

Gerald R. Ford Foundation *Newsletter*



Fall 1990

Foundation Annual Meeting

The ninth annual meeting of the Gerald R. Ford Foundation's Board of Trustees took place at the Capitol Hill Club in Washington, D.C., on June 4, 1990.

After the election of members and officers (see page 2 for the trustee roster), the Board adopted the Foundation's budget for 1990-91. It heard reports on Foundation-funded conferences, research grants, special programs, and exhibits. Among other topics, the trustees discussed plans for the new Gerald R. Ford Colloquium on public policy to be held at the Library in the Spring of 1991.

Archivist of the United States **Don Wilson**, an ex officio member of the Board and former Director of the Ford Library, reported on the great success of the Presidential Libraries Advisory Panel. He also congratulated the Ford Foundation for providing the "margin of excellence" in Ford Library and Museum programs by funding public outreach, educational activities, and special exhibits.

In his remarks, President Ford urged trustees to join him in supporting the Library's renewed effort to identify and secure the manuscript collections of those who served in his administration. He expressed his and Mrs. Ford's appreciation for the trustees' dedication



White House Chief of Staff John Sununu speaking to Foundation members and guests after the annual meeting.

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to the Foundation's work.

After the meeting, the Foundation hosted a dinner for nearly two hundred people, including twelve former Cabinet

Secretaries, who served with President Ford. Governor **John Sununu**, Chief of Staff to President George Bush, delivered after-dinner remarks.

Peter Secchia, U.S. Ambassador to Italy

Following an appointment surrounded by media criticism, **Peter Secchia**, Grand Rapids businessman and charter member of the Board of Trustees of the Gerald R. Ford Foundation, has settled into his new job as U.S. ambassador to Italy.

Positive press reviews have replaced negative coverage. In addition to performing ceremonial duties and managing the embassy, Secchia has made an effort to get to know the Italian people, language, and customs.

Secchia and his wife Joan have enlisted the help of their friends, including members of the Foundation and staff of

Community, which plans to remove its internal trade barriers to become a single market by the end of 1992.

Secchia said that the most common mistake U.S. business people make is failing to learn the language of countries they want to trade with. "If you can't communicate, you can't survive." He said that in America, "if you speak three languages you're trilingual. If you speak two languages you're bilingual. If you speak one language you're a businessman."

Secchia has played an important part in the work of the Gerald R. Ford Founda-



Ambassador Peter Secchia chats with President Ford in the garden of the American Embassy in Rome.

the National Archives, in redecorating several rooms in the ambassador's residence, Villa Taverna. One of the suites is named for Gerald Ford and now contains photographs and mementos of Ford's career, supplied by the Ford Library.

The new ambassador also sees himself as a salesman for the free market system. Back in Grand Rapids in May for a world trade conference, Secchia encouraged area businesses to pursue ventures in Italy.

He stressed the advantages to U.S. businesses in having economic dealings with Italy, noting that Italy can serve as an entree into the European Economic

tion. He helped conceive and organize "Humor and the Presidency," a nationally televised symposium at the Ford Museum in 1986.

More recently, Secchia and his wife Joan generously contributed the funds to renovate and update the equipment and slide show in the Bicentennial Amphitheater at the Museum. Through synchronized slides and music, the amphitheater program allows visitors to relive the spirit of the 1976 bicentennial year.

Secchia has also donated a portion of his personal papers relating to his long association with the Ford family to the Library.

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Gerald R. Ford Colloquium Planned

Plans are underway for the inaugural Gerald R. Ford Colloquium to be held at the Library next April. The colloquium, which will become an annual event, will be sponsored by the Gerald R. Ford Foundation, and will bring together a panel of experts to explore a topic of current interest. A distinguished guest speaker will present a paper which, along with the proceedings of the session, will be published and distributed.

The topics will change each year. The emphasis will be on selecting an issue that will command attention, that can be tied to contemporary policy development in the government, and that is the subject of popular and academic investigation.

