

December 22, 1974

POOL REPORT

You will see by the pool report that Susan has with her her best friend, whose 18th birthday was today, so they celebrated on Air Force One, a surprise party and they had a cake. The girl's name was Barbara Manfuso, M-a-n-f-u-s-o, and she is the daughter of John Manfuso of Chevy Chase in Washington.

The two girls met when they were in the ninth grade at Holton Arms.

Air Force One landed at Grand Junction at 13:27 and was uneventful. There were a few aviation-types hanging around and a few reporters and cameramen.

Q Helen, are you giving Rocky Mountain time or Eastern Time?

MISS THOMAS: Local Colorado time -- no, 10:40 -- I am sorry, Eastern Time.

Ford and Mrs. Ford and some of the staff got on the helicopter, Huey helicopter one, and Susan and other members of the staff got on helicopter two and the press and Secret Service agents were on helicopter three. We flew for about an hour over the foothills of the Rocky Mountains.

It is 140 miles from Grand Junction to Avon, which is where we landed.

And it was the view below with the Yellow Mountains and pretty soon we got into some hairy situations and snow-covered peaks and at times sort of blinding storms sort of briefly. Looking down, it wasn't a pleasant sight but beautiful at times.

We flew at one time at an altitude of 8900 feet.

We could see the jagged peaks and Mrs. Ford said she was enthralled with the beauty and that heights did not bother her. The only time she was bothered by heights was when she was at the top of the Empire State Building. She said you could see the barren beauty of this desolate country.

When they left Washington, Ford was in a brown business suit and no topcoat and when he got into the cold weather of Colorado he put on a brown tweed coat with a fur collar -- the same one he wore to the Army-Navy football game.

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Mrs. Ford was wearing a brown fur coat and she didn't wear a hat even when we hit a light snow flurry here. It is beaver, I think, with the mink border.

They brought along the dog, as you know, and Mrs. Ford said it was the first time the dog had seen snow and also Susan carried her pet Siamese cat, Shan, in a cat carrier when they arrived. We landed in a very barren field and as the helicopters -- at Avon -- and there were only a few buildings and it was snowing. At the time the choppers landed they created such a stir a whole herd of sheep began to run.

Ford came off his helicopter holding Liberty on a leash and it was bitterly cold. This is when we got our first taste of what it would be like at Vail.

They got into a small motorcade at Avon right next to this snowcovered field where we landed, and made the drive, which is about ten miles from Avon to Vail.

The first thing, we got stopped by a freight train at a crossing and had to wait for about a 30-car freight to go by.

When the Fords arrived at the Bass home, it was old home week. Their neighbors came up and friends they have known in Vail for years and years. Ford grabbed up little children and there was a lot of stomping around and laughing. A Jim Brown, who is an old friend of Ford's, said, "Welcome to snow country." This is the Brown who owns the ranch at Tremonton, Utah.

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Also one of the first people to greet the President was Bill Brown, who is manager of Slopes and Trails at Vail. And they got to discussing what the ski conditions were. He told them that there was a 15 to 20 mile an hour wind and near zero temperature on the slopes, and Ford said that was all right with him. And he made arrangements to ski at 2 o'clock.

Ford said, "I am looking forward to it," and according to Nessen, after the amenities, he went into the house and there was a buffet set up with sandwiches and soup and Ford didn't tarry. He went down to the basement and tried on his red ski boots.

He also, as you can see by the pool report, has a new ski outfit and he is very anxious to try it out. It is his first new ski attire in 6 years and he wouldn't tell us what color it was. He said, "Why don't you wait and see?"

Mrs. Ford, despite the fact she has been ailing recently, said she hoped to try some cross-country skiing. She said she doesn't know if she will or not, but she said, "I feel much better," and that she intends to make use of the sauna baths here.

She also said that they still have a lot of Christmas shopping to do and that she brought along some books and has just about finished Upstairs at the White House, by former White House usher Bernard West.

She also pointed out that this is the first time the Fords ever have come here by helicopter. They always drive and the trip takes something like four hours from Grand Junction to here. They cut off 1/4 of the time.

They have a tradition of going to church on Christmas Eve, you will be happy to know. And then they go back to the house and open their Christmas gifts. We gathered that everybody knows what they are getting before hand -- lots of ski wear.

Then on Christmas morning -- by this time they have all drawn a name and each one fills one of the Christmas stockings, and these stockings were made when each child was one year old, or for the first Christmas by Ford's mother who is now dead -- red felt stockings which I gather they hang on the mantle.

Their son Jack has been in Aspen and he is coming here. He should be here already probably. Steve is already here. I guess he came from Montana where he is on a ranch working.

So after we had left, Nessen said that the President is preparing to go skiing at 2 p.m. and that it is 6 degrees on the slopes. His ski instructor is Dennis C. Hoeger, and the ski run is called Simba.

Among the friends who greeted them at the house were Mr. and Mrs. James Brown, whom we already mentioned, from Utah; and Mr. and Mrs. Ted Kindel, who are now at Vail but they come from Ford's home town of Grand Rapids.

Mrs. Ford also said that she was a little nostalgic when she drove by their old condominium -- that they weren't going to be staying there. She said to herself, "gee I wish we were going to our place." She said it made packing a little bit difficult. She had to remember all sorts of things to take along, like bandaids. They normally have a lot of belongings in their condominium year round and they would be here when they arrived.

Rumsfeld is supposed to come over to the house at 8 a.m. tomorrow and start working with Ford. They have 150 bills and lots of other work.

Happy skiing!!!!

Fran Lewine / Helen Thomas

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