

President Richard M. Nixon in Wyoming Valley:
A Commemorative Booklet of the President's September
1972 Visit to the Flood Areas by C.W. Martine

President Richard M. Nixon



In Wyoming Valley

*A Commemorative Booklet
of the President's Sept. 9, 1972,
Visit to the Flood Areas*

Written and Pictorial Account
Including Flood Photos
Compiled and Edited by
C. W. Martine

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The following editorial was written by Harrison H. Smith, president of Wilkes-Barre Publishing Company and editor of the Wilkes-Barre *Times-Leader, Evening News, Record*. It appeared in Sunday editions of Sept. 10, 1972, and is re-printed with Mr. Smith's permission.

Thank You, Mr. Nixon!

Never before in Wyoming Valley's lengthy history was there a more spine-tingling spectacle than the unprecedented surprise visit here yesterday of the nation's Chief Executive.

President Nixon's visit came at a time when much of the world outside Wyoming Valley has nearly forgotten the plight of the thousands here. The whirlwind tour, approximately 80 days after the ravages of Tropical Storm Agnes, will do much to reinstate the nation's attention on the regional disaster. On his return to Camp David, President Nixon raised the question of had the government done enough in the way of aid to this area. In addition, the surprise visit gave renewed heart to the thousands who have suffered staggering financial blows, who have carried on valiantly and needed just such a "shot in the arm" for their morale.

Mr. Nixon, who himself had termed the Susquehanna floods as resulting in "the worst natural disaster ever to occur in the United States" entered into the spirit of his visit by chatting with as many local residents as possible and offering words of praise and of comfort for those who had suffered the most.

And Frank Carlucci, assigned especially to the Wyoming Valley, who early yesterday was with the President at Camp David, Maryland, reporting

on the aspects of the disaster recovery program in the Wilkes-Barre area, was just as surprised and pleased that the President made a last-minute decision to give up his own well-earned day of rest and come to see for himself.

An almost unbelievable span of activities marked the brief tour of Mr. Nixon which covered a two-hour period of ground transportation. This included getting into a wedding party briefly, offering to buy hotdogs for a picnic and expressing his regrets that he could not attend both—but his most magnanimous gesture was that of presentation of a \$4,000,000 check to Wilkes College.

Shortly after the presentation, the Office of Emergency Preparedness announced that an additional \$6 million would be provided Wilkes and that \$4 million had been earmarked for restoration work at King's College. The money is part of \$19 million slated for private educational institutions in Pennsylvania. The fact that most of the funds are earmarked for Wyoming Valley is another indication of the Federal Government's concern that this region will be restored and, indeed, enhanced.

The President's on-the-spot decision to come here will long be remembered after the last home, the last institution and the last business building is rebuilt and returned to normalcy.

Mr. Nixon, we thank you, from the bottom of our hearts!

A Surprise Visitor

President Richard M. Nixon paid a surprise, whirlwind visit to flood-devastated Wyoming Valley on September 9 lifting the spirits of weary residents.

The visit included the presentation of a \$4 million check to Wilkes College and a tour of damaged sections of Wilkes-Barre, Kingston and Forty Fort. The President also "crashed" a local wedding. He visited relocated residents at Scandlon Field, Kingston, and mingled with flood victims at various spots along his motorcade route.

Mr. Nixon also dipped into his pocket to pay for food and refreshments for a picnic for some 1,000 persons at Frances Slocum Park where a mobile home park was located to house victims of the June 23 flood.

Word of the President's visit was given to area newsmen shortly after noon. At this point the President was en route from his retreat at Camp David, Md. Accompanying the President on the journey were members of the presidential press corps.

The President became the fifth Chief Executive of the United States to visit Wyoming Valley while still in office.

Earlier in the day, Mr. Nixon received a report from Frank Carlucci, the President's personal envoy to the flood-stricken area. It was a result of this meeting that the President decided he would come to the Wilkes-Barre area to see first hand the damage and the results of two months of Federal assistance.

