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"The president was only about 15 minutes late," Mrs. Champine said.

"We reporters were busily chatting with each other when I turned around.

"Without fanfare, there was the president."

She said that the pressures of office and his supposedly-endangered hopes of nomination seemed to show not at all.

He seated himself next to the Norton reporter, "reach-

One reporter wanted to know whether the president enjoyed Ronald Reagan's movies, Mrs. Champine said, at which Mr. Ford laughed and said he'd never seen one.

"And he seemed to have no qualms about speaking off the cuff," she added, "even though he knew that some of the radio stations were carry-



MRS. CHAMPINE

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**1976**



May 19, 1976

# Local Reporter Gets Ford Exclusive

North Shore woman is only Muskegon area reporter to interview President Ford during his Michigan primary election campaign.

She's Marge Champine, of 20 Crestbrook Lane, who's broadcaster with WOWO radio.

She and 19 other radio journalists met with the president Sunday afternoon at Saginaw's Midway Airport for a 30-minute conference.

And frantic though his campaign may have seemed through reports over national television, Mrs. Champine said the chief executive looked "calm, relaxed, tan and fit."

A small group of broadcast journalists all received telephoned invitations from Ron Pearson, the president's press secretary.

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"We reporters were busily chatting with each other when I turned around."

"Without fanfare, there was the president."

She said that the press secretary of office and his sup-

over to me, shook my hand and asked how I was," Mrs. Champine said.

"I managed a 'fine', but the thought that I was sitting next to the president of the United States overwhelmed me -- just temporarily though."

Mrs. Champine said it was the Presidential paraphernalia -- a solid wall of communications gear, ubiquitous steely-eyed Secret Service men and an ominous red telephone -- that conveyed a sense of awe and the power of the office.

"His presence was not overwhelming at all," she added. "He was friendly," she said, "and kindly in encouraging some of the younger, less aggressive reporters to ask questions."

One reporter wanted to know whether the president enjoyed Ronald Reagan's movies, Mrs. Champine said, at which Mr. Ford laughed and said he'd never seen one.

"And he seemed to have no qualms about speaking off the cuff," she added, "even though he knew that some of the radio stations were carry-

ing the entire conference live."

She said the conference, thanks to the absence of bulky TV gear and the staged atmosphere it creates, was extremely relaxed. "It was a delight to be included in a

radio-only news conference," she said. Mrs. Champine disagrees

with the president on at least one issue: supplying arms to Yugoslavia.

But she left little doubt that she was impressed with him and his performance.

*Gail Feink*

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