

Presidential News Conferences Quietly Dying of Nixon Disuse

by Max Frankel

Washington, June 18 - The Presidential news conference is dying, without ceremony or explanation, and reporters who moan about it are being put down by the Nixon staff as self-serving whiners who merely miss the chance to kick the President around or to bask in his glory in public.

..... But there are more profound problems raised by the absence of news conferences. Without them, a President avoids not only public examination on some difficult issues but even the private briefings by which he prepares himself for the worst.

..... One of Mr. Nixon's close aides recently complained about the flabbiness of reporters' queries [John Ehrlichman, SF Examiner 14 Jun 72, filed Nix Ad], so even if the President demurs perhaps the reporters owe it to him and their readers to reveal the questions that are lingering in their notebooks.

Here is a sample, culled from those of one newspaper's Washington staff.

Mr. President:

Are you still confident of ending the war in your first term and pulling the rug out from under the Democrats on this issue? Why will the peace terms you could get this year be better than those you might have obtained three years ago? What constitutional authority do you now possess for bombing North Vietnam and mining its harbors?

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