Besides the national press corps, Mr. Nixon was accompanied by Mr. Carlucci and members of the immediate presidential staff. No other government officials accompanied the Chief Executive on the tour.

The visit was so impromptu that Wilkes-Barre city police had only 15 minutes notice that the country's highest elected official would be in the area. Police reported they were informed at 11:50 a.m. that the presidential helicopter was expected to arrive about noon at Daniel J. Flood School in the city's North End section. However, the President's copter touched down at the

school shortly before 1 p.m. In the next two hours, the President would extend his personal touch and concern to the flood-relief efforts.

The two hours would be quick-paced with many stops selected by the President himself.

Mr. Nixon's first stop was at Wilkes College, where he presented the \$4 million check to college president, Dr. Francis Michelini. The President said the check represented the initial installment on a \$10 million grant to be given to the college by the Federal government.

Before leaving on his motorcade tour, Mr. Nixon chipped in for 1,000 hot dogs and soft drinks for the Slocum Park picnic. He was made aware of the situation by Jill Garrett, a flood victim from Sambourne Street, who was relocated to the park mobile home site. Mr. Nixon had first ordered Mr. Carlucci to get hot dogs for the picnickers, but upon being informed that Federal money could not be used for such an expenditure, the President said he would pay for the costs to provide the picnic. Navy chefs also were ordered into the area to prepare the picnic treats. The 10-car motorcade traveled over the Market Street Bridge to First Avenue in Kingston, which was devastated by the flood waters. Traveling from First Avenue to James Street, the presidential motorcade was halted on orders of Mr. Nixon.

The President had spied a flood victim at Tioga Avenue and James Street and the chief executive left his vehicle to talk to the man, Charles Vivian. Mr. Vivian told the President

that he and his wife, Della, were sleeping in day beds in the attic since the flood waters damaged their residence. The President said the matter should be referred to Mr. Carlucci, but then ordered his special envoy to the area to arrange for the Vivians to have emergency housing under the Federal assistance plan.

Mr. Vivian also pointed out to the President that he was employed by Delaware and Hudson Railroad. Vivian told the President that some problems have developed because of Penn Central wanting to close the Buttonwood Yards and abandon trackage in the area. The President told Vivian that the matter would be brought to the attention of Secretary of Transportation John Volpe.

The President viewed a large crater carved by the flood in the James Street-Tioga Avenue area. He also chatted with other residents of the area and with military personnel from Fort Dix, N. J., who had been assigned to assist in cleanup in the area.

The President walked through the first floor of the Vivian residence to get a personal look at the damages caused by the flood.

The motorcade proceeded from the Vivian home to Rutter Avenue and on to Scandlon Field where hundreds of persons were gathered as the word spread of the presidential visit.

Prior to visiting two mobile homes, the chief executive shook hands, signed autographs and talked informally with flood victims. The President inspected the mobile homes of Mr. and Mrs.



President Richard M. Nixon waves a greeting.

Al Ackerson, who previously resided in Edwardsville, and Mr. and Mrs. William Roberts, Forty Fort residents.

The President addressed the crowd from the steps of the Roberts mobile home. He praised government agencies working in the recovery effort and stated Carlucci, in his role as flood relief coordinator, personalized the government as it wants to be—an agency that cares about the people.

The President spoke of other cities that rebuilt including San Francisco, which was almost entirely destroyed by an earthquake and fires 60 years ago. The President assured area residents the government will provide whatever is necessary.

The President presented his last pen to 90-year-old Mrs. Helen Cunningham, a resident of Kingston for some 60 years who now resides at the mobile home site. Mr. Nixon said the pen was a gift to the woman in anticipation of her 91st birthday anniversary. The President also autographed the cast on the arm of Al Swatko, a Kingston resident.

Mr. Carlucci was described by the President as a strong, very intelligent man who cares about people. Mr. Nixon told the crowd that he admires the spirit and determination of area residents.