The topic for 1991 will be "German Reunification, the Atlantic Alliance, and

a New American Foreign Policy."

William G. Hyland has agreed to be the keynote speaker. Hyland, an often consulted authority on U.S. foreign policy, was associated with the National Security Council during the 1970s, was a Senior Fellow at the Georgetown University Center for Strategic and International Studies, and is currently editor of *Foreign Affairs*.

Panelists, who will represent a number of perspectives, will be chosen for their first-hand experience with the policy issue or for their research or academically-based interest in it.

The Library hopes the colloquium will help to inform the public as well as influence policy-makers.



William G. Hyland

Library Seeks New Collections

The Library's first priority for the next two years is to improve the quality of its collections. After a meeting with President Ford on January 31, Library staff launched an ambitious effort to identify and seek the donation of papers that will help document the Ford presidency.

Since that time, more than three hundred contacts have been made with Cabinet officials, senior White House staff, journalists, and scholars. The response has been encouraging. In the past two months, for example, the Library has received papers from such people as Leo Cherne, member of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board and the Intelligence Oversight Board during the Ford administration, and William Fisher, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Energy and Minerals, 1975-77.

The effort to build the Library's collection targets four subjects: the operation of the White House and the executive branch, the campaign and election of 1976, national and international economic matters, and energy and the environment.

"Our core collection is sound," says Library Director **Frank Mackaman**, "but

we have an unusual opportunity now to strengthen it by adding new materials." The Library currently holds over 9,000 cubic feet of records totalling more than 18 million pages. In addition to Gerald Ford's own congressional, vice presidential, and presidential papers, there are the files of more than 100 White House advisors and staff assistants.

Future issues of the newsletter will announce the collections the Library receives.



COMING EVENTS AT THE MUSEUM

Through November 4: "Presidential Pets" exhibit. Museum.

December 15 & 16: Decorate the President's Christmas Tree workshops for children ages 6-11. Museum. Free. (Advance registration required.)

January 4 through February 20, 1991: "Movie Posters: Reynold Brown" exhibit. Museum.

Beginning January 10, 1991: Political Film Series. Six consecutive Thursday evenings at 7:30 p.m. Museum.

March 16 through July 29: "Hobbies of the Presidents" exhibit. Museum.

Accessioning archivist Helmi Raaska examines a box of materials recently donated by Phil Buchen, President Ford's friend, former law partner, and presidential adviser.

1990 Journalism Prize Winners

President Ford presented the third annual Gerald R. Ford Prizes for Distinguished Reporting during a nationally broadcast June gathering at the National Press Club. The Gerald R. Ford Foundation sponsors the two \$5,000 awards which are designed to recognize those journalists whose high standards for accuracy and substance help foster a better public understanding of the presidency and national defense issues.

Debra Lynn Polsky, special assignments reporter for *Defense News*, was selected by a distinguished panel of judges as this year's winner of the Ford Prize for Distinguished Reporting on National Defense. In selecting Polsky, the panel expressed their conviction that "reporters who delve into deeper institutional and attitudinal aspects of defense policy are as deserving of reward as those who deal with more visible current issues." In particular, the panel cited Polsky's articles on the Defense Department's laboratory structure and contract auditing procedures. Both they described as "first-rate analytical series on topics which are important, unique, and usually totally ignored."

Gerald Seib of the *Wall Street Journal* won this year's Ford Prize for Distinguished Reporting on the Presidency. The judging panel described Seib's sophisticated analysis of the presidency in articles notable for their evenhandedness and balance. "Gerald Seib communicates what he knows in a political, historical, and constitutional context, and he helps the reader understand the implications of the facts he reports," the judges observed. "He calls it right. Then he tells the reader what difference it makes."

We recently questioned the winners about their respective "beats" and share with you their insights.

