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# Nixon's Health and Pardon

## Ford Says He Acted Solely to Heal Nation's Wounds

By Stuart Auerbach

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President Ford insisted last night that the health of former President Nixon — reported during the past week to have deteriorated — played a minor part in the decision to grant him a full pardon from Watergate-related crimes.

Mr. Ford said his main concern "was to heal the wounds throughout the United States . . . I was more anxious to heal the nation. That was the main priority."

The President also denied reports that he had been told by members of Mr. Nixon's family before the pardon that the former President was in poor health. Mr. Ford said he had received all his information about Mr. Nixon's health from newspaper and radio accounts, with the one exception of a rumor that the President looked from an unnamed age — believed to be Attorney General L. B. Nichols, who met with Mr. Nixon over the pardon.

Mr. Ford, however, failed to say what the aide told him.

Questions about Mr. Nixon's health were raised by a week-end of alarming and sometimes contradictory statements by the former President's doctor, A. Forrester Maj. Gen. Walter Tkach.

Tkach remained silent yesterday, and that silence — plus Mr. Ford's failure to dispel some of the mystery surrounding Mr. Nixon's health — left open the question of whether a legal case was being built to keep the former President from having to testify in the Watergate cover-up trial of some of his former aides.

While he was President, Mr. Nixon boasted that he had never suffered a headache in his life and that he had established a world record of 4½ years in the White House without having missed a day because of illness. Dr. Tkach, who called Mr. Nixon the healthiest President in modern history.

Yet since more than a month ago Mr. Nixon resigned the presidency under the cloud of Watergate and impeachment, Tkach told a different story.

Over the weekend, he pictured Mr. Nixon as a "ravaged" man whose spirit is broken, who fears hospitalization, feeling he would never come out alive and who is in danger of suffering a heart attack if he is subjected to more pressure and tension.

Tkach is a close Nixon friend and was the White House physician for the 5½ years of the Nixon presidency.

Accounts of Mr. Nixon's poor health also came last week from members of his family.

One family member, believed to be son-in-law Edward Cox, called the Associated Press last Tuesday to say that Mr. Nixon is in physical pain from a recurrence of phlebitis and he "very depressed."

Then on Thursday, Mr. Nixon's other son-in-law, David Eisenhower, gave a series of interviews in which he said the former President was bedridden with phlebitis and that a new blood clot had formed above the knee and caused his leg to swell to twice its normal size.

There is no doubt that phlebitis is a potentially serious illness, especially if it is not treated properly.

It is the inflammation of a vein and is accompanied by the formation of blood clots. The danger comes if a large clot flows into the lungs, here it can block a main vessel and cause instant death.

No one knows the cause of phlebitis, but doctors know that a person who has suffered one attack is likely to have more.

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His second attack occurred in June, just as he was embarking on a visit to the Middle East. He rejected Tkach's advice to cancel the trip and later Tkach reported that the blood clot had attached itself to the wall of the vein.

Mr. Nixon accepted the treatment doctors gave him during the Middle East trip, on the journey to the Soviet Union that followed and in the White House.

Since his resignation, however, friends reported that Mr. Nixon had stopped taking his medicines, probably an anti-inflammatory drug, and has refused to wear an elastic bandage on his leg to keep the swelling down.

On Friday, Dr. Tkach reported that Mr. Nixon rejected his advice to go to a hospital with the comment, "If I go into the hospital I'll never come out alive."

Nevertheless, Tkach said he will see the former President this week "and I'll just try to

get him to go to a hospital" where he could get the anti-coagulant drugs that are a standard treatment to dissolve blood clots. These must be administered intravenously in a hospital before they can be taken orally.

Tkach did not explain why the medical corpsman on duty at the Nixon home in San Clemente, along with medical personnel from the Marines' Camp Pendleton nearby, could not give the former President the anti-coagulants he needs.

Tkach told Newsweek that Mr. Nixon's condition is "much worse than when I saw him two weeks ago. He has no bounce, no responsiveness at all." He said Mr. Ford's pardon hadn't helped.

"It's going to take a miracle for him to recover," the former President's doctor said.

Tkach declined yesterday to explain why Mr. Nixon—who had always been in good health, who had weathered many serious crisis in the past and who bragged that he is at his best when the going is toughest—needed "a miracle" to recover from phlebitis.

The doctor never explained why he was willing to give newsmen alarming details of Mr. Nixon's illness that he had not given to Mrs. Nixon "for fear of frightening her."

In an effort to explain why a man who has always been in excellent health, who has lived a full and stressful life and who never showed signs of

heart disease suddenly faced the dangers of a heart attack if he is subjected to more strains or pressures, Tkach told a Parade magazine interviewer:

"I don't know of any man who's been under more stress and strain than the President. I don't know what the President's breaking point is. Every man has one. But his is certainly higher than anyone else's I can think of."

"The trouble with a breaking point," Tkach added, "is that it's difficult to tell when a man is approaching it. Usually we can assess a man's breaking point only in retrospect. Then, of course, it's too late, because he's already broken."