President Nixon then mixed with the crowd,

stopping to talk to several persons. The motorcade proceeded up Wyoming Avenue from Scandlon Field, but made an unexpected stop at Forty Fort United Presbyterian Church after a wedding party emerging from the church caught the President's eye.

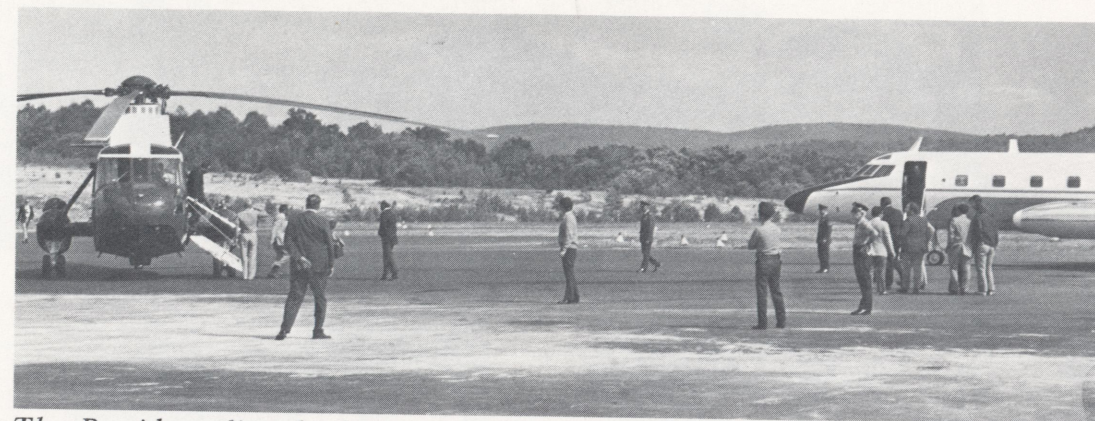
To the surprise of the wedding party and guests, Mr. Nixon made his way to the side of the newlyweds, Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Conte, posed for pictures with them and signed his name to their wedding license. The new bride was the former Cathy Pickering, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Pickering of Forty Fort. The groom is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Conte, Sr., of West Pittston.

The President also made a quick stop at nearby Bonnicks Market.

Returning to the cars, the motorcade quickly made its way down Wyoming Avenue to the Forty Fort Airport, which is being used as a staging area for mobile homes by the Federal government.

On arriving at the airfield, the President quickly left his car and proceeded directly to the waiting helicopter which had flown to the West Side while the motorcade was in progress. The President made no statement before departing.

The President at no time made any political statements.



The President disembarks from Helicopter for a Tour of the Flood Areas.



On Wilkes College Campus



With Micheli



Addressing the Press



At Wilkes with Carlucci



The President, Carlucci, Micheli



With Admirers

Scenes at Wilkes College



Listening to Jill Garrett as Carlucci observes.



Surrounded by Security at Wilkes.



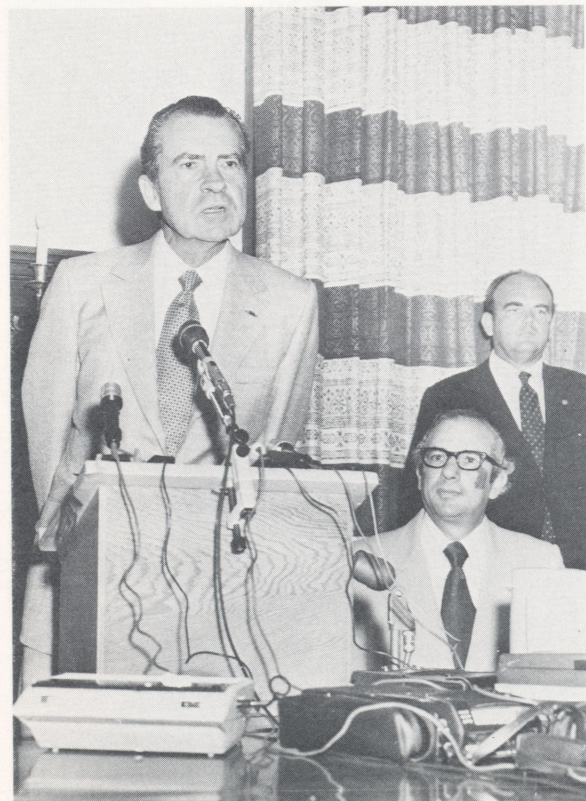
On Tour of Wilkes College



Besieged by Reporters at Wilkes.



