

Folks at Leisure World Roar For Reagan--'He's Like a Son'

By Michael Harris
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Leisure World,
Orange county

"They were very polite to the President," said Kathleen Bryant, a political activist who heard both candidates during their visits this week to the 18,000-member Leisure World retirement community in the hills of Orange County.

"But they relate to what Ronald Reagan did for the state after eight years of having the older Brown as governor."

Only the most persistent and hardy of the elderly had a chance to get into the 800-seat auditorium where Reagan spoke. The line outside the building started forming at noon, and anyone who wasn't in place by 1:30 p.m. had to settle for closed-circuit television.

When Reagan arrived at five o'clock, he found an audience ready to cheer every conservative word he voiced.

There was also a scattering of applause when Reagan praised "Mr. Ford's predecessor for leaving us with a far better Supreme Court than we've had for years."

A reference to former President Richard Nixon's accomplishments in foreign affairs also drew mild cheers.

Bryant and her husband, Edwin, had headed a group of 50 volunteers who worked at San Clemente helping Mr. and Mrs. Nixon answer their mail.

By now, she said, all but two have quit helping the Nixons and, she added, "every one of them is for Reagan."

"They relate to him like a son. He's Mr. Clean," she added.

It isn't every place that a 66-year-old politician can be thought of as a member of the coming generation. But it also isn't every day that a candidate gets asked, "How about a square deal for the veterans of World War I?"

"The nation that forgets its defenders," replied Reagan, quoting Calvin Coolidge, "will itself be forgotten."

He offered some general views on government to his solidly Republican audience.

"You can't socialize the doctor without socializing the patient,"

Reagan said in response to a question about national health care.

The audience, including a few members in wheelchairs, applauded in approval.

"I don't think it makes any sense to take money to Washington, have them deduct part of it as a carrying charge, and then send part of it back after dictating how it is to be spent," Reagan said.

Reagan offered bits of humor. He apologized for not bringing his wife, Nancy, with him, explaining she was regularly assigned to work the campaign trail at places he couldn't visit.

"You've heard that politics makes strange bedfellows," Reagan continued. "In our cases, they're making a couple of bedfellows strangers."

The humor turned up at other campaign stops throughout the counties south of Los Angeles, where Reagan hopes to pile up an overwhelming lead to assure him victory in the June 8 primary against President Ford no matter

what happens in the rest of the state.

"They say the Republicans never innovate anything, but Herbert Hoover did," Reagan told one questioner who complained about taxes.

"He gave his entire salary to the federal government, and now the rest of us do the same thing every April 15."

At another stop: "The latest development in New York City is that the muggers are demonstrating—they want more parks."

And: "I think Hubert Humphrey's bandwagon has become a streetcar named desire."

In San Diego, Reagan said he believed Humphrey might still turn back the Jimmy Carter surge in the Democratic Party, and become the candidate he or Mr. Ford will oppose this fall.

"All the other candidates seem to be more atuned to each other than they are to Carter," Reagan said.

"They may decide to band

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together. The gossip out of California is that Hubert Horatio Humphrey would agree to be a four-year president with Teddy Kennedy as vice president."

Reagan drew his biggest crowd of the day, 2500, at an outdoor rally in San Diego where he also attracted his first pickets — about 30 young men and women bearing signs urging the United States to give up the Panama Canal.

But Reagan's crowd cheered loudly when he said, "This country can not give away under threat of force something that is ours by treaty right."