

H. R. Haldeman Diaries Collection



Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum
National Archives and Records Administration

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Descriptive Summary

Collection Title: H. R. Haldeman Diaries Collection

Creator: Harry Robbins (Bob) Haldeman

Reference Code: RN-HRHD; NARA Identifier : #7787364

Collection Title (Filing): Haldeman Diaries

Collection Date: January 18, 1969 – April 30, 1973 [1969-01-18 to 1973-04-30]

Extent:

Nine handwritten volumes (Handwritten Diaries) including 7 diaries and 2 tape subject logs, and 36 audio diaries (Audio Diaries) dictated on cassette tapes

Abstract:

This collection consists of seven handwritten diaries, 36 dictated diaries recorded as sound recordings, and two handwritten audio cassette tape subject logs. The diaries and logs reflect H. R. Haldeman's candid personal record and reflections on events, issues, and people encountered during his service in the Nixon White House. As administrative assistant to the President and Chief of Staff, Haldeman attended and participated in public events and private meetings covering the entire scope of issues in which the Nixon White House engaged in during the years 1969-1973.

Name & Location of Repository:

Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Yorba Linda, CA

Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, College Park, MD

Administrative Information

Provenance/Custodial History/Legal History:¹

H. R. Haldeman kept a personal diary throughout his tenure as personal assistant to President Richard Nixon and White House Chief of Staff. Haldeman's Diary, though documenting the constitutional and statutory duties of the President, was never circulated for official purposes. The physical objects—36 audio cassette tapes and 9 bound volumes—were interfiled with Haldeman's Staff Member and Office Files. The White House Central Files Office maintained Haldeman's files in a Special Files Unit together with other politically and administratively sensitive materials produced and circulated amongst the President and his principle advisors. This unit was called the White House Special Files (WHSF). As a result of this interfiling of private and personal materials with Presidential records, the Diary became the subject of litigation and Government scrutiny aimed at establishing legal custody and control over and access to former President Nixon's records.

On April 30, 1973, Haldeman resigned as White House Office Chief of Staff. The following day, Haldeman's White House office was sealed on the orders of President Nixon and Attorney General Elliot L. Richardson. On May 25, 1973, the Grand Jury subpoenaed Haldeman's files. Five days later, at the request of Watergate Special Prosecutor, Archibald Cox, the White House secured Haldeman's files in a vault in the Old Executive Office Building (OEOB) under the control of the United States Secret Service.

On December 19, 1974, President Gerald R. Ford signed the Presidential Recordings and Materials Preservation Act (PRMPA) (P.L. 93-526, 88 Stat. 1695).² PRMPA, codified as 44 USC 2111 note, stated that the Archivist of the United States shall retain complete possession and control of original Nixon tape recordings, as well as all papers, documents, other materials created during the Nixon administration and having historical or commemorative value. The act allowed for access to the materials by former President Nixon and the Watergate Special Prosecution Force, as well as for the purpose of legal discovery and ongoing governmental business. Section 104 of PRMPA mandated that the General Services Administration (GSA) submit to each house of Congress a set of proposed regulations describing procedures for processing and providing public access to the Nixon Presidential materials in its possession. Section 105 of PRMPA provided the Federal Court for the District of Columbia (DDC) with exclusive jurisdiction to hear cases challenging the legal or constitutional validity of the act or implementing regulations, and disputes involving custody and control over the materials or compensation resulting from the seizure of the materials.

The US Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of PRMPA in *Nixon v. Administrator of General Services* (408 F.Supp. 321, 1976). The Supreme Court's decision on June 28, 1977,

¹ See also: <http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/aboutus/laws/chronology.php>

² <http://www.archives.gov/presidential-libraries/laws/1974-act.html>

cleared a path for the National Archives and Records Service (NARS)³ to take possession of the Nixon Presidential materials. In memorandum signed on July 29, 1977, by Counsel to the President Robert J. Lipshutz and GSA Administrator Jay Solomon, the White House Office of Counsel formally transferred custody and control over the Nixon Presidential materials to NARS. On August 9, 1977, sensitive Presidential materials, including Haldeman's Diary, were moved from the OEOB to a vault within the National Archives.