Views given.



Making a point



Listening to Micheline



Carlucci heard

The President "Crashes" A Wedding

The visit to Wyoming Valley on September 9 by President Richard M. Nixon proved exciting to many residents and provided a lift in spirit to others who were at the point of weariness from the long hours of flood cleanup and restoration of their homes.

Dr. Francis Micheline, president of Wilkes College, has indicated the President's visit excited him more than the presentation of a \$4 million check representing the first installment on a \$10 million grant to the local institution of higher learning.

The college itself was unprepared for the visit by the nation's chief executive. Dr. Micheline was informed that the President would be on hand for the presentation by a Federal official at 11:40 p.m.

Dr. Micheline, like many of the Wilkes staff on hand that day, reported for work in informal

dress. The college President had enough time to change into a suit and tie for the presidential visit and check presentation.

Area news personnel had even less time to prepare for Mr. Nixon's journey to Wyoming Valley and many journalists greeted the President in casual attire. Since the President himself decided on the spot where and when the motorcade would stop, newsmen could not arrange any advance planning.

The President's visit proved significant for three residents of Kingston.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Vivian, 285 James St., received a mobile home on orders of Mr. Nixon. The President stopped at the Vivian residence during his visit and upon learning that the couple was sleeping in the attic of their flood-damaged dwelling, he instructed his personal envoy to the flood area, Frank Carlucci, to take care



The Vivians in their Mobile Home.



With the Ackersons.

of the matter. The Vivians received their mobile home the very next day.

Mr. Vivian also threw a strong pitch to the President to look into the situation involving the closing of the Buttonwood Yards in Hanover Township. Mr. Nixon said he would have Secretary of Transportation John Volpe investigate the situation.

Not everyone has the honor of having the President of the United States show up at their wedding.

Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Conte has just such an honor. During Mr. Nixon's tour of the area he spotted the young couple as they emerged from Forty Fort United Presbyterian Church, Wyoming Ave. The President ordered the motorcade stopped immediately and he dashed from his car and joined the wedding party on the steps of the church. The pictures of the President posing with the newly-weds was sent

