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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

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Nessen  
sen*

TO: Ron Nessen ✓  
Sheila Weidenfeld

FROM: MILDRED LEONARD

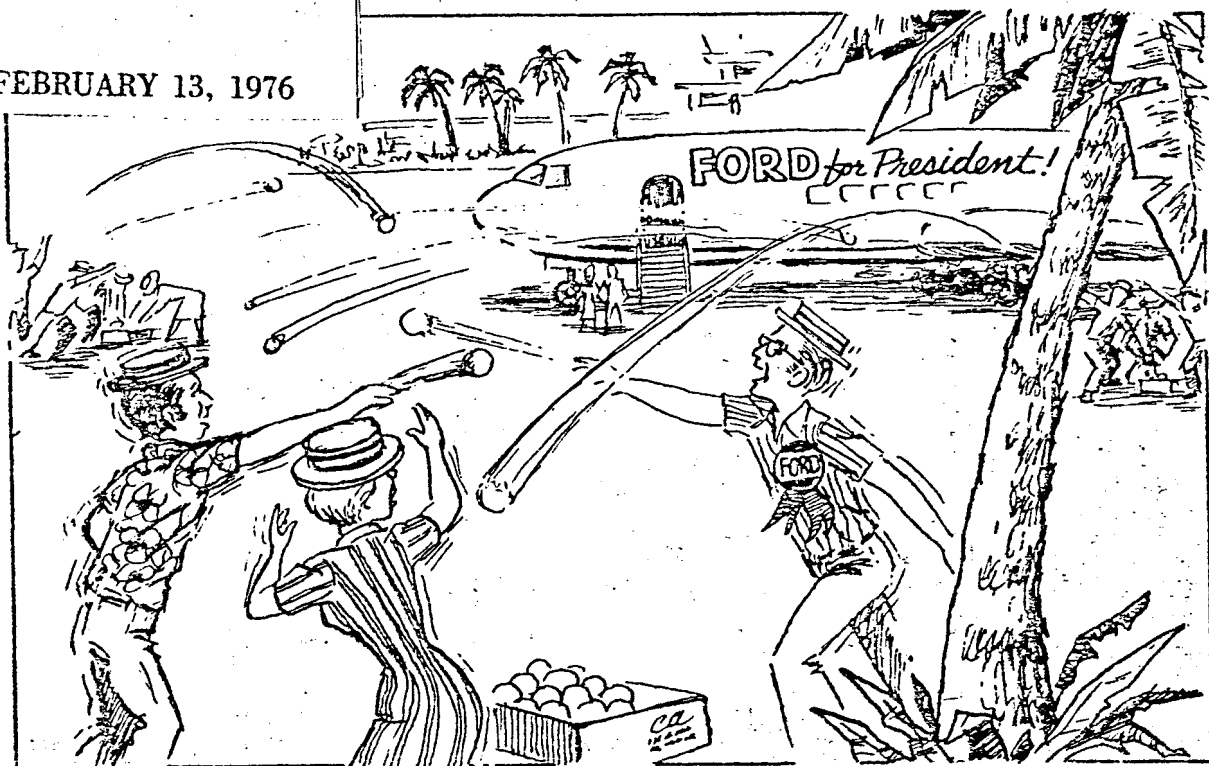
FOR: Information x

Appropriate Handling \_\_\_\_\_

Pete Secchia asked me to send this to you with following corrections: The group will now land at Tampa, go to St. Petersburg and visit a VA hosp. and participate in parade to a downtown park; then go to Ft. Lauderdale for precinct activities and be in Palm Beach on Sunday.

DATE: 2/18/76

TO MILDRED LEONARD



## Ford Flight Plans Snowballing

By Maury DeJonge

A snowball fight in Orlando, Fla., and the possibility of participation by President Ford's three half-brothers will highlight a visit by local residents Feb. 21-22 to the Sunshine State.

Purpose of the trip is to drum up support for the President in the crucial March 9 Florida primary.

Peter Secchia, local business executive and close friend of the President, feels Grand Rapids residents are better able than anyone to tell Florida residents why they should support Ford.