Soon after the Supreme Court handed down its decision, GSA submitted a set of implementing regulations to Congress which was approved on December 26, 1977, and became effective on January 16, 1978. The fourth set of implementing regulations refined the meaning of Presidential historical materials [CFR 41-105-63.104(a) as noted in 44 USC 2101] to include materials made or received by the President and his staff in fulfilling their constitutional and statutory duties of the Office of the President. The regulations further distinguished Presidential materials from private or personal materials which relate only to an individual's family or non-public affairs. The implementing regulations also stipulated that NARS must prioritize the identification and segregation of personal materials interfiled with Presidential materials, and return any personal materials to their owner in a timely manner. With formalized definitions of Presidential and personal materials in place, a distinction could now be made under PRMPA between materials for retention by NARS and others that must be returned to individuals.

On October 16, 1978, Haldeman filed suit against the Administrator of GSA to recover the Diary (*Haldeman v. Solomon* CA 78-1928, D.D.C. 1978). Haldeman's suit was dismissed because at the time NARS had not fully processed Haldeman's Staff Member and Office Files from the Special Files Unit, and therefore could not determine whether the Diary met criteria for personal returnable materials as described in the implementing regulations (105-63.104b). On January 5, 1979, Haldeman filed a second suit in the Federal Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia to retrieve his diary. While this suit was in motion, NARS archivists systematically surveyed, arranged, and described Haldeman's Staff Member and Office files. They reviewed folder title lists, and located items of an obvious private or personal nature. NARS thus identified Haldeman's Diary and determined that it met the definition of private and personal materials. In order to facilitate a settlement of Haldeman's suit, NARS agreed to prepare copies of the original diary for the plaintiff at the earliest possible date. In exchange, Haldeman agreed to voluntarily dismiss all pending legal suits and to donate the original Diary to the US Government.

Acquisition Information:

On March 27, 1980, Haldeman donated papers and other historical materials to the United States of America. On April 8, 1980, Acting Archivist of the United States James O'Neill accepted transfer of these materials on behalf of NARS under the provisions of a deed of gift in keeping with 44 USC Chapter 21 authorizing the Agency to accept for deposit materials that document

³ At the time, the National Archives and Records Service (NARS) was part of the General Services Administration (GSA).

the constitutional and statutory duties of former President Richard M. Nixon or provide evidence of Government organization, functions, decisions, and policies. Among the materials listed in an appendix to the deed of gift were the Haldeman Diaries consisting of nine handwritten, bound volumes and thirty-six audio cassette tapes.

The deed stipulated that the Diary collection would remain under seal for ten years (until around 1990) though access to the collection would be granted under limited conditions as noted. The deed further stipulated that access to national security information contained in the Diary was subject to Federal law, regulations, and executive orders. However, the deed signed by Haldeman did not specify procedures for segregating and restricting donated materials containing information potentially embarrassing to a living person. Therefore an amendment including such language was executed by Haldeman and Acting Archivist of the United States James O'Neill on April 8, 1980.

The deed of gift including a provision that Haldeman would retain sole copyright to the donated materials for his lifetime or during the period the materials remained under seal; thereafter the materials would enter the public domain. At the same time, Haldeman granted the United States Government an unrestricted license to reproduce the Diary during his lifetime subject to continued copyright, as well as the 10-year seal.

