

past 7 a.m. She will return to the hospital later today.

The President received a call from Vice President Quayle early this morning, before the Vice President went to church.

The President also spoke this morning with General Brent Scowcroft, his national security adviser; Secretary of State Baker; Secretary of Defense Cheney; and Secretary of Commerce Mosbacher. These were personal calls. There have been no special security concerns.

General Scowcroft and Governor Sununu

will meet with the President about mid-morning to provide their routine national security briefing and to discuss other policy matters.

The President also spoke this morning with his son Marvin and his daughter, Dorothy.

The President has received a number of messages from world leaders wishing him good health.

Note: John H. Sununu was Chief of Staff to the President.

Statement by Press Secretary Fitzwater on the President's Health

May 5, 1991

President Bush's diagnosis today remains essentially the same as last night. He continues to take digoxin and procainamide for the atrial fibrillation. While there have been some indications of a positive response to the medicine, the President's heartbeat has not returned to its normal rhythm. The President is wearing a heart monitor and the doctors continue to watch his progress.

In order to allow continued observation of the President, he will remain overnight at Bethesda Naval Hospital. Mrs. Bush has returned to the White House. The President has spent a relatively active day at the hospital, conferring with Governor Sununu, General Scowcroft, his doctors, Mrs. Bush, and other friends that he has called. He visited with his son Marvin and his daughter, Dorothy, at the hospital, as well as his grandchildren Sam and Ellie LeBlond.

The President's medical team met for nearly 2 hours this evening, from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., to discuss the latest test data. They report that the President is in fine condition, good spirits, and showing some response to the medicine. They will review the President's progress again tomorrow morning, perhaps as early as 5 a.m. or 6 a.m.

The doctors report that atrial fibrillation can last for varying periods of time, sometimes only a few hours, sometimes longer.

It is a condition that must be continually analyzed, but can be treated in a number of ways. Because the President is now entering his second day with this heart irregularity, there has been considerable speculation about courses of medical treatment. We want to assure the American people that the President is in a healthy condition. He has not suffered a heart attack. He has not suffered heart muscle damage.

We remain hopeful that the medication will return his heart to normal rhythm. If by morning that is not the case, the doctors will consider electrical cardioversion. This procedure is well-known and relatively commonplace. The risk is minimal, particularly in a patient such as the President who has no demonstrable heart disease. Nevertheless, it would require general anesthesia, which would be expected to incapacitate the President for only a short period of time. The final decision on this will be made tomorrow morning. During the short time that the President would be under anesthesia, the Vice President would be Acting President under the 25th amendment.

Once again, I want to emphasize that we hope that the President will respond to his medicine in a way that returns his heartbeat to normal and no further treatment will be needed. The doctors will make that evaluation early tomorrow morning.

Note: The Press Secretary read the statement to reporters at 9:02 p.m. in the Briefing Room at the White House. John H. Sununu was Chief of Staff to the President, and Brent Scowcroft was Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs.

Statement by Press Secretary Fitzwater on the President's Health May 6, 1991

At approximately 10:45 p.m. last night, the President resumed his normal heart rhythm, which was maintained until 4:45 a.m. this morning, at which time atrial fibrillation reoccurred. The attending physicians met at 5:30 a.m. this morning for approximately 2 hours to consider the situation. It was deemed unnecessary to carry out the electrical procedure since the President's response to medication had been encouraging. They decided instead to continue further adjustment of his medication and maintain observation of the President while working here at the White House.

President Bush will be discharged at approximately 9 a.m. this morning and return immediately to the Oval Office. His progress will be monitored here as his medi-

cation levels and dosages are observed. It should be stressed again that there continues to be no evidence of organic heart disease.

Today the President will continue his normal responsibilities and activities. He will meet with former Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze at 1:30 p.m. and will conduct other business during the day.

The President rose at 5:20 a.m. this morning. He's in good spirits and anxious to get back to work. We look forward to having him back in the White House very soon.

Note: The Press Secretary read the statement to reporters at 8:38 a.m. in the Briefing Room at the White House.

Exchange With Reporters in Bethesda, Maryland, on the President's Health May 6, 1991

Q. Mr. President, what do you think?

The President. I feel all right. I've just got to get over and get back to work, and keep a little monitor going here.

Q. Have you had to change your lifestyle at all or—

The President. Go ahead and ask the doctors that, but not as far as I'm concerned.

Q. Are you going to lighten up at all for the next few days?

The President. Well, they said to gradually get back into the athletics and not overdo it, so we won't run today.

Q. [Inaudible]

The President. No, it's not caused by jogging. But you ask the doctors; they'll tell you all that. I don't want to get a bad rap

on the joggers.

Q. —any particular stress situation?

The President. No. Ask the doctors, because I don't even know that that's the cause.

Q. But is it right now, sir, is your heart beating regularly?

The President. No, it's not in normal rhythm. Ask the doctors what all that means. I've never heard of this stuff before Sunday.

Q. Are you concerned about that at all?

The President. No. If I were concerned I wouldn't be here, I'd be up there.

Note: The exchange began at 9 a.m. on the grounds of Bethesda Naval Hospital, prior