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Cruise on Board USS Philadelphia,
April 30-May 8, 1938
LOG

OF

THE CRUISE OF

PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

TO

DRY TORTUGAS

FLORIDA

29 November, 1937.

6 December, 1937.
Lieutenant A. D. Clark, U. S. Navy
Commanding

The President
Honorable H. L. Ickes, Secretary of Interior
Honorable Robt. H. Jackson, Asst Attorney General
Honorable Harry Hopkins, W. P. A. Administrator
Honorable James Roosevelt, Secretary to the President
Captain Walter B. Woodson, U.S.N., Naval Aide
Colonel Edwin Watson, F. A., Military Aide
Captain R.T. McIntire, (MC), U.S.N., White House Physician
Chief Pharmacist George A. Fox, U.S.N.
Mr. Thomas Quarters, U.S. Secret Service
Mr. R. Clark, U. S. Secret Service
Chief Yeoman C. K. Claunch, U.S.N.

Lieutenant E. B. Berthold, U.S.N., Communications Officer
Mr. Paul Hart, U. S. Secret Service
Mr. J. M. Reilly, U. S. Secret Service
Mr. Charles Fredericks, U. S. Secret Service
Saturday
27 November

The President left the White House at 10:20 p.m. and motored to the Union Station where his special train was waiting. There was a light drizzle as the President and his party boarded the train at 10:30 p.m. In the Presidential Party were:
The President  Hon. Harold I. Ickes (Sec'y Interior)
Hon. Harry Hopkins  Hon. Robert H. Jackson (Ass't Atty General)
Senator Claude Pepper  Mr. and Mrs. James Roosevelt
Hon. Marvin McIntyre  Mr. John Biggers (Unemployment Census)
Captain W.E. Woodson  Colonel E. A. Watson
Captain Ross T. McIntire
Miss M. A. Le Hand  Chief Pharmacist G. A. Fox

A few members of the White House staff, the Secret Service, newspaper correspondents and photographers accompanied the party.

The train left the Union Station at Washington for Miami, Florida at 11:55 p.m.
The day opened overcast with a light drizzling rain which continued throughout the day. Passing through North Carolina, heading south, planning to arrive in Miami, Florida at 8:45 a.m. to-morrow, Monday.

All hands slept late.

The President, assisted by the Navy and Attorney General's office, Secretary Ickes and some members of his staff attempted to collect a bet on the Army-Navy football game from Colonel Watson. Colonel Watson, according to the brief, had bet on the Navy, the President on the Army. However, Colonel Watson held his ground - and his two quid.

At 5:30 p.m. the special train arrived at Jacksonville, Florida where it was taken over by crews from the Florida East Coast Railroad for the trip down the Florida coast. Governor Cone of Florida arrived on board and accompanied the party to Miami.

At midnight the special train neared Palm Beach, Florida where she was scheduled to arrive at 1:00 a.m. to stay over for about five hours.
Monday
29 November

At 1:00 a.m. the President's special train arrived at West Palm Beach, Florida where it remained until 6:10 a.m., in order not to arrive at Miami, Florida prior to 8:45 a.m.

At 6:10 a.m. the train got underway and headed southward into clearing skies and increasing temperature. The party discarded vests and some had already shifted into tropical clothing.

The President's train arrived at the Miami railroad station at precisely 8:45 a.m. At 9:00 a.m. the President and his party disembarked from the train after several local officials had called on the President in his private car, "The Pioneer". Governor Cone, Mayor Robert Williams (of Miami) and Mr. James Roosevelt rode with the President to Pier #3 at the Municipal Wharf where the U. S. S. POTOmac was moored. During the drive from the railroad station to the dock the streets were lined with people cheering the President's car as it passed. Upon arrival at the dock news photographers took pictures for fifteen minutes and, at 9:45 a.m., the President said good-bye to the officials present and the members of his party who were not accompanying him in the POTOmac. As the POTOmac left the dock the sun broke out strongly for the first time in many days and by noon the sky was clear and the weather fair. The sea was smooth.
After leaving the Miami causeway, the POTOMAC set a course for Dry Tortugas, seventy miles to the westward of Key West, Fla.

After luncheon the entire party brought out lines and began trolling from the quarter-deck of the POTOMAC. Before his line was over very long, the President hooked an eight-pound mackerel.