Processing Information:

1974-1977

Although the Haldeman Diary remained in the physical custody of the Federal Government, Federal District court orders strictly enjoined archival processing of these and other Nixon Presidential materials except where processing facilitated ongoing government business, legal discovery, as well as access by the former President or other former staff members involved in criminal proceedings. In order to facilitate access to the Nixon Presidential materials in response to subpoenas, court orders, and other special access requests, White House Counsel Philip W. Buchen tasked NARS with inventorying the contents of secure storage areas in the OEOB. NARS archivists thus created a preliminary inventory of H.R. Haldeman's staff and office files in December 1974; among the inventoried records and materials was Haldeman's Diary. After legal custody and control over the Nixon Presidential materials was confirmed by the Supreme Court in July 1977, NARS took possession of Haldeman's Staff and Office Files and began systematically processing the entire record series.

1978-1980

Systematic processing of Haldeman's files occurred in three phases: phase one included preliminary surveys and preservation actions; phase two involved arrangement, subject analysis, preliminary flagging of personal returnable materials, and description; and phase three necessitated systematic and item-level review, classification, final determination, and segregation

of Presidential historical materials and personal returnable materials. During phase three processing, archivists reviewed descriptive materials to locate items of an obvious private or personal nature. Nixon Presidential Materials Staff (Nixon Staff) thus identified Haldeman's Diary and determined that the materials met the definition of private and personal noted in the implementing regulations (105-63.104b). In order to facilitate a settlement of Haldeman's suit, NARS agreed to prepare copies of the original diary for the plaintiff at the earliest possible date.

In fulfilling the terms of the agreement ending all of Haldeman's legal suits against the Federal Government, NARS reviewed the handwritten and audio portions of the Diary between November 1979 and February 1980. Archivists photocopied the handwritten diaries, and audio engineers transferred the analog audio signal from the original audio cassette diaries to reel to reel tapes which they labeled working copies. Archivists subsequently conducted a word for word review of the entire Diary. While reviewing the Diary, NARS archivists identified audio segments and handwritten passages the release of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of privacy or libel of a living person. Sensitive privacy segments were thus sanitized from the copy of the Diary prepared for Haldeman.

In addition to sensitive privacy information, archivists also noted audio segments and handwritten entries that contained potentially sensitive national security information. As NARS did not possess declassification authority and Haldeman no longer held a national security clearance, a complete copy of the diary could not be transferred to Haldeman upon execution of the deed in March 1980. The Nixon Library therefore prepared sensitive audio segments for declassification review by Federal agencies with equity interests. Archivists recorded potentially classified audio segments from the working copies onto composite national security reels. At the same time, they photocopied all potentially classified pages from the Handwritten Diaries. The composite reels and photocopied, handwritten entries were sent to Agencies in February 1980. Agencies reviewed the materials and determined classification levels for any national security sensitive information contained therein. Upon return of the materials to NARS, archivists executed agency determinations by creating derivative declassified copies from the working copies in which segments identified as national security classified were sanitized from the Handwritten Diaries or replaced by audio tone in the case of Audio Diaries. Archivists noted on a document withdrawal record (NA Form 1421) the volume and page number of all handwritten segments sanitized for reasons on national security; the forms were placed inside a folder at the head of the photocopied volume.

NARS delivered sanitized copies of the Handwritten and Audio Diaries to Haldeman between April and November 1980.

1980-1994

Neither Haldeman nor the National Archives and Records Administration⁴ sought to publish the materials after executing the terms of the legal settlement and acquiring their respective versions of the Diary. Haldeman noted in a foreword to the 1994 Putnam edition of *The Haldeman Diaries*, that he waited nearly twenty years after leaving office to transcribe, edit, and publish the handwritten journals and audio tapes even though he had unfettered access to an appropriate copy of the Diary for over a decade.⁵

