

Suddenly the Questions Are as Far-Reaching

By JAMES N. NAUGHTON

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Critics used to complain about Presidents secluding themselves in the White House or at personal vacation enclaves. Not so with President Ford.

In scarcely more than a year in the White House, he has journeyed 45,554 miles abroad and 75,292 miles in the United States, spending the equivalent of nearly two weeks of his presidency inside an airplane. But the travels of the most peripatetic President have prompted different, perhaps more serious, questions than those raised about the comparative shut-ins he succeeded. Among the questions are the following:

¶Is Mr. Ford's escalating effort to take the Presidency to the people worth the increased exposure to crowds and the risk that entails? Two weeks ago a woman aimed a .45-caliber pistol at Mr. Ford from a crowd in Sacramento; one week ago Mr. Ford wore body armor beneath his shirt on an 11-hour political foray across New Hampshire.

¶With the President so often on the road, is he available for something short of an emer-

gency? Senate Republican leaders, seeking guidance on a proposal to extend oil price controls temporarily, tried unsuccessfully for more than an hour to make contact with Mr. Ford as he motored along Highway 101 in New Hampshire last week.

¶Is Mr. Ford bending the spending limits of the new campaign reform law by touring the nation in the guise of the leader of his party? Despite a pell-mell pace of political appearances and an increasingly partisan tone to his rhetoric, Mr. Ford has yet to assess the cost of any trip against his own 1976 Presidential campaign committee, but the Republican National Committee has paid out or been billed for \$309,000 of expenses on trips by Mr. Ford or Vice President Rockefeller this year.

The President will set out again tomorrow on a four-day official and political trip to Oklahoma and California. When he returns, he will have spent a total of 73 days outside Washington this year on either diplomatic or domestic trips.

The pace of his journeys has noticeably accelerated since July 8, when Mr. Ford formally declared his candidacy for a full term in the White House. By Monday, he will have been out of the capital 39 of the

76 days since declaring, evidently in more senses than one, that he would run.

"For what—eight years or more—a President seldom traveled out of the White House to different parts of the country," Mr. Ford told Chicago Sun-Times reporters in an interview this week. "We are trying to get the public to understand that a President can get to many, many places in the country, see many, many people and sort of get a rapport working between people and the President, areas and the White House."

Laudable as Mr. Ford's objective may be, even some of his close advisers are wondering if the velocity of his travels has not been a bit too much.

One White House aide, repeating a quip he attributed to Robert Novak, the syndicated columnist, has delighted in referring to the President's rigorous 118-mile motorcade last week, which seemed to exhaust everyone but Mr. Ford, as "the New Hampshire death march."

Then there was Mr. Ford's 23-hour day on Sept. 4. After staff meetings and a two-hour breakfast conference with Congressional leaders, Mr. Ford flew off to Seattle, where he addressed two Republican fund-raising luncheons, toured a cancer research center and answered questions for 57 minutes at a regional White House conference.

He went on to Portland, Ore., to speak at party fund-raising banquet and, at what would have been midnight in Washington, stood before 8,000 persons at a "youth bicentennial rally" to answer questions from 8-year-olds as "Is it true that Mrs. Ford was once a Campfire girl?" (Answer: "I didn't know her then") and "how come you don't have telethons for people who have sickle cell anemia?" (answer: "I hope there will be one.")

Endurance Astonishes Aide

When Mr. Ford arrived several hours later at the Senator Hotel in Sacramento, he unflaggingly shook hands with onlookers as one of his Presidential counselors, Robert T. Hartmann, glanced at his watch and muttered, "My God, the man isn't human!"

It was the next morning, as Mr. Ford walked from the Senator Hotel past another crowd on his way to the California State Capitol, that a Secret Service agent, Larry M. Bueendorf, wrested a .45-caliber semi-automatic pistol from Lynette Alice Fromme as the gun was pointed at the President from a distance of two feet.