Luck lagged for a time but before long Colonel Watson got a nibble followed by a bite. All hands reeled-in to give the Colonel full play over his strike. After fifteen minutes of reeling and hauling Colonel Watson called for a "harness", donned it and went to work in earnest on the "power-plant" which seemed to be at the other end of his line. For twenty minutes the gallery cheered while Colonel Watson struggled. Soon the water broke and the "monster" was hauled alongside and gaffed - a twelve-pound psychic grouper.

Colonel Watson took "time out".

A short time later the President hooked another mackerel which scaled five-pounds.

After a luckless period, during which no strikes were made, notwithstanding the prayers of the other members of the party to "hup" the President and Colonel Watson, the fishermen called it a day. The President won two parts of the day's pool - first, as catcher of the first fish and second, as catcher of the most fish. Colonel Watson won the third part as catcher of the largest fish.

The party rested and sunned until dinner. The salt air, an afternoon of trolling and the sun cultivated healthy appetites.

After dinner the President made inquiry as to the honors which would be rendered at Fort Jefferson upon arrival there tomorrow.
morning. Colonel Watson took the situation in hand but diplomatically turned it over to Secretary Ickes when a dispatch was received stating that Fort Jefferson was under the jurisdiction of the Department of Interior, that no Army personnel were stationed there and that Mr. Willard Morris of the National Park Service, supervisor of the Fort was at Key West and would arrive at Fort Jefferson early tomorrow (Tuesday) morning. Secretary Ickes was perturbed that the Army should interfere with the domains under his cognizance.

After Colonel Watson relinquished his hold on Fort Jefferson the party, with the exception of the President played cards. The President spent the evening going through a volume of reading matter which demanded his attention. At 2130 someone yawned and by 2200 all hands were turned in.

It was a splendid day. As the President boarded the POTOMAC at Miami the sun broke through clouds that had been heavy for days and before noon the sky was clear. The sea was calm and light northerly winds prevailed. A fine day for cruising. As the day closed we were eighty-five miles out of Miami, enroute to Fort Jefferson on Garden Key, Dry Tortugas, where we plan to arrive about 0900 tomorrow.
Tuesday
30 November

The POTOMAC rounded Key West, Florida shortly after midnight and changed course to the westward, enroute Dry Tortugas, Florida, escorted by the U. S. S. SEAFRIDGE.

At 0833 the POTOMAC arrived off Garden Key, Dry Tortugas and found a comfortable anchorage in the open sea about two miles to the northwest of Fort Jefferson. At 0800 Lieutenant A. D. Clark, Commanding Officer of the U.S.S. POTOMAC, proceeded into the dock at Fort Jefferson to inspect the docking facilities there. They were found to be favorable and, at 1005, the POTOMAC left her anchorage and proceeded into the dock where she moored at 1032. The U.S.S. SEAFRIDGE, escort vessel, anchored outside the harbor to the southeastward, distant about two miles.

The President spent the morning going over official documents and resting. After the POTOMAC tie-up, all of the party, with the exception of the President, Mr. James Roosevelt and Captain Woodson, made a tour of inspection through Fort Jefferson, escorted by Mr. Willard Morris, supervisor in the National Park Service, who had arrived from Key West by cutter earlier in the morning. All hands were impressed.

The Fort is a very impressive hexagonal-shaped structure, fully bastioned. The great walls which surround it are from three to six feet thick, and 425 feet long, rising from a moat which surround the structure. The moat is sixty-feet across and the tides passed down relate that it was teeming with sharks during the
period the Fort was occupied. During the time the structure served as a Fort the great width of the moat, the sheer rise of its walls and the hungry sharks which infested the waters, prevented attack by landing forces. During the period the Fort served as a prison, the prisoners faced the same obstacles in attempts to escape.

The work on the erection of the Fort began in 1846 and continued for fifteen years. The architectural beauty and strength of design would serve as excellent studies for the modern school. The ruggedness of the brick, made of a mixture of clay and stones, and the excellent workmanship, together with the durability of the cement, which was mixed with ground coral rather than sand, is something to marvel at. For over ninety years it has withstand the beating of the sea and the wild assaults of tropical hurricanes which elsewhere have spread destruction in their wake. This is the more remarkable when one considers that Fort Jefferson is on an isolated cay seventy miles at sea to the westward of Key West, Florida, entirely at the mercy of the elements.

The antiquated fuse ignited cannon still lay near their original foundations. Just below each foundation is a heavily barricaded powder room reached by descending an enclosed spiral granite stairway. On the second deck of the fort there are evidences of where several hundred lesser guns had previously rested - today, the positions where the guns were located appear like broken windows.
The only fresh water on the Key is that obtained from the cisterns - the rain-water which falls on the roof of the Fort drains through chimney-like orifices into the cisterns, the months of plenty giving forth a supply during the dry period.