H. R. Haldeman died on November 12, 1993; with his passing, the right to copy the diary entered the public domain.

1993-1994

Between July 1993 and July 1994, the Nixon Staff at NARA began processing the Diary for public release in keeping with the deed of gift. Audio engineers assessed the physical condition of the original audio cassette tapes and determined that the materials were too fragile to play on a cassette tape deck. Instead, engineers opted to capture analog signals from reel-to-reel tapes recorded in 1979-1980 from the original cassettes tapes. The analog signals derived from these working copies were converted to digital signals and recorded onto digital audio tapes (DATs); the resulting DATs were then used to re-review the Audio Diaries in their entirety. As NARA did not have authority to declassify national security sensitive segments identified in the 1980s, archivists retained the national security withdrawals as originally sanitized from the Handwritten Diaries or as toned over in the Audio Diaries. However, as the Nixon Staff re-reviewed the journals and tapes, archivists opened some recorded and handwritten entries previously withheld in the 1980s to protect the privacy of living persons. The Handwritten Diaries were opened to the public on May 6, 1994, but due to the technical challenges of duplicating, editing, and publishing 36 cassette tapes, the Audio Diaries were subsequently released on August 1, 1994. In the interim, NARA submitted for declassification review by Federal agencies 38 national security sensitive segments withdrawn and sanitized from the Handwritten Diaries in 1980; 33 of the 38 segments were declassified and opened to the public in August 1994.

1995-2014

At the time of the public release of the Diary, the Nixon Staff was engaged in processing all remaining abuses of governmental powers conversations captured on the Nixon White House Tapes. The Nixon Staff therefore opted not to submit for systematic declassification review the national security sensitive audio segments withdrawn from the Audio Diaries in 1980. After NARA signed the Tapes Settlement Agreement in 1996, it was legally bound to review and release the Nixon Tapes in a timely manner, thus further delaying consideration of systematic

⁴ NARS became the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) an independent agency on April 1, 1985.

⁵ Haldeman, H. R. *The Haldeman Diaries: Inside the Nixon White House*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1994, p. 15.

declassification review of the Audio Diaries. On the other hand, subsequent to the release of the Diary, the Nixon Staff received no mandatory declassification requests from the public and therefore did not submit withdrawn national security information for review by Federal agencies between 1994 and 2010. Further processing of the Diary thus remained on hold for over a decade.

With the move of the Nixon Presidential materials from College Park to Yorba Linda in 2010, the Diary collection came back into focus. The Library Director and archivists surveyed processing records pertaining to the Diary, inventoried all remaining withdrawn national security segments, and prepared declassification review cases for submission to agency equity holders. For the Handwritten Diary, the NARA-administered Nixon Presidential Library and Museum compiled one mandatory declassification review case consisting of all withdrawn segments which it submitted to agencies on June 30, 2011. The Library is awaiting declassification decisions on documents submitted in this case. With respect to the Audio Diaries, the Library submitted one systematic declassification review case, including 296 classified segments, to the National Declassification Center (NDC) at the National Archives in September 2012. The NDC returned the case to the Library in June 2013.⁶ Of the 296 segments reviewed by Federal agencies, 285 were declassified in full. The declassified segments were prepared for online release, and made available in September 2014.

Conditions Governing Access:

The original, unsanitized handwritten and audio material is retained in College Park, MD, and not available immediately to researchers.

Sanitized copies of the handwritten and audio diaries for public access are available in Yorba Linda, CA, and, where possible, available at the Library's [Virtual Library](#)

Online versions of handwritten entries, audio and accompanying transcripts are available.

- [1969](#)
- [1970](#)
- [1971](#)
- [1972](#)
- [1973](#)

November 2014: Online Release of Declassified Segments:

Inclusive Dates: December 12, 1970 – March 13, 1973

Extent: One hundred ninety-three (193) audio daily diary entries accompanied with transcripts.

⁶ See also: <http://www.archives.gov/press/press-releases/2013/nr13-124.html>

Scope and Content Note: Newly declassified topics covered include the Pentagon Papers, Vietnam negotiations, SALT negotiations, India-Pakistan, Israel, US-Soviet relations, and US-China relations.

Within these 193 diary entries, archivists were also able to re-review eight previously withheld privacy withdrawals. Seven of these withdrawals have been released.

