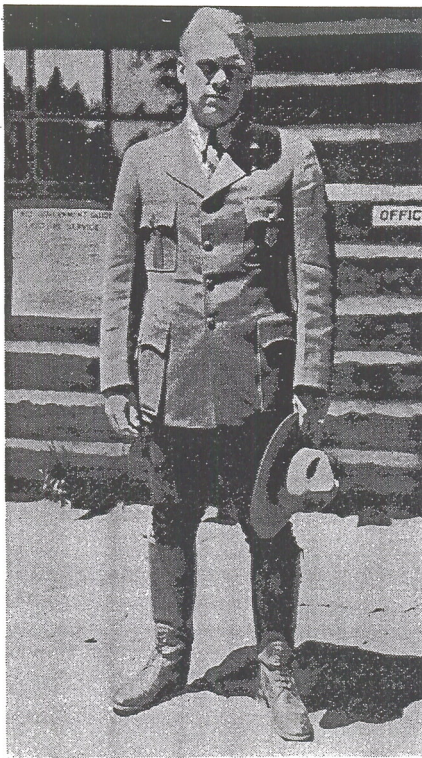




FORD AT AGE TWO (ABOVE), AS A RANGER (RIGHT)



WITH BETTY AT THEIR WEDDING

THE NEW PRESIDENT

A MAN FOR THIS SEASON

"It's the quality of the ordinary, the straight, the square that accounts for the great stability and success of our nation. It's a quality to be proud of. But it's a quality that many people seem to have neglected."

—Gerald R. Ford, Jan. 28, 1974

The 38th President has not neglected that quality. To be called a square or a straight is not exactly a compliment in some circles, where the words imply a certain woodenness and an unadventurous approach to life. But they suggest something more as well: loyalty, honesty, diligence, patience, a fear of the Lord and what the ancient Romans used to call *pietas*. Gerald Rudolph Ford has all these qualities.

Another question, which remains to be answered, is whether Ford offers anything more for the most burdensome office in the world. In a cutting commentary on the new President's intelligence, Lyndon Johnson once suggested that Ford had played football too long without a helmet, and could not chew gum and walk at the same time. Ford's executive abilities have yet to be tested, but there is little reason to doubt his political and legislative acumen. For nearly a quarter of a century, he has dem-

onstrated his skills in one of the most complex parliamentary arenas on earth, winning the respect of adversaries and allies alike even as he played the role of a loyal partisan. In a sense, he was not Richard Nixon's choice for President. He was the selection of Congress and it has to be assumed that the House and Senate knew their man.

Congressional Ethic

Gerald Ford likes to call himself a child of Congress; he loves the place, and the affection is returned. He subscribes to what can be called the congressional ethic: a tolerance of differing views, a desire to accommodate, a sense that at the heart of government lies the right to disagree and to have that disagreement voiced and voted. Although he has been a major political figure for many years, Ford has a minor ego that does not get in the way of his politics. Like most men of action, he has a temper, but the bouts pass quickly. He does not indulge lasting grudges; an enemies list would be unthinkable to him. "I have had lots of adversaries," he says, "but no enemies that I can remember."

Ford reaches the presidency with a record somewhat right of center. His

views reflect his solidly conservative Michigan district, but he now represents a far broader, more diverse constituency. Can he make the shift—and how hard will he try? His supporters are convinced that his temperament will permit it. Says a close associate: "He may not be the man for all seasons, but he is the man for this season."

The new President has sometimes been compared to the furniture that used to be produced in such abundance in his Michigan home town, Grand Rapids: durable, dependable and easy to live with. Gerald Ford is Middle America. His roots reach deeply, tenaciously into the thrifty, hard-toiling community of Grand Rapids—though he was not in fact born there. His birthplace was Omaha, where his mother Dorothy lived with her first husband, Leslie King, a wool trader. Ford was christened Leslie King Jr. Two years later, the marriage broke up, and mother and child returned to Grand Rapids. In 1916, Dorothy married Gerald R. Ford, a paint salesman, who adopted young Leslie and gave the boy his name—as well as his penchant for hard work, athletics and community involvement. He also instructed his stepson in a certain humility. Remember, he told the boy, someone else can always do the job better than you. The elder Ford, who died in 1962, never prospered as a businessman but established a reputation for character and good works. Says Jerry's half brother Richard:* "Being his son meant a lot in Grand Rapids in those days."