It is evident that the first deck of the Fort served at one time as living quarters for soldiers, and later as cells for prisoners - Dr. Samuel A. Mudd, of Maryland, the physician who treated the broken leg of John Wilkes Booth, assassin of Abraham Lincoln, was incarcerated in one of these cells. Likewise, it is apparent that the second deck was used for gun quarters and powder rooms during the earlier days of the Fort and later as guard-mount areas over the prisoners within the walls. The absence of barred windows indicates the futility of attempt to escape. Within the Fort grounds there is an enormous courtyard of several acres. Near the north and east walls are antiquated powder magazines reached by passing through a maze. Growing within the magazine walls are guava trees, many of which can be found throughout the courtyard. Near the lone
Tuesday

30 November
(Continued)

entrance to the Fort where once a huge drawbridge spanned the moat, stands a lone cork tree.

The officers' quarters, of later construction and not nearly so substantial, have collapsed. In inspecting the ruins, the most interesting feature is the enormity of the fire-places (which are in every room) as compared with the size of the room.

During the afternoon all hands, with the exception of the President and Mr. Ickes went fishing - luck was good and some sizeable barracuda, skipjacks and mackerel were brought back in the small boats. The President and Mr. Ickes rested during the afternoon until the fishing party returned at 1830.

After dinner all hands engaged in playing cards. In Colonial days these islands were the lairs of buccaneers and pirates.

Late in the evening the President received a coded message from the Secretary of State to which he replied immediately, in code.

Instructions were sent to the Navy air mail detachment at Miami to make a mail trip to the POTOMAC tomorrow.

Throughout the day the weather remained clear and fair, with a moderate northerly wind. By 2230 all hands had turned-in.
The POTOMAC remained alongside the dock at Fort Jefferson, Garden Key, Dry Tortugas through the night and forenoon.

The Navy mail plane from Miami was expected about noon and all hands spent the forenoon getting off letters to go back in the plane. The President worked on official matters to be returned to Washington by the mail plane. It was a quiet morning with everyone playing solitaire with his own affairs.

The 1209 the Navy mail plane arrived from Miami and tied-up to a buoy close-by the POTOMAC. Lieutenant A. L. Buckley, pilot of the P3Y twin-motored bomber came on board with Inspector Herbert Theurer of the Postoffice Department. The President and Secretary James Roosevelt went through the mail immediately and cleared everything requiring action. At 1410 the plane departed for Miami and arrived there at 1615.

The President and party had luncheon immediately after the mail was cleared.

After luncheon, at 1425, all hands left the POTOMAC in small boats for a fishing spree around the nearby cays and reefs. As soon as the party had left the ship, the POTOMAC got underway and went alongside the SHELBRIDGE for fresh water. By 1630 the POTOMAC had returned to the dock at Fort Jefferson.

The fishing expedition stayed out for four hours and found several fertile fishing spots — thirty-five barracuda were
taken, together with some skipjacks and one or two of unknown species. Mr. Jackson took the prize for the largest catch of the day with a barracuda tipping the scales at 18-1/2 pounds. The President took five of the barracuda caught, ranging in weight from eight to fourteen pounds.

While fishing the President discovered that Bird Key, which is shown on the chart as being above water, was one and one-half to two feet under water. The shifting sands of these small islands constantly change their contour and their height above water, washing some away entirely, enlarging others and creating new reefs and new hazards to navigation. A report on the disappearance of Bird Key was made to the Navy Department Hydrographer.

The fishing party returned to the POTOMAC at 1810. It was a good afternoon in the boats for all hands - somewhat tired, thoroughly tanned and with sufficient sport fish to show for their labors.

all hands rested until dinner.

Following dinner the party, with the exception of the
President, played cards. The shades of the buccaneers and
pirates of former days "kibitzed". The President worked on
a mass of official correspondence until 2100 when he joined
the game. All hands turned in shortly after the game broke
up at 2150 - the buccaneers and pirates left - wearing halos.

At about the time the card game broke up the President
received two radio messages - one from the Secretary of State
and one from the Secretary of the Treasury. The messages
were in code and the President replied to them immediately, by
radio, in code.

