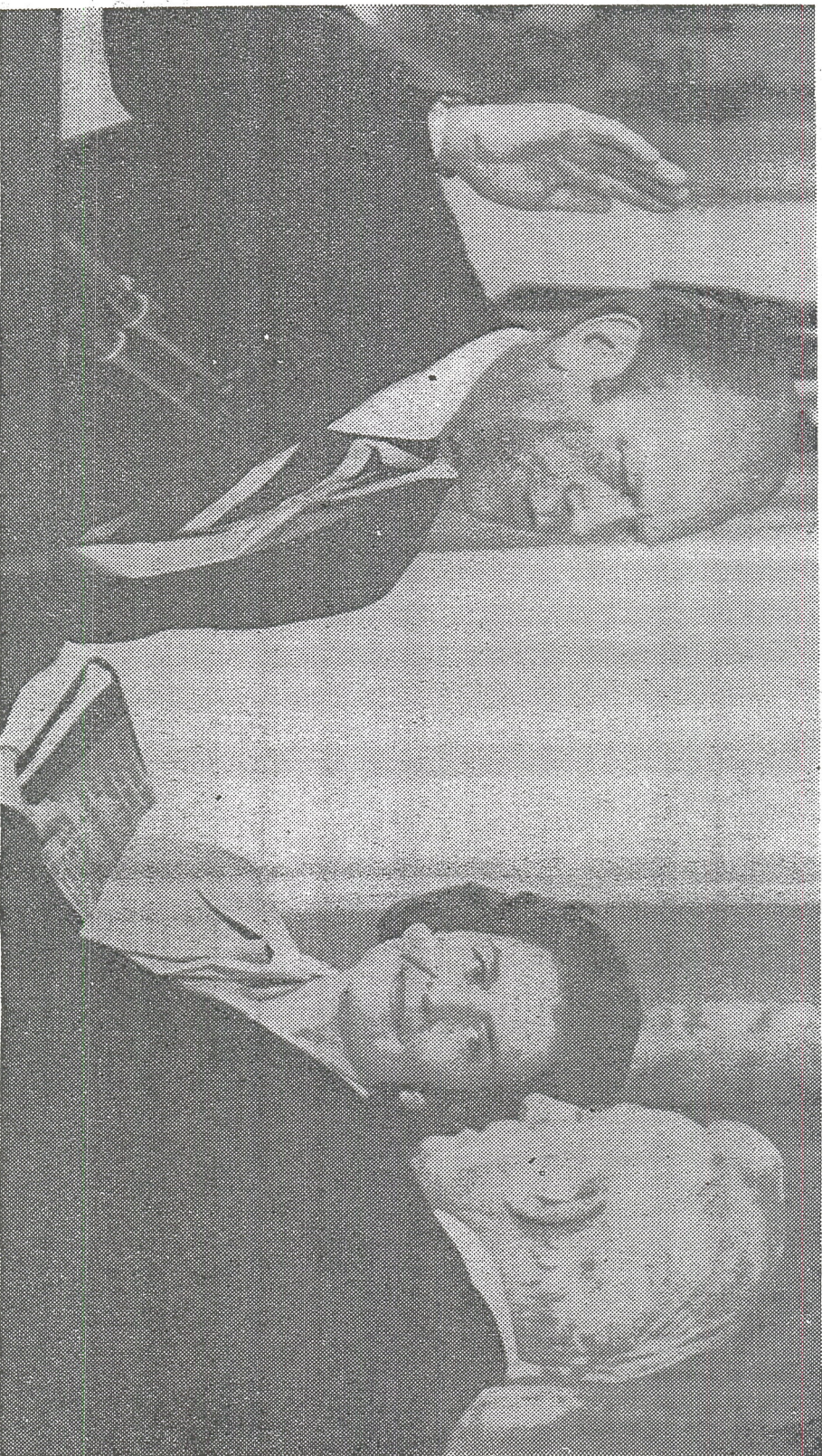
"I can only guess at those burdens," he continued, "although I have witnessed at close hand the tragedies that befell three Presidents and the lesser trials of others."

As he spoke his final words—"God helping me, I will not let you down"—the several hundred persons present gave him a standing ovation.

Plans for the simple inauguration were coordinated by Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr., who was Mr. Nixon's chief of staff.

General Haig, accompanied by Mr. Nixon's longtime personal secretary, Rose Mary Woods, sat with members of Mr. Ford's Vice-Presidential staff during the ceremony.

The guest list, compiled



Gerald R. Ford takes the Presidential oath, administered by Chief Justice Warren E. Burger. Mrs. Ford attends the White House ceremony.

Associated Press

largely by Mr. and Mrs. Ford, reflected the new President's popularity among democrats as well as members of his own party.

It was predominantly a Congressional assembly, a gathering of those to whom Mr. Ford felt closest during his long years in the House.

Former Speaker John W. McCormack, a Democrat, came down from Boston and was warmly greeted upon his entrance into the room by two friendly adversaries, Melvin R. Laird and John W. Byrnes, both former Republican members of the House.

House Speaker Carl Albert of Oklahoma, a Democrat, arrived with a newly acquired Secret Service escort. Again, as he did 10 months ago after Spiro T. Agnew resigned as Vice President, Mr. Albert Presidency until Mr. Ford selects and Congress confirms a new Vice President.

Rises About Dawn

Among others in the gathering were several who have been mentioned as possible Vice-Presidential choices. They included George Bush, chairman of the Republican National Committee, and Representative John B. Anderson of Illinois, the third-ranking Republican leader in the House.

Mr. Ford showed little of the strain of the last few days as he arrived for his inauguration. He wore a navy blue suit and a red, white and blue necktie. He rose about dawn today, after only a few hours' sleep, and wearing a robe, retrieved the morning newspaper emblazoned with black headlines, "Nixon Resigns"—from his front steps.

While the rest of the family slept, he prepared breakfast for himself and his youngest son, 18-year-old Steve, then conferred for nearly an hour at home with two of his close advisers, Mr. Byrnes and Philip W. Buchen of Grand Rapids, his former law partner.

Later, on the White House lawn, he bade an emotional farewell to his old friend, Mr. Nixon. The two men embraced just before Mr. Nixon stepped aboard a waiting helicopter.

Aides to the President said late today that it would be at least several days before the Fords moved into the White House.



Members of President Ford's family at the inauguration. From the left: John, 22; Steven, 18; Michael, 24, and his wife, Gayle; Susan, 17, and Gardner Britti, her boyfriend. They did not return home to eat lunch until 3 o'clock.

United Press International



President and Mrs. Ford in the East Room of the White House. Mrs. Ford wore a blue knit dress.

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