

Betty Beale: Washington

WASHINGTON — There's a fresh new breeze sweeping through town and it's caused by a Ford, not a Lincoln — to quote a now famous phrase. The freshness has been here for years but national importance has given it new proportions.

Mrs. Leslie Arends, wife of the House minority whip, has a vivid memory of her first impression back in January 1949 of a young congressional pair fresh in from Michigan. She remembers thinking, she said, when she first saw them:

"There's a young couple that is all American. In every way they are sound and true — real solid Americans, shiny and bright. I remember she had a pageboy, a bowler hat and a Peter Pan collar. She looked like she had stepped out of a handbox. They were such an attractive couple you had to predict they would go far."

That's the way the Gerald Fords struck her then and "I feel exactly the same way now," said Betty Arends months ago.

You could tell that everybody who crowded the House chamber to see Ford sworn in as Vice President of the United States felt the same way. There was an excitement — maybe lift is a better word — that hasn't been felt in years. "He's like a breath of fresh air," said one of the jaded members of the press looking down at the scene from the press gallery.

"He's like middle America which most of us are if we're lucky," said Lorraine Cooper, wife of the former senator from Kentucky and one of Washington's most fashionable hostesses as well as best dressed women.

The desire to see this handsome, decent, straightforward man ascend to the spot of one heartbeat from the presidency was such that for the first time in the memory of House Doorkeeper Fishbait Miller there was so little room for the chiefs of foreign missions who regularly attend historic joint sessions of Congress. The reason was that so many former congressmen attended the ceremony. They have the privilege of being seated with present members.

It took two loud requests by Speaker Carl Albert to get a section cleared for the waiting diplomats. Such prominent representatives as Peter Frelinghuysen (R-N.J.) who's on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, gave their seats to African ambassadors and themselves stood throughout the proceedings.

Pat Nixon received the customary standing ovation accorded a First Lady by the gentlemen on the floor of the House when she entered the Executive Gallery. But the surprising thing is what followed. Pat had acknowledged their tribute and sat when they suddenly saw Rose Mary Woods descending the steps to sit in the row behind the Ford children. The still-standing members of Congress looking up at her burst into a bigger surge of applause than they had given Mrs. Nixon. It left everyone wondering — was this because they all thought she had been dealt a bum deal regarding the Watergate tapes?

At the VIP-studded glamor ball of the year, the

Ovation for Rose Mary tops Pat's



A LONG toast by Romanian President Ceausescu had his wife dabbing her brow with ice water.



GIFT IDEA Tish Baldrige had as White House aide almost created a diplomatic fiasco.



VICE-PRESIDENT
Gerald Ford, seen here with his wife, Betty, drew a standing-room-only crowd for his swearing-in at House of Representatives.

white tie Symphony Ball, Rose Mary was putting all of that out of her mind as she kicked up her legs in a hot Charleston with escort Bob Gray. Feathers from the swirling hem of her all sequin, gunmetal gray gown were flying in all directions.

It took no time for social Washington to see what assets the Fords are. They attended the Symphony Ball and it was such a rare thing for a vice president they earned the gratitude of everyone, at the big fundraiser. And they acted like any other guests when it came to stopping at tables to greet friends. They were easy, normal, warm and low key — quite a contrast to Ted Agnew who always seemed stiff and cold socially.

Both Fords danced nearly every dance, Jerry not quitting when he had done his duty dances. He's a marvelous hooper, doing everything from his preferred foxtrot to rock. The same is true of Betty, said their host, Bill Whyte, vice president of U. S. Steel. But then she almost became a professional, having studied with Martha Graham for years.

White House toasts are becoming the most boring utterances in town. Visiting chiefs of state are giving longer and longer and duller and duller addresses at what is meant to be a charming occasion. Indeed, the President of Romania's toast was so long his wife had to revive herself in the middle of it. Ceausescu was going on and on in a serious vein when another dinner guest observed Mrs. Ceausescu dabbing her fingers in her icewater and putting them to her forehead.

Asked why they don't pass the word to foreign countries that five minute toasts would be in order,

Secretary of State Kissinger said, "We do but it doesn't do any good."

Tish Baldrige, who used to select the John Kennedys' official gifts, came to town to boost Western Union's new armchair shopping system — GiftAmerica — whereby you can order any of 16 gifts by phone as late as Christmas Eve and it will get there by Christmas Day. Tish, it seems, knows a thing or two about deadline giftgiving.

As White House social secretary her worst gift predicament took place when Jackie made her trip to India. To equip Mrs. Kennedy with sufficient presents to disperse on the journey, Tish ordered 62 blue cowhide leather picture frames with the gold presidential seal on them and signed photographs of the Kennedys in them.

"They were beautifully wrapped and sent ahead to India," she said. "Then somebody in the U.S. Information Service called me in Karachi three days before Mrs. Kennedy was to arrive in India and said, 'You can't use any of the cowhide frames because of the Hindu religion.'"

"It was the most terrible moment in my life. I called Rome, a silversmith I knew there, and had 62 silver frames made in two days and they were put on Jackie's plane when it came through. Then I had to unwrap all that beautiful White House paper, put the photographs in the new frames and wrap them again but the only paper available on the market looked exactly like gray toilet paper. That's the only way I can describe it. Of course, the Indians didn't mind because they were used to it. But I lamented our beautiful White House paper."