

Michigan Every Day **By Patrick Sullivan and Carole Eberly**

Oct. 12, 1973

Nixon picks Gerald R. Ford for vice president

For 24 years, Gerald Ford had been attending the Red Flannel Festival in Cedar Springs, a small town north of Grand Rapids that billed itself as the red flannel underwear manufacturing capital of the world. This year would be no exception, although Ford, a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for decades, now was flanked by a cadre of Secret Service agents and many more reporters as he marched in a parade, sporting a red flannel vest and walking alongside a high school marching band. "I'm a little overwhelmed, to be quite frank and a little thrilled and pleased," Ford said at a stop at Jordan College. "As soon as we go to work next week, I'm sure some of this overnight glamour will wear off."

Ford was swept into the national spotlight a day earlier, when in an announcement that surprised many in politics, President Richard M. Nixon named Ford as his new vice president on Oct. 12, 1973.

Ford, then House Minority Leader, stepped out of a safe congressional career into a presidential administration embroiled in controversy. Ford replaced Spiro T. Agnew, who resigned as vice president a few days earlier after he pled guilty to income tax evasion. Ford was a popular pick.. In more than two decades in Congress, the Republican – known for his integrity and openness had friends on both sides of the aisle. After Nixon resigned and Ford became president on August 9, 1974, he gave up any chance of winning the presidential election in 1976 when he pardoned Nixon.

In addition to being the only president from Michigan, Ford is also the only president to have never won a national election. Ford attended the University of Michigan on a football scholarship where he was a star center. On Oct. 15, 1948, he married Elizabeth "Betty" Anne Bloomer, a dancer who studied under Martha Graham. Mrs. Ford was known for her candor and as an outspoken advocate for

women's rights. He died Dec. 26, 2006 at the age of 93. His presidential museum is in Grand Rapids, on the shores of the Grand River.