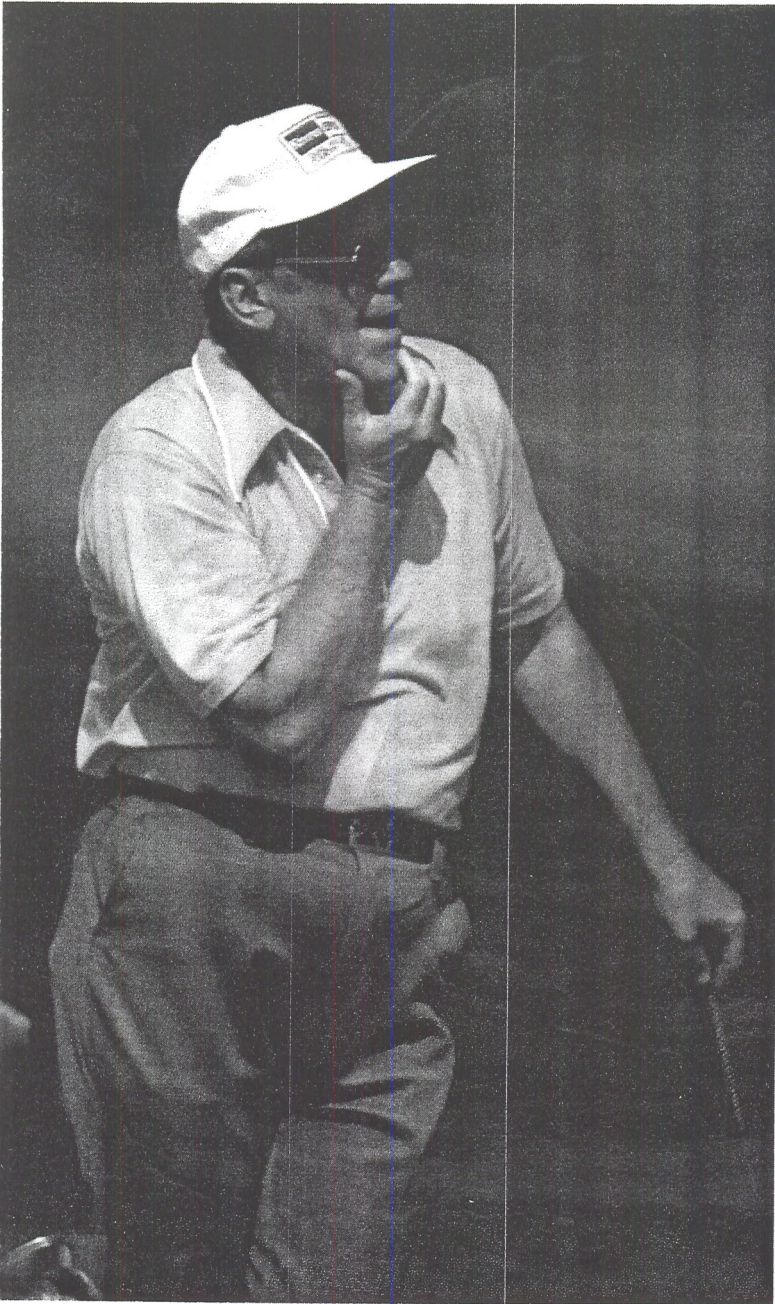
During the Depression, life teetered on the edge of discomfort for the Fords. As a high school student, Jerry had to wait on tables to supplement the family

*Ford has three half brothers. Thomas, 56, is a staff analyst for the Michigan legislature. Richard, 50, manages the family paint store in Grand Rapids. James, 47, is an optometrist in that city.

The sporting Ford: swimming in his pool in Alexandria, skiing at Vail, golfing at Quail Hollow Country Club in Charlotte, N.C.