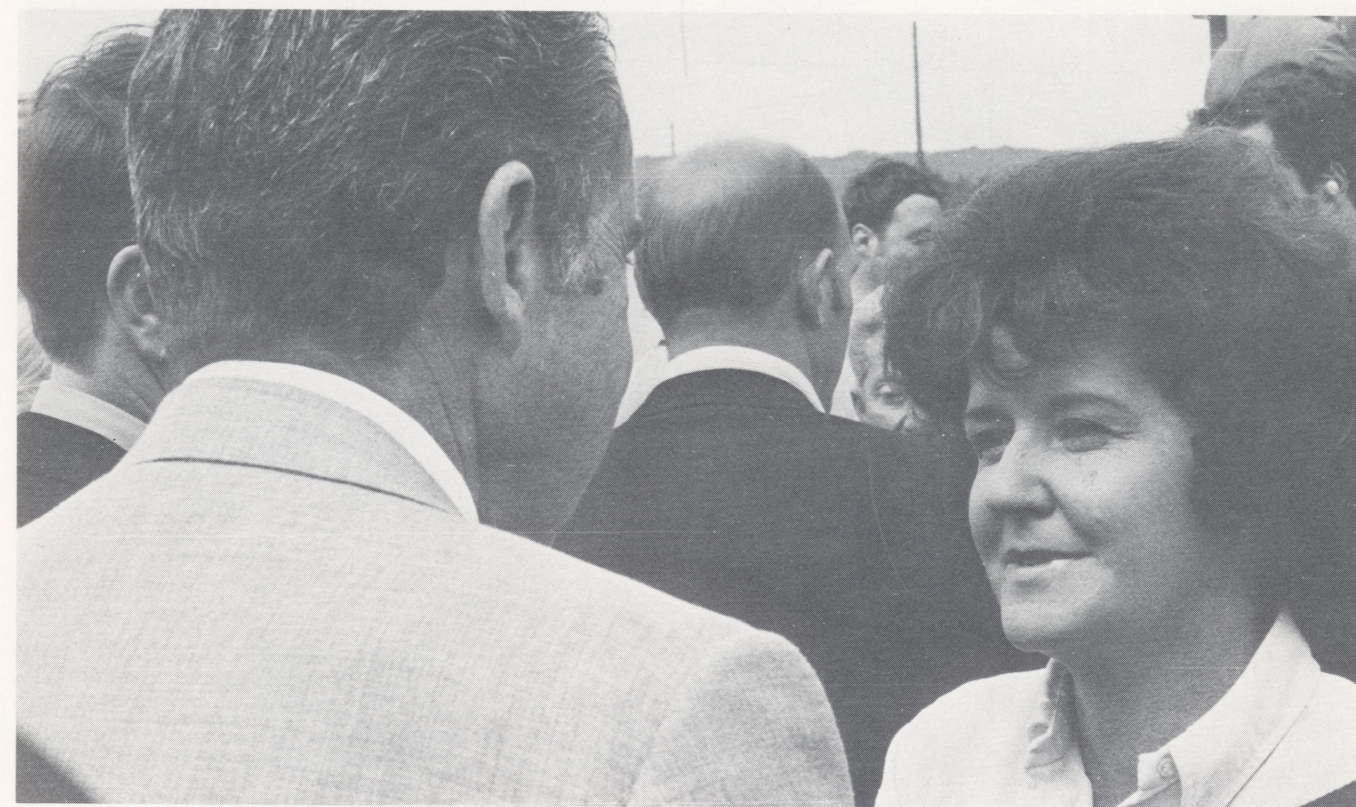
out on national news service wires and appeared in many national publications.

The groom's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Conte of West Pittston, were overjoyed at the President's brief stop at the wedding party. The parents reported receiving telephone calls from friends all over the nation. The senior Contes were not able to talk to the President during the brief stop because of the crowd.

The bride's parents, Mr. and Mrs. William Pickering of Forty Fort, had joked about the possibility of Mr. Nixon coming to the wedding.

President Nixon talked for several minutes with the newlyweds, shook hands with Mr. Pickering and other guests and gave a donation to Rev. Harold F. Mante, pastor of the church. The President signed the couples marriage license.

The Pickerings said that they were stopped constantly by friends as they left church the next day and questioned about the President's stop at their daughter Cathy's wedding.



Talking with a Flood victim.



Smiles light faces of weary victims.



Some humor



At Scandlon Field



A grimace



Mr. and Mrs. Conte—The delighted newlyweds are congratulated by the President.

Richard M. Nixon became the fifth president of the United States to visit Wyoming Valley while still serving his term of office. Other Presidents did visit the area, but either before or after their terms of office.

First U.S. President to visit the area was Rutherford B. Hayes, the nation's 19th chief executive, who was an honored guest July 3, 1878, at a centenary celebration of the Battle of Wyoming at Wyoming Monument.

President Theodore Roosevelt spoke at the national convention of the Catholic Total Abstinence Union on August 10, 1905. President Roosevelt was a personal friend of the late Msgr. John J. Curran, pastor of St. Mary's Church, South Washington Street, Wilkes-Barre.

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt paid two visits to the area. He came to Wilkes-Barre on August 15, 1936, to tour the 1936 flood area. On October 28, 1936, President Roosevelt noted Mitchell Day by speaking at Miner Park.