Questions for Gerald Seib

Q. Your coverage of George Bush suggests that you have a better grounding in political science and history than most reporters. Is this the case? If so, how does it influence your reporting and the kinds of stories you choose to write about?

My grounding in history and political science comes simply from a solid, basic liberal arts education—the kind of education that I think is the best preparation for a career in journalism. I happen to have been blessed with a few university mentors who fostered and encouraged special attention to history. If I could point to any one thing I fear is lacking in much contemporary reporting, it is a sense of history, even recent history. I've at least tried to keep some historical perspective in my coverage of the presidency.

"If I could point to any one thing I fear is lacking in much contemporary reporting, it is a sense of history, even recent history."

Q. What attractions does writing about the presidency from the reporter's perspective hold that the political scientist's perspective would not?

The thrill of writing as a reporter is the chance to look ahead, and, with any luck, to spot trends as they are developing. The political scientist often has a quite different task, the task of looking backwards to see whether the initial analyses of these trends has proven correct over the long haul. Both are useful tasks, but I've always considered the job of looking forward more exhilarating, though perhaps more risky.



Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Seib with President Ford

Q. How is it possible to gain reliable insights on an individual whose thoughts and actions are shielded by a phalanx of aides and public-relations people?

It's almost always possible to penetrate a phalanx of aides and public-relations people and gain at least some insights into a public official by relying on secondary sources. People who have access to a president sooner or later love to talk about that access, if only to brag about it. The problem with that kind of information is that it is inevitably colored by the prejudices and agenda of your source. I think that President Bush has been recognizing that it's wiser for a president to make himself accessible, so that the impressions reporters develop are based on first-hand rather than second-hand contact.

“People who have access to a president sooner or later love to talk about that access, if only to brag about it.”

Q. How do you develop sources among the White House staff?

Developing sources among the White House staff is a slow process of building trust and rapport. In some cases, White House staff members use reporters simply because of what they represent—a major newspaper or a television network the administration wants to use to deliver a certain story. But I've found that, over the long haul, such institutional links are superficial, and aren't any substitute for personal relationships developed over time.

Q. Is the presidency over-covered? Have reporters neglected other sources of influence and other important political and social phenomena in their preoccupation with the power and prestige of the White House?

The presidency isn't so much over-covered as it is superficially covered. There's an obsession with speeches and the precise turn of phrase the president uses, and a shortage of analysis about the broader political and personal pressures that produce presidential decisions. White House reporters would be better off if they took a wider view of presidential news, but, unfortunately, that's often something that the pressures of time and demands of editors won't allow.

“The Presidency isn't so much over-covered as it is superficially covered.”

Q. In what ways has the personality of George Bush shaped his actions as president?

George Bush is a classic example of how a president shapes the office more than the office shapes him. Mr. Bush still functions essentially as the country party chairman he once was, focusing on intensive personal contacts and the small act rather than the grand gesture. He is essentially the opposite of Ronald Reagan in style. So you have a presidency almost void of televised appeals to the masses and sweeping rhetoric, and instead one in which the president himself works the phone with world leaders, courts important Congressmen one-on-one and hopes his actions are more eloquent to the American people than his words. And in press relations, Mr. Bush has used the same tactics, trying to draw reporters into his tent through intensive direct contact and communication.

Q. Given the extensive and unpredictable demands on their time, can White House reporters have a personal life?

It is possible to have a personal life, but a White House reporter is well advised to have a flexible one. In my case, the job is made easier by the fact that my wife also is a reporter for the *Wall Street Journal* and therefore used to coping with the same kinds of demands. The travel schedule of George Bush, though, has made the problem tougher.

“George Bush is a classic example of how a president shapes the office more than the office shapes him.”

Questions for Debra Lynn Polsky

Q. How does a reporter select story topics from the vast array of possibilities that must present themselves at an institution as big as the Pentagon?