JAMES DRAKE—SPORTS ILLUSTRATED



The First Family's First Days

The day before the presidential inauguration last week, Betty Ford met with a fashion designer; nonetheless, she quickly dismissed the idea of buying a new dress for the occasion. The new First Lady decided instead that a sky-blue outfit already in her closet would serve just as well. When Ford's eldest sons Jack and Mike, accompanied by Mike's new wife Gayle, were about to enter the White House grounds to attend the swearing-in ceremony, a guard stopped them and demanded that they show him some identification. Taken aback, they simply looked at one another in dismay. Finally, the Fords' longtime family chauffeur, Richard Frazier, stepped up and told the guard, "These are the President's kids." They were immediately let in.

Both episodes provide something of a clue to the unassuming, uninsistent style of the Fords. They also help to explain why the First Lady says that the Fords are simply "a normal American family." They will shortly move into the White House, but their neighbors of 15 years marveled at their calm. At the height of last week's disruption of her household, Betty Ford, pointing to a prayer book she held in her hand, told a visitor, "This is what helps me to get through it all."

Close-knit and wise in the ways of the capital, they took last week's events in stride. Although Washington was swept by rumors that her husband might soon become President, Betty Ford relaxed over tea, answered letters, and played with a neighbor's child at their four-bedroom home in Alexandria, Va. Daughter Susan, 17, went off to a nearby secretarial school; she is taking a typing class there in preparation for the fall term at Holton-Arms School in Bethesda, Md., which she attended as a boarding student last year. Steve, 18, came home from the last day of his summer grass-cutting job to find reporters camped on the front steps. They were the first to tell him that Nixon's televised resignation announcement was imminent.

Meanwhile, Jack, 22, was working at his summer job as a forest ranger in Yellowstone National Park when he was quietly summoned home by his mother. Mike, 24, and Gayle, 23, who were married only last month, had just arrived at their home in Beverly, Mass., prior to his resuming his studies this fall at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in nearby South Hamilton. Mrs. Ford reached Mike by telephone to notify him of his father's impending succession, and the couple flew back to Washington.

Thus the new First Family assembled to take part in a ceremony that

marked the entrance of their modest, unaffected grace into the White House. At 56, Betty Ford is trim and auburn-haired, with a model's high cheekbones and blue-gray eyes. She has steadfastly borne the major child-rearing responsibilities throughout Ford's active political career, and still prefers an evening at home with her husband and children to a night out. She admits that she is not a good cook, and has an unsettling tendency to be late for appointments. Her lissome figure and smart eye for clothes should earn her plaudits in her role as official hostess. Mrs. Ford has encouraged her daughter to study modern dance and ballet as she herself did, and is an enthusiastic supporter of the performing arts, a love that she will doubtless continue to nurture as First Lady.

The strain of being a politician's wife has taken its toll. She has suffered from a pinched nerve in her neck in recent years caused, say her doctors, by emotional stress. After several years of various forms of physical therapy to relieve the pain, she began to see a psychiatrist and take tranquilizers to steady her nerves. "I tried to be everything," she admits, "and I completely lost my sense of self-worth." Now she declares that "I feel better than I have in years," and no longer relies on tranquilizers.

Aside from the expanded role that the Secret Service is bound to play in their lives, the Ford children are not likely to let their father's new responsibilities chill their ardent sense of independence. Blonde and graceful, Susan has already shown that she is in the tradition of perky presidential daughters; last week she brought along to the inaugural ceremonies Current Beau Gardner Britt, 17, who will enter Virginia Polytechnic Institute this fall. Steve was admitted not long ago to Duke University, but before settling down in college, he has opted to take a year off to work on a cattle ranch in Utah.