President Harry S. Truman appeared in Wyoming Valley in 1948 as a candidate for reelection, speaking at Public Square.

Other Presidents to visit the area before or after their term of office were William Howard Taft, here in 1916 in behalf of the candidacy of C. E. Hughes, who ran for President against Woodrow Wilson; Andrew Johnson who viewed rescue work at Avondale mine disaster on September 6, 1869; and John F. Kennedy who spoke on Public Square and toured the Valley during his 1960 campaign for the Presidency.

The President Helps Pay For A Picnic



Carlucci coordinates the Picnic at Frances Slocum State Park.

Not many citizens of the United States have the opportunity to attend a picnic paid for in part by the President of the United States.

Approximately 1,000 persons in the Wyoming Valley area did get just such an opportunity on September 10 as a result of President Richard M. Nixon's visit to the flood-stricken area the previous day.

The picnic started when Jill Garrett, 18, a flood-displaced resident of Wilkes-Barre, advanced the idea of holding a get-acquainted outdoor wiener roast and social in the picnic area at Frances Slocum State Park, Kingston Township. The young woman coordinated plans for the event and received sufficient response from other residents of the emergency mobile home park at the State park. Many of the residents donated salads and other foodstuffs.

However, other items such as hot dogs and soda pop were at a minimum and it was at this point Mr. Nixon entered the picture. Miss Garrett invited the press corps covering the Presidential visit to attend the picnic. Under questioning by the chief executive, it came to light that sufficient hot dogs and other items may not be available for the gathering.

Mr. Nixon at first ordered his personal envoy to the flood area, Frank Carlucci, to see that sufficient supplies were made available. However, the President's personal representative noted that Federal money could not be used for such a purpose at which point the president said he would take care of the costs. He also ordered a crew of White House chefs and stewards to cater the event.

Commander Ron Jackson, USN (ret.) direct-

ed the crew of White House personnel sent to the area. The truck from the White House contained 1,000 hot dogs, 1,000 hamburgers, 100 cases of soda and sufficient ice to cool the refreshments. The crew also stopped in the Wyoming Valley area on its way to the park and bought tomatoes.

The cooks and stewards in the crew were Eddie Serrano, Robert Lizama, Tony Poblete, Danny Velasco, Benji Ramos, Vince Villardnda and Gus Labrado.

The crew left the nation's capital at 6 a.m., arriving at the park at noon to prepare to set up for the gathering. The White House crew arranged in buffet style the potato salads, cake and other side dishes prepared by the women of the park mobile home site.

Mr. Carlucci attended the affair.

Youngsters were entertained at the affair by

Ed Hilburt a magician. Boston Store Teen Board, under direction of Kay Williams, supervised various games for the youngsters.

Other members of the board include Miss Garrett, Paula Amos, Julia Bowlick, Donna Dunleavy, Sandy Hilburt, Joann Malenky, Jackie Mann, Ann McHale, Judge Metzger, Maureen O'Hara, Sharon Rostock, Janet Stasik, Judy Tetlak, Linda Teresavack, Ursula Uluzas and Donna Wasalewski. The board was assisted at the affair by Mary Beth Wuzwicki, Sharon Moran, Tom Musto, Richard Mebane, Lisa Waznik and Terry Klings. Gordon Henry, chairman of the citizens committee at the park, assisted with arrangements for the affair as did Terry Paul.

Mr. Carlucci reported the mobile home site has 798 residents from 258 families housed in 263 mobile homes. A total of 281 mobile homes are planned for Slocum Park site.



White House chefs prepare food.



