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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

September 19, 1974

Dear Rip,

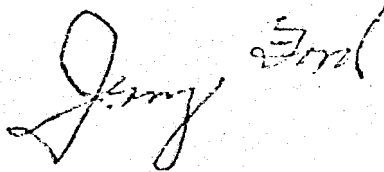
Many thanks for your good letter of August 21 which has been awaiting my attention for some time now.

I am glad to have the real story on those few words by Dick Hanley, but I am pleased that you enjoyed the article in Sports Illustrated.

I truly appreciate your good wishes and support as I begin my duties as President.

With warmest personal regards.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jimmy Ford". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely,".

Mr. Edward Whalen  
253 E. Delaware Place  
Chicago, Illinois

were usually the finishers. We held Minnesota, the Big Ten champion that year with such stars as Pug Lund, Phil Bengtson and Bud Wilkinson, scoreless in the first half, and missed two good scoring opportunities ourselves. Then we ran down and were overwhelmed 34-0. (Having been worn out once too often, I would say that today's unlimited substitution is better. More people get to play, and the game is less a test of stamina and more of skill.)

But though we weren't very good, we weren't very exciting, either. Kipke's style was written up in *The Saturday Evening Post* under the headline "A Punt, A Pass and A Prayer." As far as I know that was the origin of the phrase, and it bespoke the Michigan system: Play tough defense. Punt when in doubt. Force the other guy into mistakes. Then score on a pass. And pray for deliverance. We *always* kicked off. We *always* punted on third down inside our own 25, unless we had about a yard to go. We played tough defense—a straight 6-2-2-1, with none of the sliding and stunting you see today. We ran the short punt to death. We were dull.

That last year we had an excellent passer named Bill Renner, who broke his leg before the season started. Our punter was the best I ever saw in pro or college, John Regeczi, and he got hurt in the third game. If your system depends on a punt, a pass and a prayer, and all you have left is a prayer—well, that might put you in good hands, but you better not count on any favors. We lost seven out of eight.

Despite our humble record I was invited to play in the East-West Shrine Game in San Francisco on Jan. 1, 1935, primarily on the recommendation of Dick Hanley, the Northwestern coach. I had had a pretty good day against his star guard, Rip Whalen. According to Hanley, when he asked Whalen why Michigan made so much ground up the middle that day, Whalen said, "Ford was the best blocking center I ever played against." I still cherish that remark.

The Shrine signed two centers for the East, a boy from Colgate named George Akerstrom, and me. On the train ride from Chicago to California, Curly Lambeau, the coach of the Packers, went from player to player, plying the good ones about their pro football interest. He ignored me. Then in the first two minutes of the game Akerstrom got hurt. I played the rest of the way—58 minutes, offense and defense. After the game a group of us were given the option of a train ride home or a free trip to Los Angeles to see the movie studios. Being a conservative Midwesterner unacquainted with glamour, I naturally chose Hollywood.

On the train from San Francisco to Los Angeles, Curly Lambeau sat with me the whole way. He suddenly knew my name. And he asked me to sign with the Packers. I told him I'd think about it.

That August I played in the All-Star game in Chicago, the second in which the college stars played a pro team. We had Don Hutson and a number of outstanding players, but the Bears beat us 5-0. Shortly after that I got Curly's offer in writing: \$200 a game for the 14 games. Patsy Clark of the Lions matched the bid.

But pro football did not have the allure it has now, and though my interest was piqued I didn't lose any sleep over my decision. When Ducky Pond, the Yale coach, came to

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