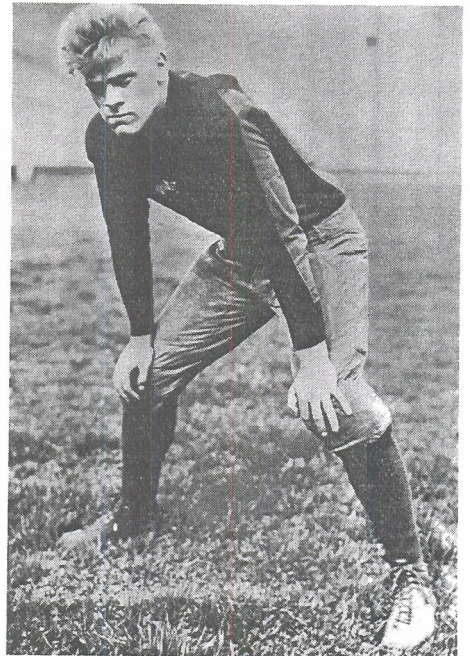
Tall, wryly humorous and, like all the Ford boys, a good athlete, Jack begins his senior year at Utah State this fall as a forestry major, then plans to enter graduate school to study watershed management. Mike, the most serious and introspective of the four, is working on his doctorate in theology but has yet to decide on his career plans.

Last week the reality of becoming the nation's new First Family had still not quite taken hold. After her father had taken the oath of office and her parents were busy greeting guests at a reception, Susan Ford roamed wide-eyed through the White House. "Would anybody mind if I looked around?" she politely asked a military aide in the Red Room. "Not at all," he replied with a smile. "This is where you live."

THE NATION

income. Nonetheless, he still had time to indulge the passion of his youth: football. A strapping youngster, he played center for South High School for reasons that probably had as much to do with temperament as physique. Ford always had his hand on the ball, but he snapped it to the quarterback who called the plays and scored the touchdowns. As Ford acknowledges, he never stopped playing center even when he gave up football: "I've tried to be a good blocker and tackler for the running back who carries the ball."

Ford went on to play football at the University of Michigan, where he was a solid B student. He spent summer vacations as a park ranger. In his senior year he was voted the football team's most valuable player. "You learn to accept discipline," he reminisced in later



FORD AS MICHIGAN FOOTBALL STAR
A center by temperament.

years. "My football experiences helped me many times to face a tough situation in World War II or, in the rough-and-tumble of politics, to take action and make every effort despite adverse odds."

After graduation in 1935, Ford turned down offers to play professional football. Instead, he decided to coach football and boxing at Yale. "I boxed the lightweights and coached the heavyweights," he recalls. While on the job, he took some courses at Yale Law School. He did well enough to be admitted to the law school and finished in the top third of his class in 1941. During his Yale days, he dated and almost married a Powers model named Phyllis Brown, who persuaded him to invest \$1,000 in a modeling agency. Ford even modeled sportswear with Phyllis on the ski slopes in New England. But he soon severed relations with both model and agency. Nothing quite so frivolous has

since intruded on his well-regulated life.

Shortly after Pearl Harbor, Ford gave up a budding law practice in Grand Rapids and joined the Navy as an ensign. His first assignment—whipping raw recruits into physical shape at the University of North Carolina—was not Ford's idea of fighting a war. He kept requesting sea duty, and in a year he got his wish. He was assigned to the aircraft carrier U.S.S. *Monterey* in the South Pacific. Although he was under enemy fire in several major battles, his closest brush with death came during a typhoon that nearly washed him overboard; he was saved by landing on a catwalk beneath him. The *Monterey* was a "lucky" ship, said Ford.

Mustered out at 32 with the rank of lieutenant commander, he returned to Grand Rapids to practice law. He also joined almost every organization available: the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Masons, the Elks. He was especially proud of his status as an ex officio Boy Scout (later he would boast: "I am the first Eagle Scout Vice President"). He made no secret of the fact that he wanted to go to Congress. In 1948 he was given his chance. Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg, grand old man of the G.O.P., had made a dramatic switch from isolationism to internationalism and was annoyed that the Republican Congressman in the Fifth District, Bartel J. Jonkman, did not convert along with him. Vandenberg encouraged Ford to challenge Jonkman in the Republican primary.