As he vowed then that he would, Mr. Ford has continued to wade into anonymous crowds of presumed well-wishers, contending, "You have to balance or weigh the risks as to my own personal security against what is a very important aspect of our political life in America."

Neither the White House nor Secret Service officials will openly discuss Presidential security. But the unrelenting concern of the protective service over Mr. Ford's unremitting approaches to crowds was best illustrated by the so-called "bullet-proof" vest worn by the President, at the evident insistence of the Secret Service, on his day-long tour of New Hampshire.

Mr. Ford has contended that the momentary touches of outstretched hands of President and public are important ingredients in national rapport. At a news conference on Tuesday he even asserted that he was "very much amazed how often people, in the course of shaking hands or greeting them make specific recommendations or comments."

The comment came as a surprise to those who accompany Mr. Ford in crowds and hear little more than excited warbles of housewives and teen-agers or exchanges of pleasantries—"Hi there, nice to see you," Mr. Ford keeps repeating—as the President wends his way briskly through crowds.

Mr. Ford defended his frequent forays by saying that they come in addition to 12-hour or longer workdays here, that he has an excellent staff that

as Ford's Travels

keeps in touch with him when he is away and that his travel "in no way whatsoever interferes with the responsibilities I have."

Mr. Ford does work frequently on White House business on long-distance flights in his Air Force jet. Sometimes, though, aides will say on short hops that the President has busied himself preparing the text of the next speech he is to deliver. And his communications facilities, while unsurpassed, occasionally cannot cope with his schedule.

Last Thursday, Senator Robert P. Griffin, Republican of Michigan, the Senate minority whip, tried to reach Mr. Ford through the White House switchboard by leaving messages at hamlets where the President was appearing on his trip across New Hampshire. Mr. Ford was, of course, and always is in contact with the White House through special Army Signal Corps circuits reserved for emergency use. But Senator Griffin never reached the President through normal channels and eventually the Republican leaders had to settle for a brief conversation by radio-telephone with the White House chief of staff, Donald Rumsfeld, in Mr. Ford's limousine.

Meantime the Senate was balked in a search for an accommodation on oil price controls, an issue that has been a centerpiece on Mr. Ford's traveling lectures.

Perhaps the most nettlesome question raised by Mr. Ford's journeys is the extent to which they may advance his Presidential candidacy and be subject, accordingly, to the spending limits imposed by the campaign reform act that Mr. Ford signed into law last year.

According to the White House, Mr. Ford has three distinct roles: President, leader of the Republican party and candidate for President. Mr. Ford has contended that none of the trips he has taken to date or those scheduled before year's end are meant to advance his own candidacy. Therefore the travel costs have been borne either by the Government or by the Republican National Committee, and not by the President Ford Committee.

But the lines between statesmanship, party politics and personal candidacy sometimes appear to blur, even in appearances by Mr. Ford that are classified by the White House as purely "Presidential."

Categorizing an Issue

Is it Presidential, or political or personal advocacy for Mr. Ford to say, as he did at a recent White House regional conference in St. Louis, that he will continue to veto spending measures until members of the predominantly Democratic Congress "finally awaken and find that they are the principal contributions to inflation in this country?"

the growing number of appearances by Mr. Ford before Republican party audiences.

Since taking office, Mr. Ford has helped to raise nearly \$2-million for the national and various state Republican treasuries without diverting any of the funds to his own campaign organization.

Clearly, he does want to help the party," an aide said. "and in helping the party he helps himself."

While Mr. Ford has carefully omitted from his political rhetoric any overt appeals for personal help in 1976, his stump speeches have become more

aggressive and more self-centered.

In Dallas last Saturday, cheering members of the National Federation of Republican Women did not appear to miss the oblique message when Mr. Ford said he was striving to restore fiscal integrity to Government "but it takes a little time to undo 25 years of reckless Democratic spending."

By "a little time," Mr. Ford seemed to mean more than the 16 months remaining in his inherited term in the White House. His bid for four years more appears well under way.