

# FORD VOICES REGRET AND PRIDE ON RECORD

## Sorry Over Inability to Advance Economy — Hails Restoring of People's Faith in Government

By PHILIP SHABECOFF  
Special to The New York Times

VAIL, Colo., Dec. 26—President Ford, now in the last days of his brief Presidency, believes that his greatest contribution while in the White House was restoring the trust of the American people in their Government.

He thought his toughest decision was ordering a military operation to rescue American merchant seamen in the Mayaguez incident. One of the most difficult tasks of his Presidency was achieving a second Israeli-Egyptian disengagement in the Sinai, he feels.

And his greatest disappointments were what he said was his inability "to turn the economy around as effectively as I had hoped" and his failure to negotiate a second strategic arms limitations treaty with the Soviet Union.

These assessments of his own Presidency emerged from a long interview by Barbara Walters of ABC News with Mr. and Mrs. Ford. The interview was taped in the White House on Dec. 4 and will be telecast by ABC a week from today. The text of the interview was released for publication tomorrow. (2 JAN

### Football Watching Interfered With <sup>77</sup>

President Ford and his family are now in this Rocky Mountain ski resort on a two-week holiday ending next Sunday. Today the President canceled plans to ski on slopes that still have only a thin covering of snow. Instead, he decided to remain in his rented house and watch the professional football playoffs. However, a cable television power failure frustrated this plan most of the day.

Unlike what he did on other vacations here, Mr. Ford is doing very little official work. His only major remaining Presidential chore is the preparation of his State of the Union Message. He has been working on this sporadically.

In the interview with Miss Walters, Mr. Ford denied reports that he was very depressed after losing the election to Jimmy Carter. He called the reports "totally untrue."

"I think I reacted about as calmly, dispassionately as anybody possible could," Mr. Ford said. He added that he had known that he was starting "way, way behind" Mr. Carter and that, although he got very close, "our expectations were a little higher than were justified."

"Inwardly, I really thought I was going to win, but I always approach any competition with a view that, yes, I am going to win whether it is in athletics or in politics, but under no circumstances when it was all over on Nov. 3 did it affect my attitude, mentally or physically. We didn't go out a great deal. We didn't, you know, go out and celebrate our defeat. We had a lot of fun here with the family."

### Didn't Find White House Lonely

The ABC interview touched on some of Mr. Ford's other personal feelings about the Presidency. He said, for example, that, unlike President Truman, who called the White House a great white prison, or President Taft, who called it "the loneliest place in the world," he never found it that way.

"There have been one or two nights perhaps where certain circumstances were such that it seemed awfully big and somewhat lonesome," the outgoing President said. "But on a day-to-day basis I enjoy it here. I think it is a great place."

He said that he liked the mansion as a place to live, especially the fact that it is right next to the office.

He further said that he would miss the staff and "mostly the day-to-day challenges."

"When I walk into that Oval Office, every day there is something new that has to be done, whether it is domestic or foreign policy," he went on. "And I will miss that challenge because that has been the thing that has been the thrust in my life as long as I can remember."

Mrs. Ford said she had found the White House lonely at times but would miss the people who worked there.

"They have been such fine people and such good friends and I know it will be very hard for me to leave them without tears because I love them all," she told Miss Walters.

When asked why he had kept up his contacts with former President Richard M. Nixon, who had left the White House in disgrace, Mr. Ford said that he had done it out of friendship and conscience. He noted that he had visited his predecessor in person only once, when Mr. Nixon was ill with phlebitis.

### Felt Obligated to Visit Nixon

"I would have had a guilty conscience if I had not gone to the hospital and seen a man who was literally on death's bed. He had been my friend for 25 years and here was a person who was as close to death as I have ever seen somebody and I felt that it was a personal obligation to go and see him."

Mr. Ford said he had also spoken to Mr. Nixon by telephone six to eight times and said:

"I don't see anything wrong with that. He was a man who had spent a good part of his life in government. He had been, I think, very successful in foreign policy. He had known the political situation. He has been a friend of mine."

In the interview, Mr. Ford said he did not plan to run for national office again, but he stopped short of ruling out another run at the Presidency. When asked if he would run again, he replied, "I don't anticipate it, no. But I have learned to be a little less firm than . . ."

At that point Miss Walters interrupted to ask if he was "not going to say 'never' after this."

Mr. Ford replied, "Well, there is no anticipation of it."