

# The Vice President's First Day

By Spencer Rich  
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Washington

Gerald R. Ford began his first full day as 40th Vice President of the United States with a ringing defense of President Nixon's record and a categorical denial that the President has any plans to resign.

"I can assure you that the President has no intention whatever of resigning," Ford told his first Senate

press conference yesterday, after a discussion and picture-taking session with Mr. Nixon at the White House. "It was reiterated to me this morning."

Ford also told reporters "there is no evidence that would justify impeachment . . . I don't think the President's a political liability to any candidate (and) in his five years, he has done a super job in foreign policy. He has many more pluses on the political scene than minuses."

Ford said he had brought up the matter of possible resignation at his meeting with Mr. Nixon because, while he knew Mr. Nixon's mind, "I'm going on one of the quiz shows on Sunday and I wanted it straight from the President himself."

He said the President had also told him that papers to prove Mr. Nixon innocent of wrongdoing in the ITT case, the "milk deal" and other incidents will be released

"prior to the first of the year."

The President had assured him, he said, that once these documents are released and all the facts are out, "he should be completely exonerated."

Ford's meeting with Mr. Nixon was one of the high points of a day devoted largely to making the transition from the job of House GOP leader, a post he's held since 1965, to Vice President

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of the U.S. and presiding officer of the U.S. Senate.

Although Ford will have much more space, a much bigger staff as Vice President; yesterday he was still using a small suite of offices on the second floor of the Capitol right off the House chamber which have been his as House Minority Leader.

His day began about 8:20 a.m. when he arrived at his offices and was told that 15 House pages were to present him with a briefcase they had chipped in to buy as a going-away present. Shortly later he took the long walk across the Capitol building to the office of Frank Valeo, secretary of the Senate.

There he went through the ritual required of every Senate member and presiding officer: filling out documents, insurance forms and other necessary papers to put himself and staff on the Senate roster for business purposes, franking privileges and the like. With his accession to the vice presidency Thursday, his pay rose from \$49,500 a year to \$62,500.

Flanked by aides and Secret Service men, Ford marched into the Senate chamber five minutes before

the formal opening of the session. At 10 a.m., he mounted the president's chair and stood with head bowed as the Rev. Dr. C. Ralston Smith of Bethesda, Md., a special assistant to evangelist Billy Graham, intoned the daily prayer as guest minister.

"We pray for each member that he might be responsible to Thy purposes and promptings," said Dr. Smith. "Especially do we ask Thy blessing upon our Vice President, Gerald Ford, as he undertakes the responsibility of presiding at these significant sessions. Imbue him plentifully with wisdom and grace."

Then, as his first business yesterday, he presided as the Senate — with only a handful of members on the floor — routinely passed by voice vote a bill to create a Boston national historical park.

The next order of business was some nominations, which were agreed to without objection, also with only a handful on the floor. In a loud, steady voice, Ford called forth, "without objection it is so ordered."

With still only three members on the floor, Ford sat and listened while Minority Leader Hugh Scott (Rep.

Pa.) told the Senate he is delighted the District of Columbia will have a baseball team and that the first game will be with the Philadelphia Phillies, and while George McGovern (Dem-S.D.) delivered a speech on veterans' educational benefits.

By 10:12 a.m., Ford's first spell as presiding officer was over; a senator took the chair and Ford retired to the "formal room."

The "formal room," located inside the Senate chambers, is one of five offices Ford will enjoy as vice president. One is located in the Executive Office Building, a second is in the New Senate Office Building. A third is a large room — used mainly by staff — the fourth is a small house room near the Senate chambers which Ford said he will retain. The fifth, the formal room, is a stately reception office about 25 feet by 25 feet, with a huge desk and chair, a stately grandfather clock, a deep blue rug, a large painting of ex-vice president John Nance Garner (1933-41) on one wall, and busts of former vice president Henry Wilson (1873 to 1875) and Senate president pro tem Lafayette Foster (1865 to 1867) flanking Garner.

Vice Presidents, who

usually don't spend too much time presiding anyhow, often repair to this room when the atmosphere of gassy rhetoric gets them down.

This time, however, Ford was talking arrangements with chief aide Bob Hartman and other staff members. These included Walter Mote, Vice President Spiro Agnew's legislative aide for the Senate whom Ford is keeping in the same job, and Ken Belieu, a former White House liaison man for the Senate and under secretary of both the Army and the Navy at different times, who is joining Ford's staff.

Ford also posed for pictures with Senators Jacob K. Javits (Rep - N.Y.) and Bob Dole (Rep-Kan.), both up for re-election in 1974.

At 11:06, Ford put aside his discussions of office problems, staffing and schedule arrangements and braved the chamber again, taking the gavel and remaining until 11:47 while Senators Alan Bible (Dem - Nev.) and Paul J. Fannin (Rep - Ariz.) declaimed to a virtually empty chamber on the energy crisis.

Ford appeared a trifle glassy-eyed from the talk when he surrendered the chair and went back into the formal room to stand under

a massive chandelier donated by Teddy Roosevelt (who was said to have asserted its tinkling would keep senators awake) to receive a silver medallion

The medallion and a similar silver plate, was struck by Jacques Cartier jewelers of Canada, with a portrait of Ford and his name, to commemorate his ascent to the Vice Presidency. It was presented by Michigan friends of Ford.

Ford then left for the White House for his talk with the President, from which he returned for a formal press conference at which he defended Mr. Nixon. Ford said "when the President isn't there I will preside" at National Security Council and domestic council meetings, and indicated he expected to campaign for GOP candidates nationwide in 1974.

Ford said he doesn't see any way to stop the House Judiciary Committee's investigation of Mr. Nixon but is confident that when it is finished, the committee will find Mr. Nixon guiltless. "If a committee of 38 members; 21 Democratic and 17 Republican, voted against the (impeachment) resolution by a majority vote, I think that would be totally satisfactory" to reassure the American people, said

Ford.

Ford revealed with a laugh that he hadn't been offered a bite of lunch at the White House, so he left the press conference to go back to his old House office to eat there.

He didn't come back to the Senate again to preside until 4:13 p.m. when the Rhode-

sian chrome bill was being discussed — again with only a handful present.

At 4:40 p.m. he finally left, leaving debate to continue with a senator substituting in the chair, while Ford began preparing for a fund-raising party at the Capitol Hill Club which he was scheduled to co-host later for Rep-

resentative Stanford Parris (Rep-Va.).

Asked if, after listening to the Senate he found it any more enlightening than House debate, Ford laughed and replied "I don't think I should make any comments about the caliber of the debate on either side of the Capitol."



AP Wirephoto

#### THE NEW VICE PRESIDENT READ THE SPORTS PAGES Mrs. Ford served him tea with his breakfast