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Nixon to Visit Huntsville On 'Honor America' Day

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HUNTSVILLE, Ala., Feb. 17 —The 140,000 people who live in this North-Central Alabama city are accustomed to coming up with answers to complex questions.

This is where much of the basic rocket research was done for the program that placed men on the moon.

But space science is a precise art, whereas political science is an imprecise art, and so no one in "Rocket city" seemed precisely certain this weekend why Richard M. Nixon was coming to town tomorrow.

Technically — no throwaway word hereabouts—he was coming because he had accepted an invitation from the 27 members of the local Sertoma Club to take part in Huntsville's second annual "Honor America Day" program, one of those old-time all-American events in which bands, politicians and the local citizenry gather in a downtown park to celebrate the red, white and blue.

But why Huntsville, of the hundreds and hundreds of towns that annually request the President's presence for one reason or another? And why now?

The visit will mark the first time in several months that the President has ventured beyond the Pennsylvania Avenue-Key Biscayne-San Clemente orbit. He last touched the grass roots in November when he opened Operation Candor.

Polls Are Cited

The visit will also take place at a time when Watergate-depressed polls indicate that two of every three Southerners disapprove of Mr. Nixon's Presidential performance. That can be taken as either good news or bad news in view of the fact that the polls further indicate that, nationally, three of every four Americans are dissatisfied with Mr. Nixon's conduct.

According to Dewey Clower, the White House advancement man here, Mr. Nixon is coming to Huntsville because "the event fits his schedule and because he's been looking for some time for such a celebration."

Lou Azar, the Sertoman who sent the invitation to the White House, says:

"This is not a political thing. We are a nonpartisan civic group. We simply want to honor America. The President got invited because he's our President, not because of anything he's done or hasn't done."

Local Republicans, a minority group despite the fact that Mr. Nixon carried Huntsville and most of the rest of the South in 1972, have a somewhat different viewpoint. They are distributing 60,000 red, white and blue leaflets that describe the event as an opportunity to "see and hear the President of the United States and Mrs. Nixon." The flyer adds:



Associated Press

ON CORN-CHIP BREAK: David Eisenhower at vending machine in the Indiana University Medical Center in Indianapolis on Saturday. Yesterday, his wife, Julie, was reported to be making good progress from her ovarian-cyst removal operation on Thursday. Doctors said she might leave the hospital by end of week.

"Stand up and be counted for what's right with America."

The people of Huntsville first learned of Mr. Nixon's visit about a week ago. Thus far, the police say, no protest movement has formed, though some citizens plan quiet demonstrations.

William Baune, an unemployed Huntsville welder who heads a three-week-old committee to impeach Mr. Nixon says its members will circulate petitions during the celebration.

At the Huntsville branch of the University of Alabama, several students have announced that they will parade with anti-Nixon placards during the ceremonies.

A few days ago, when Mr. Nixon briefly left his Key Biscayne compound to dedicate a hospital in adjacent Miami, he was loudly heckled by demonstrators. While heckling could

also occur in Huntsville, officials here seem confident that demonstrators will not get out of hand.

Geographically, Huntsville is not so far south as Miami. But philosophically, Huntsville is considerably more Southern.

This probably means that Mr. Nixon will not only find considerable respect for the Presidency as an institution, an important factor when demonstrators are afoot.

Mr. Nixon has something further going for him. Huntsville is filled with people who draw their pay from the Federal Government. The slowdown in the space program has cut the Civil Service roster here, but there are still thousands of Federal workers here.

Tomorrow's festivities will begin shortly before noon with a country music concert and will conclude around 2:30 P.M. with a speech by the President. There has been considerable speculation—some call it wishful thinking—that Mr. Nixon might announce here that Huntsville will now become a Federal center for energy research.

Mr. Nixon will be introduced by Gov. George C. Wallace, who is moving around more and more these days, much like a man about to announce that he is a candidate for reelection.

Invitations to attend the celebration were also sent to John Wayne, the actor; Paul Harvey, the news broadcaster; Billy Graham, the evangelist, and Paul (Bear) Bryant, the University of Alabama football coach.