



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

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Saturday, April 18.

More Apollo XIII, as we flew to Houston to thank the backup ground team and give them a Medal of Freedom. Good ceremony - President did well in his tribute and it should have had good impact. Then on to Honolulu to meet the astronauts, took their wives. President pretty relaxed on plane. Had various people up - several sessions with me, Ziegler, Borman, long talk with Tom Paine. At end of flight an awkward little session where he gave wives pearl pins, with press in.

Hawaii ceremony very good - our guys did a spectacular advancing and logistics job, and it all went perfectly. Very brief, touching and impressive. Biggest debate was regarding whether wives should go aboard plane to greet astronauts privately or astronauts come out and do it for the cameras. President had strongly held the first view - but latter won out when Borman took it on.

On to Kahala Hilton. President had Rose and me in for drinks and dinner with him and Pat Nixon. Nice chat, mainly regarding how bad the press people are - usual topic, treat them with complete contempt. President not sure about his own reaction to the whole exercise and wanted readings from people in DC - but all were at White House press corps dinner that we stood up. He felt we should have had it inside with better crowd noise, etc., and not worried about Hawaiian atmosphere. We had a great setting with ocean and Diamond Head in background, but crowd got lost.

Overall an extremely good day - but a lot of work and a lot of air time - 11 hours - to bring it about. Probably worth it - because it was completely a TV story and thus will override any adverse reporter reaction.