Copies of the audio for *each day with a national security return and accompanying transcript for those days* are available at the links above with available days highlighted in green.

Note on the Audio:

The audio daily diary entries included in this online release of materials represent a small portion of the entire Haldeman Diaries Collection. Contained within the 193 diary entries released hereunder are 296 national security sensitive segments reviewed by the NDC at the National Archives and eight privacy segments reviewed by the Nixon Library. Of the 296 segments reviewed by the NDC in keeping with systematic declassification provisions of Executive Order 13526, 285 have been released in full and 11 remain exempt from declassification. Of the previously withheld privacy withdrawals, seven have been released in full.

These audio diary entries have been remastered from original audio cassette tapes or second-generation reel-to-reel audio tapes and have been rendered in the form of MP3 and WAV digital audio files. Exempted audio segments are noted by a consistent audio tone covering the length of the redacted portion, while all declassified and newly opened privacy audio content has been reinserted in original order. Due to the nature of WAV files, the Nixon Library is unable to embed metadata at this time. Basic information can be found in the file name and accompanying MP3 file.

Note on the Transcripts:

Transcripts of these recordings have been edited in rich text format and have been rendered as PDF documents. All materials returned from systematic declassification review are marked within the transcripts either as declassified or exempt in full. Segments marked declassified have been transcribed in full. Segments marked as exempt from declassification include a brief description of the redacted transcript and an exemption category cited from EO 13526. Re-reviewed privacy material has likewise

been transcribed if opened, or transcripts have been annotated for continued closure.

Even though transcripts may be prepared with great care and substantial effort, many points of ambiguity are inevitable, and erroneous or different interpretations from transcripts are always possible. The Nixon Library and the National Archives considers existing transcripts to be an interpretation of the record rather than the record itself. *The Library considers the actual audio to be the record, and strongly urges users to listen to the audio entries.*

Finding Aids: A Portable Document Format [PDF] Index for searching across the transcripts is available as a download [insert link]. Click the “H. R. Haldeman Diaries Index.pdx” file inside the file folder.

All other audio can be accessed on the audiocassette copies available in the Yorba Linda Reading Room.

A printed transcript of the remainder of the diary (handwritten and audio) is available in the Yorba Linda Reading Room.

Photocopies of the available handwritten textual entries are available in the Yorba Linda Reading Room.

The complete CD-ROM version of transcripts from 1994 can be searched in the Yorba Linda Reading Room.

NOTE: The Library will make efforts to provide online or electronic access to all entries over time.

Languages of Materials: English

Preferred Citation:

Diary Entry: [Date], H. R. Haldeman Diaries Collection. Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Yorba Linda, CA.

Publication Rights: Contents of the Haldeman Diaries are in the public domain

Related Collections:

H. R. Haldeman White House Special File Staff Member and Office File

<http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/forresearchers/find/textual/special/smof/haldeman.php>

H. R. Haldeman Oral History

<http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/histories/haldeman-1987-08-13.pdf>

<http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/histories/haldeman-1988-04-11.pdf>

<http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/histories/haldeman-1988-04-12.pdf>

<http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/virtuallibrary/documents/histories/haldeman-1988-04-13.pdf>

H. R. Haldeman Donated Papers – “Guide to the H. R. Haldeman Collection (1956-1978)”

http://www.nixonlibrary.gov/forresearchers/find/textual/findingaids/findingaid_haldeman.pdf

Select Bibliography:

Haldeman, H. R. *The Ends of Power*. New York: Times Books, 1978.

Haldeman, H. R. *The Haldeman Diaries: Inside the Nixon White House*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1994.

Haldeman, H. R. *The Haldeman Diaries: Inside the Nixon White House the Complete Multimedia Edition*. Santa Monica, CA: Sony Electronic Publishing, 1994.

Hoff, Joan. “Researchers’ Nightmare: Studying the Nixon Presidency.” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*: Winter 1996, Vol. 26 (1), pp. 259-275.

