

# Marianne Means

## Washington sideshow

WASHINGTON — Jerry Ford and Jimmy Carter are both running for president for the first time, meaning the campaign which begins in earnest tomorrow may turn not on who wins it but on who doesn't lose it.

Carter observed wryly at a gathering of Democratic state chairmen here that "We've already made some mistakes — I think that's inevitable in the Democratic party."

The President, for his part, has just taken an astonishing gamble by picking as his campaign manager James Baker, who has absolutely no national campaign experience.

Fortunately, not everybody has to hit the hustings this fall:

Item: Richard Nixon, ignored by his party's convention and politically isolated at his San Clemente estate, has some strong opinions about the presidential campaign anyway. He recently told a visitor that he believed Ford had a hard job ahead but would in the end win the election.

Nixon also said he didn't think Sen. Robert Dole was a wise choice for vice president because Dole adds nothing to the ticket. "Ford should have chosen either John Connally or Ronald Reagan," Nixon said.

Item: Whispers that White House press secretary Ron Nessen is on his way out have risen to a deafening roar. The word is that Nessen will not be press secretary after the end of the year, regardless of whether Ford is elected.

His probable replacement, if and when: Bill Greener, former Pentagon press spokesman who is now Ford's campaign press boss.

Item: Political losers don't die, they just fade quietly — and slowly — away. At least, their staffs do. Reagan headquarters here will continue to function for another two months, sans candidate. There is a lot of bookkeeping still to be done, because of the financial filing requirements under the new campaign law.