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# Ford's Day— Routine, but Still Unusual

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As expectations grew that he will soon be President of the United States, Jerry Ford tried to steer a level, business-as-usual course yesterday, with mixed results.

The day started out normally enough for the Vice President. At about 6:30 a.m., he rose and swam his customary several laps in the backyard pool of his home in Alexandria. Then he dressed and stepped out of the house, where he encountered the first evidence that this would not be quite a normal day for him.

Television cameras clicked and TV newsmen shouted questions at him. But in keeping with his statement of Monday night that he would bow out of the impeachment debate, he declined comment, got into his government limousine and headed for Capitol Hill.

There, he attended a routine breakfast with eight Republican congressmen, to discuss the state of the economy. The host, Rep. Clarence J. Brown (R-Ohio), said the congressmen honored Ford's decision of Monday night and no questions were raised about impeachment or about Ford's own plans.

Instead, according to Brown, the congressmen expressed dissatisfaction with Mr. Nixon's recent speech on the economy and urged Ford to press for a clear-cut administration commitment to a balanced budget for the next fiscal year.

From the breakfast, the Vice President returned to his Executive Office Building office, where he spent an hour conferring with staff aides. Then he went to the 11 a.m. Cabinet meeting at which the President reiterated that he had no intention of resigning.

The Vice President had scheduled a speech to the National conference of the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service at the Statler-Hilton. But he sent John O. Marsh, a staff assistant who usually specializes in defense affairs, to deliver it for him while he attended the late-scheduled Cabinet meeting.

In the jumpy atmosphere prevailing around town, that cancellation in itself bred speculation that something momentous might be in the offing. But yesterday, at least, was not the day most everyone now seems to believe is inevitable—the day of Ford's elevation to the presidency.

The Cabinet meeting ran nearly two hours, obliging the Vice President to cancel some Capitol Hill meetings with congressmen.

Instead, according to his press secretary, Paul Miltich, Ford ate at his desk on the second floor of the EOB and spent the afternoon talking to a number of callers.

First, he discussed with officers of the National Association of Home Builders policy recommendations they offered. Then he conferred with Philip Buchen, his former law partner in Grand Rapids who is now executive director of the Domestic Council Committee on the Right of Privacy—a special problem area assigned to the Vice President.

He met with a group of

Japanese legislators and then gave interviews to Vermont C. Royster, columnist for The Wall Street Journal, and Betty Beale, a reporter for the Washington Star-News. In between, he conferred briefly with Republican National Chairman George Bush. Miltich said they discussed a party TV fund-raiser in Los Angeles at which Ford is to speak Thursday night.

In late afternoon, he went to his ceremonial office at the Capitol for a meeting with three Democratic and two Republican senators who were the original co-sponsors of a resolution calling for a continuing "domestic summit conference" on the economy consisting of the House and Senate leadership and committee chairmen particularly involved with economic legislation and policy. The group was headed by Sen. Pete V. Domenici (R-N.M.), prime sponsor of the resolution in the Senate.

Then, in the early evening, the Vice President went home to Alexandria for dinner with his family.

It was, as vice presidential days go, fairly routine, except for the atmosphere of expectation that surrounded it. Tighter security prevailed in the EOB than usual. Visitors were discouraged, and once inside the dim corridors, were asked to conduct their previously stated business and leave. One who tarried outside the Vice President's second-floor office was not only asked to leave but was escorted, courteously, by a White House policeman to the main entrance—and exit.

Among the Ford staff, scattered in mostly unmarked offices along the second-floor corridor where the Vice President's office is located, the mood seemed to be one of quiet, unrejoicing expectation—approaching inevitability.

"It's like waiting for the other shoe to drop," one staffer said. "We know he's going to be President now." But the Ford people were circumspect, avoiding any comment about a Ford administration and what it might be like.

There was instead a tone of commiseration toward the Nixon people. One Ford aide told of seeing White House speechwriter and media expert Patrick J. Buchanan leaving the building the night before, and a colleague calling to him: "Have you packed your bag?"

Outside the Vice President's suite, with the seal of his office hanging over the door, a solitary White House policeman sat at a desk, and a single Secret Service man, his ear wired to a walkie-talkie, stood guard in the tranquil corridor.

As columnist Royster came out, a smiling Vice President came to the door, looking relaxed in a conservative gray business suit. He said goodbye to Royster and hello to Miss Beale, and laughed his hearty, country-boy, all-stops-pulled guffaw, then disappeared into the office again.

As the pressure mounted just across the street in the Oval Office of the White House, Jerry Ford was going about his business.