There are thousands of potential stories. Often, reporters only have time to cover the biggest stories such as the military's multibillion dollar weapon programs, massive budget cuts and procurement fraud investigations. I also try to write longer feature articles that reveal how the Pentagon works. After covering the Pentagon for several years, I began to notice patterns. For example, military people often complain that the Pentagon's process for determining which new weapons to purchase is seriously flawed. That led to a lengthy investigation of that process to determine when it works and when it fails.

Q. Does the current talk of a "peace dividend" generate fear in the Pentagon?

Most people in the Pentagon concede privately that there is plenty of fat to trim in the Defense Department's \$300 billion annual budget. Army officers say there is no need for new aircraft carriers. The Air Force would be more than willing to stop the Army from building a new tank. And the Navy does not understand the need for a billion-dollar bomber. Nevertheless, each service argues that none of its own programs can be cut. For that reason, the idea that Congress will cut defense spending in the next few years makes them very nervous.

"Most people in the Pentagon concede privately that there is plenty of fat to trim in the Defense Department's \$300 billion annual budget."

Q. Is the defense industry afraid?

Yes. That is where the real terror resides. Days after the Berlin Wall was opened and Eastern Europeans began fleeing to the West, defense industry executives began warning of the dire consequences of lowering defense spending. People are afraid of losing their jobs. They are scared that their skills will no longer be needed.

Q. What was the private reaction of people in the Pentagon to the threat of armed conflict in the Persian Gulf?

In the early days of the massive airlift to Saudi Arabia, Pentagon officials were excited. An Army colonel told me he had been working 15-hour days but enjoying it. The Defense Department was filled with activity. Everyone supported President Bush's decision to send troops to the Persian Gulf.



President Ford and Debra Lynn Polsky

During the following weeks, Pentagon officials continued to say the military should remain in the Gulf. But they became concerned about the troops. How will they perform in the desert heat? Will Iraq use chemical weapons? How long will the conflict last? And will the American people continue to support the U.S. military's presence in the Gulf?

Q. You are the first woman to win a Gerald R. Ford Foundation Journalism Prize. Has your gender caused problems for you as a defense reporter?

No. People often ask, "What's a nice girl like you doing in a place like this?" And that gets tiring. But overall, the military has not made me feel uncomfortable. In fact, I think any initial skepticism that a woman can write about weapons and strategy can be overcome quickly. I can speak the jargon-laden vocabulary of the Pentagon. That helps to convince people who work there that I understand how the military operates.

"People often ask, 'What's a nice girl like you doing in a place like this?'"

Q. Do military people make good sources?

Yes. Military people generally do not seek out reporters. They have little to gain from helping a reporter. Nevertheless, once a reporter wins their trust, they make excellent sources who answer questions truthfully and thoroughly. Military sources rarely withhold information unless they genuinely believe its release would jeopardize national security.

Q. What is the biggest issue Defense Secretary Dick Cheney faces?

It is extremely difficult for civilian political appointees to control the military. There have been successes, but the battle will never end. Generals and admirals are convinced that they know how money should be spent and wars fought. When a civilian fights for different views, the military generally finds a way to win, seeking congressional intervention or support from other political appointees. When those tactics fail, the armed services simply wait. They will be around long after the civilians have left their government jobs. Like all his predecessors, Cheney will continue the struggle to control the services.

New Research Opportunities

Research opportunities at the Ford Library continued to expand in 1990 as new collections were opened to the public. Two of these are described below, along with a preview of upcoming openings and a progress note on declassification of security classified materials.

Theodore Marrs's files are notable for the substance and variety of his liaison work with veterans and their families, health care professionals, and Native Americans, among others. His background as a physician and an Air Force Reserve officer gave him special credibility with these groups. Topics that especially engaged his attention were the problems of Indians, particularly health matters, and problems associated with the end of the Vietnam War. These included the clemency program for deserters and draft evaders, assistance to Indochinese refugees, and the worries of families of MIAs and POWs.