Stolid but Engaging

Initially, Ford worried that he might not appeal to his largely Dutch constituency. But if his name was not Dutch, his behavior and appearance were: stolid, slightly ponderous but engagingly open. He won by a 2-to-1 margin, and in twelve subsequent elections he never carried the district with less than 60% of the vote. During the campaign, he received help from Elizabeth Bloomer Warren, a Grand Rapids fashion coordinator who had once studied dance with Martha Graham. Three weeks before the election and eleven months after her first marriage ended in divorce, she and Jerry were wed. They then picked up to go to Washington, where they have lived ever since.*

Freshmen Congressmen roughly divide into two types: those who go it alone and those who join the team. Ford was definitely a team player. While more restless freshmen like John F. Kennedy avoided the tedium of the House floor as much as possible, Ford attentively followed debate and parliamentary maneuvers. In his second term, he landed

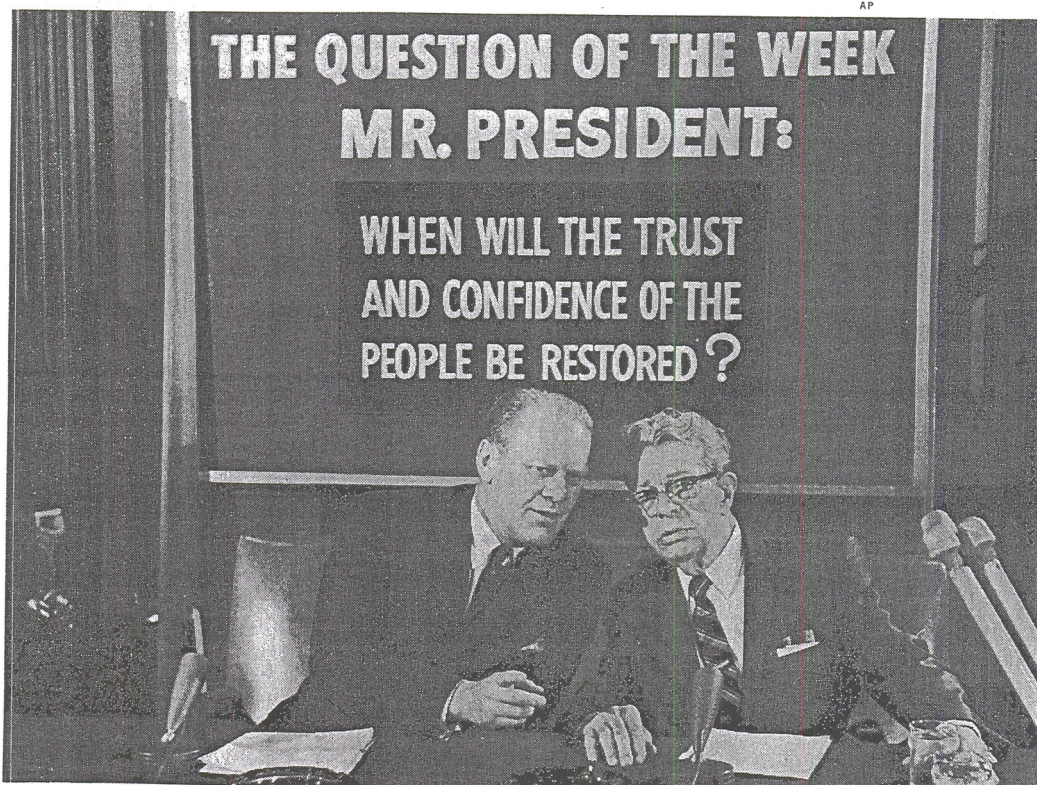
*Since 1955, the Fords have lived in a relatively modest four-bedroom home in Alexandria, Va. They also own two homes and a two-story apartment in Grand Rapids, as well as a condominium in Vail, Colo., where they regularly go for skiing vacations. In 1973, Ford's net worth was estimated to be \$256,378.

a seat on the Appropriations Committee and became an expert on the defense budget, an intimidating thicket of statistics that most Congressmen shunned. "He had a tremendous capacity for work," says his half brother Tom. "And let's face it, people who have a capacity for work normally succeed."

