



H. R. Haldeman Diaries Collection, January 18, 1969 – April 30, 1973

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Friday, March 28.

This was the day Dwight Eisenhower died.

The morning was occupied with details and an NSC meeting. The afternoon had been left clear for personal time. President had me in quite a while before NSC - mainly on wanting to take stronger action on obscenity. Wants to move ahead with Justice on strong program, fast. Even decided he'd go to a play in New York where they take off clothes - and get up and walk out, to dramatize his feeling.

After NSC, at about 12:20, he went into Oval Office with Mel Laird. At 12:25, I had just stepped out into the hall, ran into Tkach who said DDE had died. The two of us went into the Oval Office through the hall door. Tkach told the President - then turned and left the office. I went on in. President was at his desk, Laird in chair at the side. Laird started to say something - President asked if he'd heard Tkach, he hadn't. President told him. Both were quiet for a minute. Then President started talking about some funeral details. He then got up - said to have Rogers, Harlow and Kissinger come in - then stood looking out the window. I told Chapin to get the others. President then started to cry - just standing there. Then he walked slowly, still crying, into the little hall - stood there and sobbed - said "he was such a strong man," - went into little office for a few minutes. Then came back into Oval Office - others were there by then, standing awkwardly. President still had tears, and red eyes - talked with them aimlessly, then sat on the edge of the desk, half crying and described in detail his last visit to DDE. Harlow commented on how DDE had seen all his checkpoints - the nomination, the election, the wedding, the Inaugural, the President's success, and John's appointment as Ambassador. So he could go freely now. Rogers by now also has tears.

Things then turned to plans and arrangements. President decided to go right to hospital to see Mrs. Eisenhower. Then found Pat Nixon had not been told, so he called her. Also talked to Tricia. Asked others in room to go with him to hospital. Had to wait until public announcement



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at 1245. Then we left. I rode in staff car. Pat Nixon and Tricia with President. Some people on streets, but most didn't know yet.

At the hospital I stayed downstairs and used the time on the phone regarding arrangements. Set up details regarding timing, plan for Camp David this afternoon, guests for funeral, etc.

I rode with Nixons on the way back. Pat Nixon strongly opposed going to Camp David, but President firm and had me argue for it. Swung Tricia over. Not Pat!

Back at White House all regrouped in Oval Office for further discussion about foreign visitors, and overall plans. Some confusion, but all pretty well organized. No way to know how many coming.

Interesting sidelight - before going to hospital had to sign proclamation, etc. Debate regarding which day for official mourning. President had previously decided on Sunday, others argued for Monday, so I changed the proclamation after he had signed it, and had him initial the change.

Also we decided - and President approved - to let employees off for balance of day. Later found there's a law that prohibits President giving time off in honor of death of former government official. Got around it (after the fact) by using basis that DDE is five-star general and died in office, since it is a permanent rank. So we're legal.

President asked to have Bebe come to Camp David - we called him. Then, in answer to my question, said I should go too. We left at about 4:00 (President in meantime talked to Rose - and had John Alexander, law partner, come in for a little while). Just President, Tkach, Manolo and Chuck Larson, the aide, were on the helicopter.

At Camp David, President took me into Aspen for brief tour. Asked to have barber brought up (on chopper with Bebe). Then settled down, and I left for my cabin.

He called me over to give him the texts of the proclamation, etc. Talked for a few minutes about arrangements. He was in sport jacket, sitting by the big window. Fire crackling.



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He called Julie, at the White House, to ask about time of TV specials. Mrs. Eisenhower was there and came on phone. Thought President was in his office. When he said he was at Camp David, she said that was Ike's favorite spot in the world and she was so glad the President was there. President explained he was working on eulogy, and wanted to get away. They had a fairly long and good chat, which obviously affected him emotionally.

He asked me to have DDE's Guild Hall speech sent up. Discussed plans and changed them to drop meeting at Camp David tomorrow with Bunker and Goodpaster - will postpone to Sunday evening or Monday morning. Wants Rose and Ray to come up and work on speech. He said Ray's draft had some good ideas but he'd make a lot of changes. They'll stay overnight. He settled back to work so I left.

I spent all the time - other than with President - on the phone working with White House staff on plans, etc.

Chopper arrived with Bebe, barber - plus Chapin. Cole and Larry who came for the ride, and to bring some papers to sign. We took a tour of the camp while President got haircut. Then I went in with papers. Spent just a minute. He and Bebe were just starting a martini, and watching TV.

We all left for White House. I'll go back up tomorrow with Rose and Ray, and take Chapin.

Another day to remember.