The 1979-82 records of the National Council for United States-China Trade continue the story told in the 1974-78 records opened a few years ago. The Council helped U.S. exporters and

importers deal effectively with the Chinese government. There is a wealth of information on China's economy and business practices in the period immediately after the full normalization of diplomatic relations.

The White House Central Files of the Ford administration have been open to research for several years. Now, as a result of a systematic declassification review by Library staff, over 7,000 pages of formerly classified material have been opened.

Looking ahead to 1991, the Library expects to open the papers of Presidential Clemency Board Chairman Charles Goodell, the files of White House Staff Secretary Jerry Jones, and additional records of the President Ford Committee, among other materials. The completion of a machine-readable version of the President's daily appointments and activities diary should facilitate the study of presidential time management.

Ten Grants Awarded

Ten scholars won Gerald R. Ford Foundation research grants last spring and completed their Ford Library research this summer. Many of their projects treated issues of current importance.

James Anderson (Texas A&M University) examined macroeconomics during the Ford administration. Acknowledging the widely known influence of Ford's Economic Policy Board, he looked at the roles of other mechanisms and players. One of the players was Arthur Burns, whose extensive papers are also central to **Wyatt Wells's** (University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill) research for his dissertation, "Defending the Dollar: Arthur Burns and the Federal Reserve Board."

Sociologist **Alexandra Todd** (Suffolk University) researched drug policy, and education professor **Malcolm Campbell** (Bowling Green State University) studied the emergence of federal education programs as a political issue. Environmental concerns claimed the attention of **Peter Longo**, a political scientist and water resource specialist from Kearney State College.

While research in diplomatic history remains difficult because of national security restrictions on key materials, opportunities do exist for researching domestic aspects of foreign affairs issues. Historian **Ian Bickerton** (University of New South Wales) found one opportunity in the effect of American Jewry on the U.S. stance toward Israel. **Joseph Bock**, a Missouri state legislator and William Jewell College political science instructor, found some useful material for his study of the influence of White House staff on the President's foreign affairs decisionmaking.

The Foundation also awarded grants to **John Burke** (University of Vermont) for his management study, "Coping with the Institutional Presidency," **Shirley Anne Warshaw** (Gettysburg College) for Cabinet government in the Ford administration, and **Gil Troy** (McGill University) for part of his study on the evolution of presidential campaigning.

For information on the grants program and Library collections pertinent to your topic, please call grants coordinator David Horrocks, (313) 668-2218. The next application deadline is March 15.



A painting by renowned Japanese artist Kaji Higashiyama, a gift from Emperor Hirohito to President Ford on his state visit in 1975, was videotaped at the Library by a Japanese film crew for a documentary about the artist. The Library director and a staff archivist were interviewed on camera regarding their impressions of the painting.

Media Blitz for "Presidential Pets"

The broad appeal of the "Presidential Pets" exhibit, which opened at the Museum on May 5 and continues through November 4, has resulted in media interest far beyond the expectations of the Museum staff. Staff members hoped that "Pets" would be featured on area radio and television stations and covered by the local newspapers, but when USA TODAY and National Public Radio also picked up the story, it was a pleasant surprise. NBC's "Saturday Night Live" even had some fun with the story. One local television station has done five separate spots about the exhibit.

The wide publicity of the show has contributed to an increase in visitors to the Museum this year. Reaction to the exhibit has been quite enthusiastic, according to visitor surveys.

People from across the country arranged their vacations so that they could see the exhibit. One person commented, "We came all the way from Pittsburgh just to see the 'Pets' exhibit. I am so impressed with it. I'm glad I came." A Californian had read about the exhibit in *Bird Talk Magazine* and looked forward to seeing it on her visit to Grand Rapids. Another visitor noted, "Whose idea was it to have an exhibit on 'Presidential Pets'? We love it."



Kennedy family photograph used in the "Presidential Pets" exhibit.

The Gerald R. Ford Foundation Newsletter

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