Biographical Note

Harry Robbins (“Bob”) Haldeman, the son of a successful businessman, was born in Los Angeles, California, on October 27, 1926. He attended the University of Redlands and the University of Southern California. During World War II, he served in the Naval Reserve and completed his education at the University of California, Los Angeles, where he graduated in 1948 with a degree in business administration.

In 1949, Mr. Haldeman joined the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency in New York. Ten years later he was promoted to the post of vice president and manager of the California office.

Mr. Haldeman first met Richard Nixon when he was serving as Vice President under Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1952. Mr. Haldeman later assisted Vice President Nixon in his unsuccessful 1960 Presidential campaign against John F. Kennedy. He also managed Richard Nixon's unsuccessful campaign for the governorship of California in 1962.

In 1968, H. R. Haldeman became the chief of staff of Richard Nixon's successful campaign for the Presidency. During the campaign, Mr. Haldeman became responsible for maintaining the candidates' schedule, supervising the advance team, and participating in the development of campaign strategy and platforms. After President Nixon's election, Nixon appointed H. R. Haldeman Assistant to the President and the White House Chief of Staff.

H. R. Haldeman's duties included maintaining the President's schedule and coordinating the White House staff. Mr. Haldeman was responsible for running the administrative functions in the White House. He supervised the administrative staff responsible for appointments and dispersed the President's instructions to his staff.

Mr. Haldeman was a key figure in the Watergate scandal, and by April 30, 1973, the scandal forced Mr. Haldeman (along with John Ehrlichman, President Nixon's domestic policy advisor) to resign (on this same day, the resignation of John Dean, White House Counsel, was accepted by the President). On New Year's Day, 1975, he was convicted of conspiracy and obstruction of justice, and he was sentenced February 21, 1975, to an 18-month prison sentence, which he served in Lompoc Federal Prison in California.

On his release from prison, Mr. Haldeman became vice president of the David H. Murdoch real estate development company. In 1978, Mr. Haldeman published his autobiography *The Ends of Power*. Harry Robbins Haldeman died of cancer on November 13, 1993, at his home in Santa Barbara, California. At the time of his death, H.R. Haldeman had been working on a publication of his diaries from his time in the White House. *The Haldeman Diaries: Inside the Nixon White House* was published in 1994.

Scope and Content

This collection consists of seven handwritten diaries, 36 dictated diaries recorded as sound recordings, and two handwritten audio cassette tape subject logs. The diaries and logs reflect H. R. Haldeman's candid personal record and reflections on events, issues, and people encountered during his service in the Nixon White House. As administrative assistant to the President and chief of staff, Haldeman attended and participated in public events and private meetings covering the entire scope of issues in which the Nixon White House engaged in during the years 1969-1973.

This collection is divided into two series: Handwritten Diaries and Audio Diaries.

H. R. Haldeman Handwritten Diaries (NARA Identifier: #7788251)

Arrangement: Arranged chronologically by date of diary entry. Diary entries related to head of state visits are compiled in chronological order by date in a separate volume entitled Trips I.

Dates: January 18, 1969 – December 2, 1970

Scope and Content: This series consists of daily diaries handwritten in narrative form. The diaries detail President Richard Nixon's schedule and trip itineraries including summits and state visits, speeches and press conferences, and meetings or telephone calls with heads of state, Cabinet members, labor leaders, members of Congress, representatives of the Armed Forces, Federal agencies, staff from the Office of the President and White House Office, press and reporters, and the general public. Haldeman describes relations among the President and his senior advisors and documents personnel management decisions and Presidential appointments including Supreme Court Chief Justice Warren E. Burger and Harry A. Blackmun.

