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"I'm counting on being around for the campaign next year."

"[There is] no reason whatsoever to trade in your reliable Ford for a flashier model."

Jerry Ford

Chapter IX

The Reagan Challenge: Winning the 1976 GOP Presidential Nomination

Jerry Ford did not know that his fortuitous occupancy of the White House preempted the well-laid plans of the former governor of California, Ronald Reagan. The Californian, then dividing his time between his home in Pacific Palisades and his 688-acre spread, Rancho del Cielo (Ranch in the Sky), already had planned to seek the Republican nomination for the presidency after Richard Nixon completed his second term. Reagan, after Nixon's premature exit, was dubious for a time about the wisdom of challenging an incumbent Republican until convinced otherwise by John Sears, a Washington lawyer who later became his campaign manager. Sears argued, "Jerry Ford can't cut the mustard, he's not perceived as a leader, he can't lead the Congress or the country." Sears cajoled Reagan very persuasively, insisting

