

POOL REPORT

(Reutrn, Vail to Washington, Thursday, Jan. 2.)

The President, wearing his furcollared brown tweed coat and no hat, came out of the Bass House with Mrs. Ford (brown fur coat) and Susan (camel-hair coat) at 11:45 a.m. President was leading Liberty on a leash.

With a ~~group~~<sup>KNOT</sup> of neighbors watching from the road, they shook hands with various locals, including Larry Buendorf, head of the Secret Service ski detail.

Six-car motorcade, with police cars fore and aft, left at 11:50 a.m. President and Mrs. Ford were in a blue Continental, along with Liberty. Susan rode in a yellow Continental with her escort, Gardner Britt. It was snowing lightly. Uneventful motorcade to Avon, where party changed to three helicopters at 12:05 p.m.

At Avon, there was a brief exchange in which the President said he "had a ~~brief~~ great time, but it's nice to get back; it really is."

Q<sup>U</sup>estion: What's your reaction to the Watergate verdict?

President: I don't think it's appropriate for me to comment.

Uneventful helicopter flight over snowy peaks began at 12:15, ended at 1:20 p.m. at Grand Junction airport. Snow had stopped, weak sun was out.

Walking to his plane, the President seemed to be favoring his right leg. Aboard Air Force One, Messen told us this was true, but Mr. Ford "did not injure himself out there at all." Messen said the President favors the leg "once in a while" because he hurt that ~~knee~~ knee playing football. But he emphasized that no skiing injury was involved. He said the President has had similar trouble in the past after tennis and ~~skiing~~ golf. Dr. Lukash says there's no treatment for it, "it just goes away." He said Lukash says there is no new injury at all.

After quick takeoff, which you saw, at 1:35 p.m., Messen came back to tell us:

-- That the President had signed 15 bills. He said the list of bills and statements was being made public by the White House in Washington, along with the retirement of Lewis Mumford as Librarian of Congress.

-- That the President, soon after takeoff, began a conference in the forward compartment with staff chief Donald Rumsfeld, White House Counsel Philip W. Buchen and John O. Marsh, his assistant for Congressional liaison. WE SAW NONE OF THE ADVISERS ON THE PLANE.

(Messen said Buchen and Marsh flew to ~~Washington~~ Grand Junction from Andrews when the plane was ferried out ~~to~~ to Colorado Thursday morning. We were told there was no hangar space for the plane at Grand Junction, so it returned after ~~the~~ the flight out Dec. 25.)

Messen declined to specify the subject of the conference, saying only that it dealt with more than one subject and the President "has a lot of work to do this month and he's taking advantage of the trip.

Messen reviewed the schedule for the next few days with no substantial changes: Friday--Trade bill signing and signing of other bills; Sat.--Economic meeting and more bill signing. Sun--midnight bill deadline; ~~sign~~ sign last bills.