Among many individuals about whom Haldeman frequently writes in the diaries are Henry A. Kissinger, William P. Rogers, John D. Ehrlichman, Melvin R. Laird, Dwight L. Chapin, Ronald L. Ziegler, Vice President Spiro T. Agnew, Herbert G. Klein, Arthur F. Burns, Patrick J. Buchanan, Bryce N. Harlow, J. Edgar Hoover, Patrick J. Moynihan, Robert Finch, and John N. Mitchell. Haldeman documents public events and private meetings covering the entire scope of issues in which the Nixon White House engaged in 1969 and 1970.

Among some of the main domestic policy topics frequently noted in this collection are Apollo space missions; appropriations and expenditures; anti-war demonstrations; executive branch and White House reorganization; legislation related to Social Security benefits, drugs and crime, taxation, employment, opinion polls, the press, and public relations; Presidential messages; supersonic transport planes; and welfare reform.

Foreign policy topics noted by Haldeman include negotiations on strategic arms limitation, anti-ballistic missiles, and chemical and biological weapons; the President's policies for Vietnam including troop deployments, My Lai, peace negotiations, and the November 3, 1969, speech; North Korea's air strike on a US Navy reconnaissance plane; aerial bombing of Cambodia; foreign aid and international finance; and negotiations on the status of Okinawa, Japan.

H. R. Haldeman Audio Diaries (NARA Identifier: #7788252)

Arrangement: Arranged by audio cassette tape number and thereunder chronologically by date of recording

Dates: November 30, 1970 – April 30, 1973

Scope and Content: This series consists of audio diaries spoken in narrative form. The audio diaries detail the President's schedule and trip itineraries including summits and state visits, speeches and press conferences, and meetings or telephone calls with heads of state, Cabinet members, labor leaders, members of Congress, representatives of the Armed Forces, Federal agencies, staff from the Office of the President and White House Office, press and reporters.

In the diaries, Haldeman describes relations among the President and his senior advisors, and documents personnel management decisions and Presidential appointments. Government reorganization is covered in some detail particularly as it relates to senior White House staff positions, the Federal budget, and appropriations. Haldeman notes the President's deliberations on second-term appointments; the appointment of women, Latin Americans, and African Americans to senior advisory and senior management positions; and discussions about candidates to fill two vacant seats on the Supreme Court and the directorship of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) upon the death of J. Edgar Hoover. The diaries also note the administration's response to leaks of national security information particularly related to the Pentagon Papers and the President's policies with respect to Vietnam and South Asia. Haldeman discusses the President's 1972 presidential campaign strategies, speeches, and press conferences; relations with Republic National Committee Chairman Robert Dole and Committee for the Re-Election of the President Chairman John Mitchell; potential running mates including Vice President Spiro T. Agnew and John B. Connally; and leading opposition candidates George Wallace, Pete McCloskey, George McGovern, and Thomas Eagleton.

Haldeman documents public events and private meetings covering the entire scope of issues in which the Nixon White House engaged in during the years 1970 – 1973. Among the main domestic policies, issues, and legislative initiatives he describes in this series are: busing for school intergration; collective bargaining and labor strikes; anti-war demonstrations; organized crime and drug control; supersonic transport planes; taxation;

welfare reform and social security adjustments; wage and price controls; the Watergate Affair; youth, the military draft, and the 26th Amendment to the Constitution.

Foreign policy topics include the President's summit meetings with Soviet Union Premier Leonid Brezhnev, Soviet Jews, grain sales, and negotiations on strategic arms limitations; the President's Vietnam War policies including aerial bombing and troop deployments in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, the Calley Case, peace negotiations, the repatriation of American prisoners of war, and the War Powers resolutions; foreign aid and international finance; trade negotiations with Japan; military tactics and peace negotiations related to the India-Pakistan conflict and the the Middle East; the President's visit to the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China's membership in the United Nations (UN).

Haldeman frequently describes findings in public opinion polls. For each audio diary entry, Haldeman briefly notes in an audio tape log the date, the President's travel itinerary and meeting schedule, and the main topics discussed; the logs thus serve as a chronological index to the audio cassette diaries.