



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

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Thursday and Friday, July 24-25.

We crossed the date line so one day covers two.

This is the day the men came back from the moon. After a sleepless night on the Arlington for me (my cabin was next to the radio shack and a banging door), we were up at 4:00 for 4:40 departure. It was beautiful on the flight deck, absolutely dark, millions of stars, plus the antenna lights on the ship. Borman said it looked more like the sky on the back side of the moon than any he had ever seen on earth. Helicopter left in the dark and flew over the ocean to the Hornet. Landed and went through quick briefings on the decontamination set-up and the recovery plan. Then waited on the bridge for the capsule to appear.

It did, in spectacular fashion. We saw the fireball (like a meteor with a tail) rise from the horizon and arch through the sky, turning into a red ball, then disappearing. Waited on bridge an hour or so until we could see the helicopters over the capsule and raft in the sea. We steaming towards them. Watched the pickup first through binoculars, then with naked eye. President was exuberant - really cranked up - like a little kid. Watched everything, soaked it all up. Showed everyone his fancy binoculars (actually Don Hughes').

Then the pick-up helicopter landed on deck. President ordered band to play "Columbia the Gem of the Ocean". Presented gifts in flag plot - then down to hangar deck for President chat with astronauts in quarantine chamber. Great show. He very excited – personal - perfect approach. Then prayer and "Star Spangled Banner", then "Ruffles and Flourishes" and "Hail to the Chief", and we left.

Had a short hop to Johnston Island because splashdown closer than planned. A brief stop there and on to Guam.

Huge crowd at Guam airport, lot of kids. Usual honors. President worked fence and spoke. Then to quarters. Then the press backgrounder at the Officer's Club. President had me ride back with him - was disturbed by lack of staff briefing for arrival. Still ecstatic over the day, as was Pat



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Nixon who had seen it on TV in Hawaii. On helicopter ride back from Hornet, President came back and chatted with me. Felt he had done well and that it had been the right approach, in contrast to formal statement. All of us agreed. He was really riding high still.

And so to bed early after lots of lack of sleep. Pretty historic and fascinating day!