

## Turnover to energize GOP

Chicago Daily News

WASHINGTON — Gerald R. Ford's ascension to the presidency will transform the Republican Party overnight from a sulking band of self-pitiers into an army galvanized for a roaring demonstration of its strength in November.

The swift change in White House tenancy also will deprive Democrats of their cardinal issue in the mid-term congressional election—the Nixon morality.

Top political strategists here believe there will be these immediate and long-range effects of a Ford presidency:

- Republicans will cut their losses in Senate and House seats this fall.

- Democrats, no longer able to exploit Watergate,

will revert to the sluggish economy as their No. 1 issue.

- The GOP, rallying behind Ford as its probable 1976 nominee, will avoid the fratricidal warfare that had been building among rivals for that nomination.

- Democrats, with Nixon no longer around to unify them in opposition, will fall back into the same disarray that afflicted them after the McGovern debacle two years ago.

As recently as two weeks ago, Democrats were boasting of picking up between 50 and 100 House seats this November, and only a few Republicans (not Ford) quarreled with that assessment. None disputed it too convincingly.

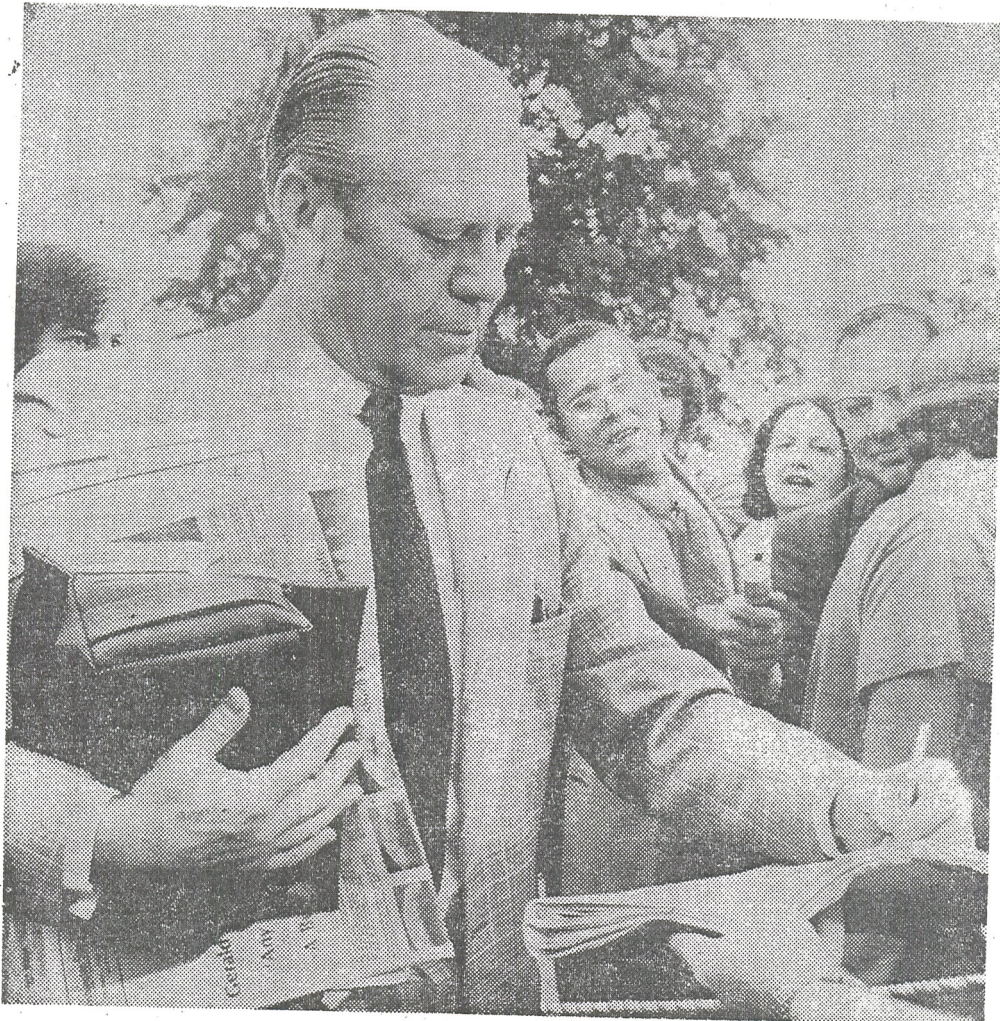
Republicans here now say

the GOP will lose no more than 35 or so seats, only slightly more than the average mid-term loss for the party that controls the White House.

The House currently is split 248 to 187 in favor of the Democrats.

The Senate is divided 58 to 42, with Democrats in the majority, and 34 seats are up for election. The GOP hopes to retain most of its incumbents but has virtually no chance of increasing its Senate strength.

Nixon's departure means that November "will be less of a disaster for us, and maybe no disaster at all," said Rep. Charles Wiggins, R-Calif., who had been Nixon's most eloquent defender on the House Judiciary Committee until almost the very end.



### *New fan club members*

President Ford signs autograph outside his Alexandria, Va. home yesterday at the beginning of his first full day as chief executive of the nation.

—UPI Photo