A charter flight of campaign volunteers will leave Kent County Airport the morning of Feb. 21 for Orlando. The trip is being arranged by Friends of the First Family. Everyone taking part will pay his own way.

"We're going to take some Michigan snowballs with us and have a snowball fight right at the Orlando airport," Secchia said. The group also plans to pass out Michigan apples and litter bags with the slogan, "Keep it Clean with Jerry."

Thomas G. Ford, one of the President's half-brothers, will be on the plane, and brother Dick will make an effort to go along, Secchia said. The third brother, James, is scheduled to

meet the Grand Rapids delegation in Orlando.

Another special guest who has signed up for the trip is Lt. Gov. James Damman.

To keep the cost down, some travelers will take sleeping bags and sleep on the beach or in a public park in the Pompano Beach-Ft. Lauderdale area. For those who aren't used to roughing it, there will be motel accommodations.

Secchia said more than 40 persons have signed up to date, but added that the group may be as large as 80 or 90. He said the trip is more personal than political.

"We just like Jerry Ford, and we feel that some people in Florida don't know what a bright and totally dedicated guy he is."

Participants will represent a cross-section of local residents. Checks for \$200 per person have been requested. If the cost is less, refunds will be made. Checks must be made payable to Friends of the First Family, 3153 Three Mile Rd. NE.

The delegation will pass out Ford buttons and campaign literature at shopping centers in the areas visited. The group will return home Sunday night. Reservations may be made by calling 949-6221.



# *Ford Backers Head For Sunshine, Votes*

By Maury DeJonge

President Gerald R. Ford's primary campaign in Florida will take on a home town flavor Feb. 21-22 as his supporters plug for votes in what is considered a crucial state.

Peter Secchia, local business executive and close friend of the President, said a charter flight of campaign volunteers will leave Kent County Airport the morning of Feb. 21 and fly directly to Orlando. The trip is being arranged by Friends of the First Family.

"We are getting great response from persons who want to go," Secchia said. "At this point we don't know exactly how many persons will make the trip, and the type of aircraft will depend on the number who participate."

It marks the first time in the history of local politics that campaigning of this sort has been planned.

"We are asking each person to make checks payable to Friends of the First Family, 3153 Three Mile Rd. NE," Secchia said. Checks of \$200 per person have been requested. If the cost is less, refunds will be made.

Other areas to be visited include the Pompano Beach—Ft. Lauderdale and Clearwater-St. Petersburg areas. The Grand Rapids delegation will visit shopping centers, passing out Ford buttons and campaign literature.

A bagpipe band will meet the group in Orlando; transportation between cities will be by plane. The delegation will stay overnight in the Pompano Beach-Ft. Lauderdale area.

Secchia said for those who have religious conflicts regarding campaigning Sunday, arrangements have been made for them to attend church services.

"This will be a working trip, with no time for visits to the beach," Secchia said. "We hope to attract the attention of the Florida news media to draw attention to the President's campaign."

The March 9 Florida primary is considered crucial by Ford's campaign organization. Secchia said he hopes the Feb. 21 trip will gain national attention because it will take place three days before the Feb. 24 New Hampshire primary.

The group has received an offer from Gov. William G. Milliken to appear at the Kent airport to see the group take off.

Secchia said he is looking for a cross-section of local residents for the trip. Several county commissioners have made reservations as have area legislators. "But we also are interested in those persons who previously have not been real active in party politics," Secchia said.

The group will return to Grand Rapids Sunday night. Persons who would like to be included may make reservations by calling Secchia's home, 949-6221.

Secchia said the group handling the arrangements will meet again Friday to complete plans.

December 8, 1976

**MEMO FOR:**

**Mildred Leonard**

**FROM:**

**Ron Nessen**

**I received a letter today from Mike Ellis requesting that I pass on his letter and enclosure to the President.**

**The files indicate that Mr. Ellis has, indeed, corresponded directly in the past with the President.**

**Therefore, will you please handle the attached for me. Thank you.**

**Enclosures**

**RN:ct**

