

'Quickie' Book:

Wit, Wisdom Of Rep. Ford

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Richard W. Beatty could never be accused of playing football too long without a helmet.

Beatty, an enterprising book publisher in Arlington whose most notable efforts have included a history of the 17th Virginia Infantry and a treatise on the adventure of marriage, almost choked on his chateaubriand a week ago Friday in a rooftop restaurant in Arlington Towers.

The public address announcement that evening was that Rep. Gerald R. Ford had been nominated as Vice President of the United States, and Beatty couldn't get his dinner check fast enough.

For tucked away in a corner of Beatty's office was a set of ready-to-print proofs

News Analysis

of the selected speeches of Gerald R. Ford, seemingly bubbling in newly discovered financial value.

Barely two days later, the sayings of Vice President-designate Ford hit the streets. Less than week later, the book was already in its third printing (35,000 copies), and nobody had complained that the two-color cover left inky smudges on the fingers or that the glued binding hadn't really set.

"It was a stroke of luck from a publishers point of view, I suppose. I like to think it was a combination of astuteness and luck, but you can take your pick," said an ebullient Beatty in an interview.

In fact, the printing plates for The Selected

Speeches of Gerald R. Ford, edited by Michigan State University professor Michael V. Doyle, had been sitting around Beatty's shop for more than three years. It took only a weekend crash program—with printers and editors working until 5 o'clock every morning—to get the first copies on the bookshelves.

"It was supposed to have been a scholarly book for historians, researchers and the press. Just a little collection of the speeches of a congressional leader that would be a convenience for a limited market," said Beatty.

The little collection begins with a distinctly unscholarly preface in which Ford offers a dictionary definition of the word "book" and then observes:

"Books serve a far larger purpose than radio, television and magazines. They bring the far-ranging thoughts of one man or many men within two covers for all to study and ponder."

Available for pondering amount the 246 pages of The Selected Speeches are 25 chicken dinner oratorical by Ford between 1965 and 1972, touching on such subjects as Earth Day, Israel, accom-

plishments of the Nixon administration, urban crime, economy and the Johnson administration's credibility gap. Most are unabashedly partisan in tone and content, and that may have compelled Ford to warn in his preface that "I do not expect everyone to love my speeches."

Or his jokes.

Included in the selections

are a string of one-liners Ford delivered in an off-the-record speech March 9, 1968, before the Gridiron Club in Washington.

Ford, a former lineman at the University of Michigan, began his self-effacing recitation with a quotation by Detroit Mayor Gerald Cavanaugh: "There's nothing wrong with Jerry Ford except he played football too long without a helmet."

Some samples of Ford witicism contained in the new book:

"What a full public career Vice President Humphrey has had—just one long struggle against McCarthyism. He's been birched red by the Old Right and rapped brown by the New Left."

"I sort of sympathize with the senator from New York (Robert Kennedy). I know there's one big dealer here in town who'd like to send this Ford back to Michigan. But that would be dirty politics at its Nader."

"You know, I nearly didn't get here on time tonight. When I heard it was to be a bipartisan affair, I went straight to the President's Club. Isn't that where you go to buy partisans?"

Of the then-private citizen Richard M. Nixon, Ford quipped, "Dick's the only candidate who gets five o'clock shadow on the Today Show."

Another: "Let me assure the distinguished Vice President of the United States (Humphrey) before all of you that I have absolutely no designs on his job. How many others in this room can make that statement?"

And in what appeared to be a disclaimer, Ford confessed, "Matching me against Hubert Humphrey for laughs is like putting Twiggy up against Zsa Zsa Gabor."

What follows in The Selected Speeches is a potpourri of political dissertations, many of which dwell on Ford's support of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, his concern with a rising rate of street crime and an occasional reference to what he termed a "terrifying buildup in executive branch power" under the Johnson administration.

In his 1967 speech Ford

also assailed the high cost of television network campaign advertising ("They should not be at the service of the highest bidder), the "falling" economy and the

See SAYINGS, F16, Col. 1

SAYINGS, From F1
then-uncontroversial issue of privacy ("Wiretapping and electronic eavesdropping worry all Americans who prize their privacy").

Some of Ford's speeches seem to ring with home-stretch campaign fervor, but others are distinctly lackluster and seem almost studiously unoffensive.

"Whenever a person is called upon to make a speech, the first question that enters his mind is, 'What shall I talk about,'" intoned Ford in an address at Tulane University on April 19, 1968. There was no indication of audience reaction.

But if Gerald Ford's sayings never become immortalized in American political history, he will at least have imparted some modesty in his own preface to Richard Beatty's quickie seller.

"Whatever else shines through my speeches, this volume will impart to all who read it the flavor of one political life in America—and I hope that impression is favorable," wrote Ford.