

# The Ex-President Golfs, Writes and Waits

## San Clemente

Four years ago, 47 million voters gave Richard Nixon their nation's highest honor.

Now Mr. Nixon is in utter isolation, almost in hiding, either in his Casa Pacifica home or on a golf course.

The former president has not taken part in the campaign. He has not given his support to Gerald Ford, the man he put in office, nor has he been asked to.

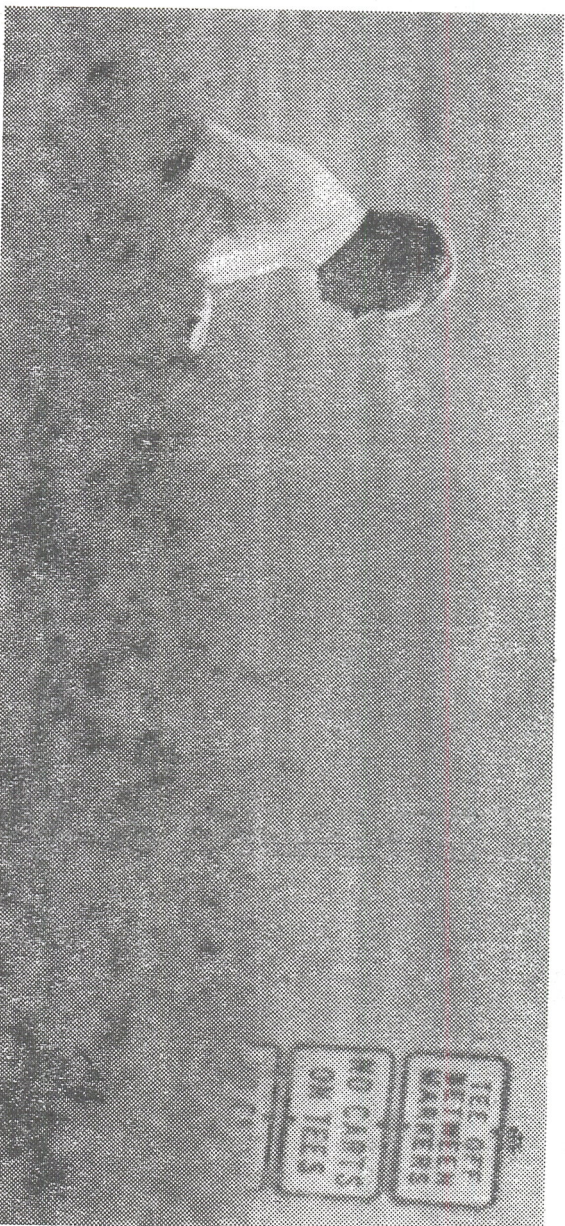
"All Carter needs is for Nixon to endorse Ford or to indicate he is working for his election," says Donna Wilkinson, a San Clemente city councilwoman and Republican in this town where the GOP outnumbered Democrats 5 to 1.

Mr. Nixon has recovered his health. He plays golf three and sometimes four times a week, often as many as 36 holes in a single day, zipping around in an electric cart with Secret Service agents never more than a few yards away.

His favorite course is Shorecliffs, a public links on the northern edge of San Clemente. An aide telephones to say Mr. Nixon is on his way. He tees off with no waiting, then "plays through" the golfers ahead of him.

A few weeks ago a group of young boys gathered near the first tee and, as Mr. Nixon prepared to hit his drive, one of them called out:

"Hey, Nixon, do you cheat at golf like you did in the White



Richard Nixon on his favorite golf course, Shorecliffs in San Clemente

LPI Telephone

House?"

He acted as if he had not heard the remark. Clubhouse attendants shooed the boys off, and Mr. Nixon went ahead with his game.

But that moment was rare, not only because of his ultraprivate routine but also because this community seems to have banded together to ensure that privacy.

You walk into the Walgreen's drug store on Avenida del Mar, and the matronly clerk at the cash register is friendly until you ask if she ever sees Mr. Nixon.

"No, I haven't seen him," she snaps. "I only saw him once when

he was president."

Warren Esterline, managing editor of the San Clemente Sun Pilot, agrees folks are somewhat protective of the town's most famous resident.

"I think the majority think he is a good guy," says Esterline. "They think he was removed from office improperly, that it was full of politics. It is something they would like to forget about."

The Sun Pilot conducted an informal telephone poll from numbers chosen at random from the directory, asking: "Are you still interested in reading or hearing about the activities of Richard

Nixon?"

The survey produced 310 replies with 54 per cent responding "No," 43 per cent "Yes," and three per cent refusing comment.

Esterline says he feels that many of those who said they did not wish to hear any more about Mr. Nixon really meant they didn't feel he should endure further exposure in the media.

B. Patrick Lane, an attorney and the town's Republican mayor, says he doesn't believe people shield Mr. Nixon, or that San Clemente treats him any differently than would other sections of the country, or that it is unusual that

he is never seen around town.

"I think many people feel that he made a grave mistake but that he has paid a terrible price for it," says Lane. "There are those who defend him very strongly, but I have heard equally the reverse.

"And I don't think it is strange that you don't see him on the streets in view of the office he held and the manner he left it. It isn't as if this were his home town, that he delivered papers as a boy, had a lot of friends. He simply bought property on the south edge of town. We seldom saw him when he was president.

"You would hardly expect him to come down to the beer bar and arm wrestle with the boys."

Although it is impossible to get information from Nixon's office about his routine, visitors agree he is working long hours on his book of memoirs and preparing for television interviews with David Frost.

A reporter for the Wall Street Journal did manage a brief chat with Mr. Nixon at Shorecliffs not long ago, and the former president said he was working on the book every day.

"Writing is the toughest thing I've ever done," Mr. Nixon said.

There is speculation about what Nixon will do when the election is over. Many Nixon watchers feel he will emerge from his cocoon and attempt to take an active part in public affairs.

United Press