

Ford Asserts Patient Shows Sign of Strain

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By JON NORDHEIMER NOV 2 1974
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LONG BEACH, Calif., Nov. 1—President Ford visited former President Richard M. Nixon in the hospital today and said later that Mr. Nixon was showing physical strain.

"It was very obvious to me that he has been very, very ill," Mr. Ford remarked after an eight-minute visit to the former President's room in the intensive care section of Memorial Hospital Medical Center of Long Beach.

Mr. Nixon's doctors reported today that the former President's condition was stable but remained serious, with evidence that there has been a halt in the internal bleeding that had complicated his recovery since surgery Tuesday to reduce the hazard of a phlebitis condition.

The President interrupted a political swing through the West Coast to drop by the hospital at mid-morning. He later flew to Fresno, Calif., to aid the campaign of Representative Robert B. Mathias.

"Obviously, he's a very sick man," Mr. Ford told newsmen as he left the hospital, "but I think he's coming along very, very well. He was very interested in the discussion I had with him concerning my forthcoming trip to Japan, South Korea, the Soviet Union."

He said he had also given Mr. Nixon a quick briefing on Secretary of State Kissinger's diplomatic trip abroad.

The President entered the cardiac care unit at 10:10 A.M., and was greeted by the Nixon family. There was an emotional and fervent, though apparently not tearful greeting. The President hugged Mrs. Nixon, then

kissed her. Mr. Ford kissed the Nixon daughters, Julie Eisenhower and Tricia Cox and then spread his arms wide and hugged all three simultaneously.

"It's great to see you," Ron Nessen later reported the President telling Mrs. Nixon. "I talked to Betty this morning."

Mrs. Nixon was wearing a powder blue suit with paisley lapels. Tricia was wearing a white dress with white boots; Julie had on a red blouse, scarf and black shirt.

At 10:12, according to Mr. Nessen, Mr. Ford entered room 704, two doors down from the former President and talked with Mrs. Nixon and the girls for five minutes. At 10:17, he went to the end of the corridor to room 706 and began his visit with the former President. He was taken in by Dr. John C. Lungren, who stayed only briefly. The two men talked for eight minutes.

Mr. Nessen said later that the visit had been essentially a surprise to the former President, who was told about it three minutes before Mr. Ford walked in the door.

The former President was fully conscious and was wearing a white hospital gown. He was propped up in the bed, which had been elevated about 30 degrees. The President, who called his predecessor "Dick" during the conversation, sat in a chair at Mr. Nixon's left. Mr. Nessen said monitoring equipment was visible above the bed.

Mr. Nessen said that Mr. Nixon had no difficulty talking but that "his voice was husky."

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He added, "His hair was mussed, he was clearly drawn and he had lost weight." But Mr. Nessen did not think the President appeared haggard.

Mr. Ford asked Mr. Nixon, "Did you have a good night?" Mr. Nixon replied, "one of the nights are too good."

As he got up to leave Mr. Ford exhorted Mr. Nixon to "be well" then took the former President's right hand in his right hand. The President left the room at 10:25 and went back to Room 704 to talk with the Nixon girls for about two minutes before he left the seventh floor. None of the Nixon family accompanied him from the cardiac suite.

The President left the hospital at 10:33.

Mr. Ziegler, the former White House press secretary, said the patient had not been informed of Mr. Ford's visit until a few minutes before the President entered the room, on the advice of Mr. Nixon's physicians, who wanted to minimize the "excitement" connected with the visit.

"I saw President Nixon briefly after the visit and he was, of course, very tired and appeared to be very weak after this morning's activity," Mr. Ziegler said.

Much of his exhaustion was due, Mr. Ziegler said, to routine tests and activity that the former President underwent before the visit. When he entered the former President's room, Mr. Ziegler told newsmen, Mr. Nixon was telling a nurse: "You know with the bath this morning and the other things you've been doing to me, it's been a very busy morning and I'm very tired."

"He did say, however, in about the 45 seconds I spent with him, Mr. Ziegler continued, "that it was very nice of President Ford 'to come see me' and then he said it was really very thoughtful of him to take the time to come to the hospital."

It was the first meeting of the men in 84 days, since Mr. Nixon resigned the Presidency and flew to California and into seclusion.

Asked to describe the President's reaction to the meeting, Mr. Ziegler demurred. "I don't want to characterize President Ford's observations or how he felt," he said.

"He has a press secretary who can do that. I would only offer a personal response. To see President Nixon lying there as he is, is trying for those

who have affection for him and for those who hold respect for him. It's not easy to see him in this condition."

About 150 persons gathered at the main entrance to the hospital to watch Mr. Ford's arrival and departure. The crowd, composed mostly of patients and hospital visitors, was friendly and applauded the

President when he arrived and when he left.

The President had traveled to Long Beach municipal airport by helicopter from Los Angeles where he had spent the night after attending a dinner for Houston I. Flournoy, the Republican candidate for Governor, and went by limousine to the hospital.

President Visits Nixon for 8 Minutes



United Press International

President Ford leaving the intensive-care unit where he visited Richard M. Nixon yesterday at Memorial Hospital Medical Center in Long Beach, Calif. At right is Ron Nessen, White House press secretary.