The following pages contain a Pictorial Review
of the President's Visit plus several
Aerial Photographs of the June 23, 1972, Flood





Stressing a point



Surrounded by Security



Answering questions



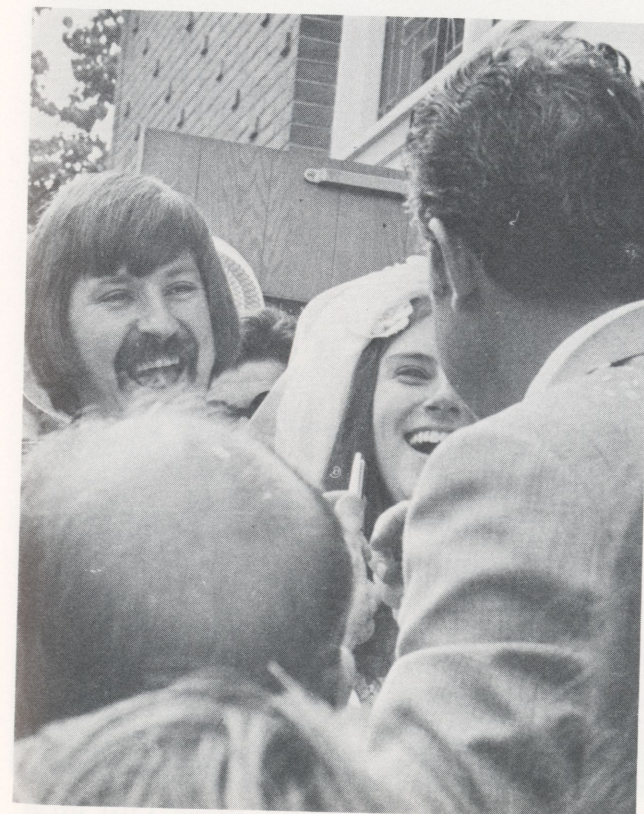
A look of concern



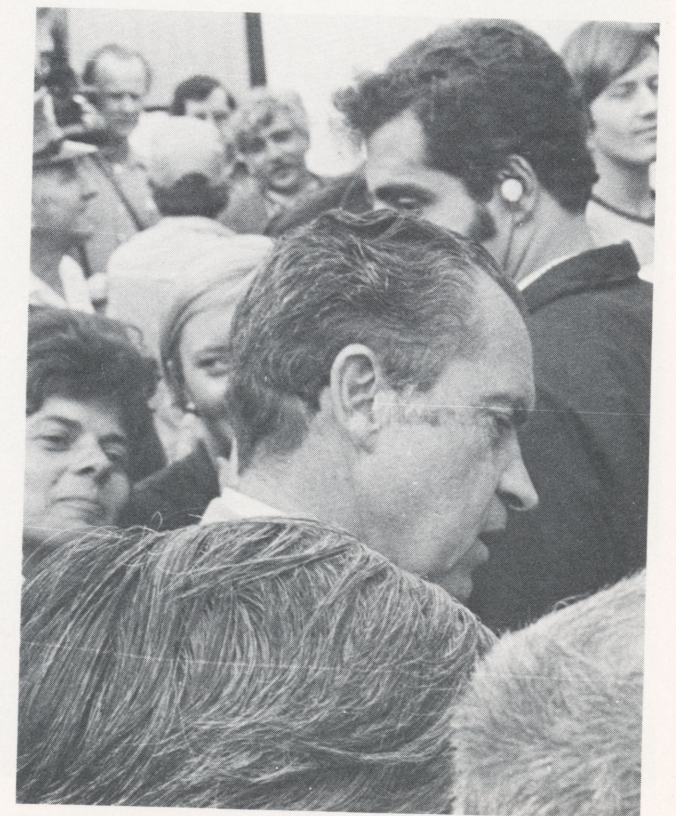
Presidential Notes



Park Picnic guests



At the Wedding



With the crowd



On Tour of Wilkes College



At Mobile Home site



With Jill Garrett



A brief respite



Happy Leaders



A smiling Chief Executive at Scandon Field



A brief respite



Happy Leaders



A smiling Chief Executive at Scandlon Field



Public Square at height of flooding



Carey Avenue Bridge



Wyoming Bridge



Midway Shopping Center, Wyoming



Port Blanchard Area



THE
LIBRARY
OF THE
MUSEUM OF
NATURAL HISTORY
AND
ZOOLOGY
OF THE
CITY OF
NEW YORK