Ford was careful not to lose touch with Grand Rapids. He did not try to impress his constituents by loading his district with pork: using his influence to land lucrative defense contracts or military installations for Grand Rapids. He concentrated instead on personal service. European relatives of Grand Rapids citizens had little trouble migrating to America. Jerry Ford smoothed the way for them. In a biography of Ford that has just been published, Author Bud

Ford's career was progressing just the way he had planned—one careful step at a time—until it was given an upward jolt by some of his impatient colleagues. After the 1964 Democratic landslide thinned Republican ranks in the House, a group of Young Turks decided that a change of leadership was necessary to meet the challenge of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society. They urged Ford to run for House minority leader against Incumbent Charles A. Halleck of Indiana. After a vigorous campaign, Ford eked out a narrow, six-vote victory in the Republican caucus.

His new post made Ford a national figure with a handy pulpit to express his views. He joined the late Senate Minority Leader Everett Dirksen in "The Ev and Jerry Show," a weekly televised



FORD WITH SENATE MINORITY LEADER EVERETT DIRKSEN AT A 1966 PRESS CONFERENCE
A patter and a hugger who made lasting friends in both parties.

Vestal quotes a remark that has made the rounds in Michigan: "Every Dutch immigrant since Ford went to Congress just happens to have been an underground Resistance hero during World War II. And every Latvian who wants to come to Grand Rapids was the leading physician in Riga before the Russians took over."

While he served in Congress, Ford managed to get back to Grand Rapids every week. He would hold open house in a trailer to greet all the voters who failed to come to Washington to see him. "He runs the best constituent service I have seen anywhere," says A. Robert Kleiner, Democratic co-chairman of Michigan's Fifth District. "After 25 years, there's almost nobody in the district he hasn't done a favor for."

press conference that was intended as a G.O.P. rebuttal to the Great Society. True to character, Ford was content to play straight man to Dirksen's grandiloquent grandstanding.

"No man's light will be hidden under a bushel," Ford assured his fellow Congressmen. "Every Republican will have a voice in decision making and a chance to make a name for himself." Ford gave credit where it was due, took less than his share and made friends in both parties. No arm twister, he was a patter and a hugger. "It's the damndest thing," mused Louisiana's Democratic Congressman Joe D. Waggoner Jr. "Jerry just puts an arm around a colleague or looks him in the eye, says, 'I don't need your vote,' and gets it." Adds Edward F. Derwinski, an Illinois Re-



FORD GREETING SCHOOLCHILDREN ON A VICE-PRESIDENTIAL TRIP TO ILLINOIS
Astounding stamina and too much talk on a cross-country odyssey.

publican, "Jerry is an open tactician. He doesn't look for clever ways to sneak in behind you. He does the obvious, which is usually common sense."

Ford was pre-eminently a loyal party workhorse and proud of it. He could be counted on to vote against most all Democratic legislation, worthy or not. He voted no on subsidized housing, aid to education, Medicare, the antipoverty program, minimum wage bills. In 1973, he was one of 70 Congressmen to vote to sustain all of Nixon's vetoes. On occasion, he has taken a more conservative stand than the White House. As a representative of an auto-manufacturing state, he voted against using any of the highway trust funds to pay for mass transit. "If Jerry saw a hungry child, he would give the kid his lunch," says Democrat Kleiner. "But he can't see that voting against the school lunch program is depriving millions of kids of food."

In Salacious Company

Only once did Ford's partisanship lead him into an uncharacteristically harsh attack on a fellow public servant. After the Nixon Administration was stung by Senate rebuffs of two nominees to the U.S. Supreme Court, Ford led an impeachment drive against Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas. Ford charged that Douglas had received an annual retainer of \$12,000 from the Albert Parvin Foundation, which reportedly had underworld connections in Las Vegas. Ford also denounced the Justice for writing an article for *Evergreen Review* in which he seemed to sanction violent revolution in America. Waving a copy of the magazine, Ford pointed out that Douglas' article appeared in the salacious company of photos of nude women. In the course of his tirade, Ford made the brash statement that an impeachable offense is what a majority of the House says it is. Not long after, he admitted he had gone too far: "Impeach-

ment would have been too harsh, and perhaps what I did was too strong."

