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Gerald R. Ford at his first news session as President

Open, Friendly Mood Marks News Session

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Aug. 28—They call it an “open Administration,” and the people at President Ford’s White House did their best today to convey that feeling at his first news conference.

They did not put up the blue draperies that used to hang behind former President Nixon’s podium—too stagey, they said—and they had moved the speaking platform across the East Room to the opposite wall, in front of a door. And the door, symbolically, was open.

The open door at times had a strange effect on television screens. When the television cameras zoomed in for a close shot, it appeared that Mr. Ford was not in a crowded room at all but standing alone with vast chandeliered and empty halls stretching behind him. It was, in fact, a view of the Grand Entrance Hall.

President Nixon held 37 news conferences, and toward the end, they often seemed to slip into bitterness with an edgy and defensive President — his famous dark beard shaved close and heavily made up—dueling with aggressive reporters. Today that atmosphere was completely gone.

Mr. Ford wore no makeup. He was confident, seemed relaxed and began the news conference with a joke. And his aides saw to it that a number of small details, like the open door, were arranged to mark the transition.

‘Very Serious Announcement’

Mr. Ford could have come through the open middle door to the East Room, grandly striding through the long halls with television cameras following his approach. It would have taken him directly to his lectern and was the shortest route in the room.

But instead he arranged to come by the crowded north door as planned and to leave by the south door.

He began with a joke about the formality of Presidential appearances.

“At the outset, I have a very important and a very serious

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To Our Readers

Effective Monday, Sept. 2, the newsstand price of the weekday New York Times will be increased from 15 cents to 20 cents in the New York metropolitan area and Long Island. Sharply higher operating costs, particularly the cost of newsprint, have made this price increase necessary. Beyond a 50-mile radius of New York City, the newsstand price of The Times will remain at 20 cents.

Further details appear in an article on Page 35.

An Open, Friendly Mood Prevails at News Session

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announcement," he said.

"There was a little confusion about the date of this press conference. My wife, Betty, had scheduled her first press conference for the same day and obviously I had scheduled my first press conference for this occasion.

"So Betty's was postponed. We worked this out between us in a calm and orderly way. She'll postpone her press conference till next week and until then, I'll be making my own breakfast, my own lunch and my own dinner."

It was no thigh slapper, but the reporters laughed and it set the plain and folksy tone Mr. Ford was trying to convey.

A series of other small touches supported the theme.

John W. Hushen, deputy Presidential press secretary, said that press aides had chosen not to use the large lectern that President Nixon had used in his later days at

the White House. In his first news conference as President, Mr. Nixon used no lectern and almost never carried papers.

Mr. Ford answered questions quickly. He fielded 27 questions in 28 minutes while his predecessor usually covered 19 or 20 in about the same time.

During Mr. Nixon's later news conferences it seemed that he consciously picked those in the press who were likely to ask harsh questions, as if to prove to the nation that the press indeed was out after him, or that he could handle the tough ones.

Mr. Ford seemed consciously to mix his questions among men, women, blacks, young and old—calling on old White House hands and newcomers.

President Ford plans to hold news conferences about every two weeks, Mr. Hushen said, under various settings—calling those with specialties at times and holding impromptu meetings.

Before today's news conference began, reporters who

Congress Study Backs Research on Weather

WASHINGTON, Aug. 28 (AP) — Government research on weather modification may make it possible to "alleviate drought, reduce destructive forces of hurricanes, suppress lightning and damaging hail and dissipate fog" a report to Congress says.

The report by the Controller General's office says research into changing the weather, now divided between seven Federal agencies, should be concentrated in one agency.

The report estimates that spending on weather modification has increased from about \$3-million in the fiscal year 1959 to about \$17-million in fiscal 1974.

were used to being tightly herded across the White House grounds instead flowed from the press center to the North Portico and stood in the muggy 91-degree afternoon, waiting to get inside.

If Mr. Nixon had manipulated such events to close them off, Mr. Ford seemed to be trying to manipulate them open.



President Ford passing reporters as he made his way to the lectern yesterday for his news conference in the East Room of the White House

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