



## A Day in the Life

Thursday, 25 May 1978:

**10:20 a.m.** I arrive at Tweed-New Haven Airport, with a photographer. The day is overcast, and we wonder whether Mrs. Mondale's plane will be able to make it into Tweed. Everyone else has obviously managed to make it to the airport, judging from the glut of cars. Since the plane is due in at 10:30, we figure we'll have time to maneuver into position to view and photograph the arrival. We figure wrong; Mrs. Mondale got in 10 minutes ago, and she's upstairs with Mayor Frank Logue, doing whatever visiting dignitaries do. They'll all be down in 20 minutes.

**10:31 a.m.** Any journalist covering the political beat must be an expert time-killer. We joke—about the weather, about the stories we covered last week and last month and last year, about the Secret Service, and about press secretaries. I interview the nine kids and two adults standing in the airport waiting room. They're from the Hill Model Children's Center. Did they come to see Mrs. Mondale? No, it was a rainy day and they just decided it would be nice to check out the airport.

**10:34 a.m.** Pat Jette, Logue's press secretary, comes down from upstairs to pass along the rules. There'll be no interviewing of Mrs. Mondale anywhere along the route; all questions will have to wait for the "press comments" on the Green at one o'clock. Our first stop is the welfare office, and there there'll be no photographing of welfare clients (employees are ok). We'll travel during the day in two blue CETA vans, and we'll leave everyplace early to arrive at the next stop early so that the cameras can set up. We look at each other a little wistfully. I begin to have second thoughts about the whole day. "Sounds like fun," someone comments.

**10:50 a.m.** After several false alarms, there's a flurry of motion inside the terminal, and the classic photographers' crunch forms at the bottom of the outside stairs, everyone jockeying for the best position for a shot. Luckily, there are only local media here today; when the national media are around, it turns into a cutthroat, life-and-death struggle to stay on top or be trampled. Positions are finally established, just in time. The entourage emerges: Secret Service men in suits, serious expressions on their faces, the earpieces of walkie-talkies snaking up their necks, gold-and-red pins on their lapels; the elite of the New Haven Police Department's plainclothesmen and the mayor's staffers, also looking serious and all wearing green-and-white lapel pins that say "S-1" (in the world of the dignitary status is clearly a lapel pin); the mayor and Maryann Logue, both smiling broadly; and Joan Mondale. Cameras are turned on, shutters click with the characteristic sound of motor drives at work, and Mrs. Mondale zooms by us, fixed smile on her face, dressed in something which gives the impression of being purple and white and—frilly, somehow. The mayor helps her into one of a long line of cars, we sprint for the blue vans, and we're off.

**11:05 a.m.** Comments in the van I'm riding in can conservatively be characterized as

cynical and sarcastic. Scatological references occasionally spice up the conversation. At one point I am threatened with bodily harm if I continue to take notes. I continue.

**11:10 a.m.** The City Welfare Office on Bassett Street seems a strange place to choose as a first stop. We enter from the back, into a huge room, painted institutional two-tone green, filled with desks. In one corner Ruth Resnick and Terry Lennox are up on scaffolding, roughing out the mural they're doing for the office wall. That's what Mrs. Mondale is coming here to see. When the entourage arrives, having picked up a number of city officials (all wearing green-and-white tags) along the way, all work in the office ceases. Mrs. Mondale hears from Resnick what the mural, and community art, and community change, are all about. She in turn discusses skills and techniques. The welfare workers don't discuss much; they just watch the spectacle. As Joan turns to talk to Tom Corso, the man who runs CETA in New Haven, the call goes out and the press gets herded away, ready to move on to the next stop. Jack, the cameraman for channel 3, stops halfway out to get a wide shot of the mural and the crowd. But the most interesting shot is a wider shot still, from the back of the room: a cluster of people, white and distinguished at the center, mixed black and white and bureaucratic-looking at the edges, packed into one corner of a huge, a cavernous room, open to the ceiling but crowded near the floor with desk after desk, each covered with yellow forms.

**11:30 a.m.** In front of the Children's Museum is yet another tall man in a blue suit, earplug and lapel pin. This one has a clipboard in his hand. Inside are lots of kids, oblivious to the honor about to descend on them. The pace of kid-play falters only once, momentarily, when the first flash goes off. But, bless their souls, they shrug the intrusion off, integrate all the strangers, and play on. Jimmy gives Mrs. Mondale a 25-cent loan, which she spends at the restaurant that Michael in a floppy police hat and Carl, wearing a sign that says he's a stock clerk, are running. In the arts and crafts area, Mrs. Mondale makes a musical instrument, a shaker, from a small milk carton, some split peas and a popsicle stick. When it's done, she wraps it in a piece of orange construction paper. But she has to leave before she can play it in the kids' orchestra. The TV cameramen go wild, and probably get some great footage. I stand back, musing over the likely cost of this event if a public relations firm had been paid to stage it. But all the publicity is free.

And so it went: arts and crafts exhibits and working potters at the Creative Arts Workshop, performances by CETA artists in the mayor's conference room in City Hall-in-the-sky, a silly, meaningless, overbrief "press comments" session, a chat with Yale's impending president, a look at Claes Oldenberg's lipstick (reportedly the real reason the VP's wife came to New Haven), visits to Yale's galleries, and other stops here and there at the city's arts institutions. It was capped off by a visit to a

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