At the urging of his wife, Ford had seriously considered winding up his political career in 1974. He has often said his highest ambition was to become Speaker of the House, and it did not look as if the Republicans were going to control the House any time soon. But then Spiro Agnew was forced to resign as Vice President, and Ford was made an offer he could not refuse. Although former Treasury Secretary John Connally may have been the President's first choice, Ford had the right look to Nixon. He had never wavered in his loyalty to the President; ever since they had both been junior members of Congress, they had got along. Some cynics felt that the appointment was more Machiavelian than met the eye. With no experience in foreign affairs and no proven capacity for administration, Ford might make people think twice about dumping even a tainted Nixon. Very soon, though, Ford's candor loomed larger than Nixon's experience.

This openness made his confirmation hearings before the House Judiciary Committee—which lasted a grueling six days and went into every aspect of his life—a cakewalk. At least 350 FBI agents, 70 in Grand Rapids alone, fanned out to investigate his background, but Ford instructed anybody who asked: "Tell them the truth—give them everything." Everything did not amount to very much. He had been careless about disclosing the names of campaign contributors in his last election. A discredited Washington lobbyist had accused him of accepting money for favors. By the end of the televised hearings, Ford emerged with his reputation intact and even enhanced.

Once he was sworn in as Vice President, Ford hit the road as a traveling salesman for the presidency and the Republican Party. In his first eight months in office, he flew more than 100,000

miles and made over 500 appearances before groups ranging from a large G.O.P. rally in Chicago to the Boy Scouts. The aim of this energetic odyssey was to rally the party faithful in a time of troubles and give them a glimpse of a new and accessible party leader.

It was also a convenient escape for Ford from the Washington snake pit. But he was rarely allowed to forget Watergate for long. As he put it, he had "to walk a very fine line." Occasionally, he stepped over it. At first, he was almost an unabashed apologist for the President's defense strategy and once even used language supplied by White House speechwriters for a shrill attack on "groups like the AFL-CIO, the Americans for Democratic Action and other powerful pressure organizations." He accused them of "waging a massive propaganda campaign against the President of the United States." In subsequent speeches, he called for more openness on the part of the President and greater cooperation with the special prosecutor. Yet as the tensions built and the evidence against Richard Nixon accumulated, some of Ford's best friends began to worry that Jerry was frittering away political credits by making too many speeches. They bluntly advised him: "Shut up, Jerry." Finally, in the last week, before Nixon fell, he did shut up.

Perils of Candor

Physically, at least, Ford seems able to handle the arduous demands of the presidency. At 61, he weighs 203, only four pounds over his football-playing weight; he stays in shape by two daily 20-minute swims and occasional rounds of golf (scoring in the 90s). He limits lunch to a salad or cottage cheese with ketchup, though he occasionally succumbs to ice cream. No teetotaler, he likes to polish off a hard day's politicking with two or three dry martinis with a pair of olives in each. Ford's colleagues are as-

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tounded by his stamina. He has been known to fly to Denver after a day's work in the House, deliver a speech, fly back to Washington, take a swim at 3 a.m., sleep for four hours and then start the next day's activities with no hint of fatigue. "I don't get much sleep," he admits, and to date it does not seem to matter. However tight his schedule, he has always found time to attend an Episcopal church on Sundays and a weekly prayer session in the House.

How well equipped is Ford mental-

ly and emotionally for the presidency? He has few qualms. Insisting he did not wish or expect to be President, he said last spring: "I see no reason why I shouldn't be a good President. It doesn't frighten me at all. I feel prepared, and I know the policies I believe in would be sound." Nonetheless, some people worry that Ford's plodding, amiable ways and his eagerness for consensus may render him less than decisive in a national crisis. His openness could prove to be a liability in the White House,

where nations hang on a President's every word. Candor could cause the same kind of trouble for Ford that it did for Harry Truman—though it must be said that Truman survived his faults with honor. As Ford recently confided to a friend: "It's pretty hard to change your life-style totally," and no one really wants him to. It is his plain-spokenness that makes him such a welcome contrast to his predecessor; for the moment, he is living proof that nice guys sometimes finish first.