The fair weather continued; the skies were clear, a rather
fresh northerly wind made the air comfortably cool and all hands
took advantage of the warm sun which played on the cays through­
out the day. The red sunset of the evening presaged a good day
again tomorrow. During the siesta period some members of the
party made independent excursions through Fort Jefferson and
around the moat, along the beach.
Thursday
2 December

The POTOMAC remained moored to the dock at Fort Jefferson, on Garden Key. The escort vessel, SELFRIDGE, road at anchor just outside the harbor, within signalling distance. The skies were clear but a fresh northeasterly wind made the air considerably cooler than yesterday.

During the morning some of the party went fishing but luck lagged and the water outside the haven was rather choppy. After luncheon all of the party went out in the boats again, except Captain Woodson. The party remained out for almost three hours and returned with seventeen fish. Secretary Ickes got the largest catch of the day with a nineteen pound barracuda. The President turned-in two skipjacks, one ladyfish and an oddity of unknown variety. Dr. Mc Intire was second best with a fourteen-pounder. Colonel Watson was a runner-up.

Though a warm sun beat down, the fresh northeaster which continued throughout the day made it a cool afternoon in the fishing boats. After returning to the ship the fishermen rested until dinner.

After dinner orders were dispatched by radio to the Navy air mail detachment at Miami to make a mail trip on the morrow. This mail trip was advanced one day due to the fact that some official documents from the State Department required immediate
action by the President.

About 1930 the entire party met at the tables and went into executive session. The buccaneers and pirates arrived promptly. The session adjourned early in order that the members of the party might get off mail for the return trip of the plane tomorrow.
Friday
3 December

The POTOMAC remained moored to the dock at Fort Jefferson throughout the forenoon. The escort destroyer, SELFRIJDE, rode at anchor just outside the harbor. During the morning, the President worked on official matters to be returned to Washington via the mail plane expected at noon. The rest of the party were engrossed in their own correspondence and it was a quiet morning.

The Navy mail plane left Miami for Dry Tortugas at 0945 and at 1100 landed close-by and secured to a buoy. The President and Secretary James Roosevelt cleared the incoming mail immediately upon its arrival. While the President and Secretary Roosevelt were clearing the mail, the plane crew inspected Fort Jefferson. At 1205 the mail was cleared and the plane took-off for the return flight to Miami.

At luncheon the President had as his guests, in addition to his party, Commander H. D. Clarke, Commanding Officer of the escort vessel, SELFRIJDE, and Lieutenant Commander G. C. Miller, Executive Officer of the SELFRIJDE.

After luncheon the President sent word to the White House temporary offices at Miami that the POTOMAC would leave Dry Tortugas at 1300 tomorrow, Saturday, and would arrive at Miami about 1330 on Sunday, and that the party would proceed direct to Washington, omitting the contemplated stops at Warm Springs and Gainesville, Georgia.
Friday

3 December
(Continued)

At 1420 the President, Colonel Watson, Secretary Roosevelt, Dr. McIntire and Mr. Hopkins went out in the fishing boats. The President took with him Colonel Watson and Mr. Hopkins in order that he might act as Referee in Chicanery between these two enthusiastic competitors. The President caught several grouper and a few small fry while his companions, Colonel Watson and Mr. Hopkins, assisted each other with an empty bag. Dr. McIntire and Mr. Roosevelt got two barracuda and a skipjack. After the boats came back at 1620, Colonel Watson prevailed upon Captain Woodson to go out again. Colonel Watson caught one grouper; Captain Woodson got nothing but there lurked a suspicion that the grouper Colonel Watson caught closely resembled one of those which the President caught earlier in the day.

At 1430, after the fishing party took to the boats, the POTOMAC again went alongside the SELFRIIDGE for fresh water. During the stay alongside the SELFRIIDGE, Secretary Ickes and Mr. Jackson took the opportunity to inspect the destroyer. Commander Clarke escorted them throughout the ship and they were greatly interested. The POTOMAC tied-up to the dock at Fort Jefferson again at 1605.

All hands rested until dinner. The weather continued fair but rather cool with a good northeasterly wind which made boating conditions outside the harbor somewhat uncomfortable.
After dinner the usual drawing-up of chairs took place and the Executive Session went into the semi-final round. All hands answered the roll call. Colonel Watson made a couple of motions but the legal talent present drew him out. A Joint Resolution to send the Colonel to the postgraduate school at Shooting River for a "refresher course" in old army game tactics, including the social variations of "Receiving, Seeing and Calling", was adopted. The meeting adjourned at 2300 and all hands turned in.
Saturday
4 December

The POTOMAC tied-up to the dock at Fort Jefferson, Garden Key, Dry Tortugas.

At 1040 the President accompanied by several members of his Party left the POTOMAC to inspect the ruins of Fort Jefferson. Mr. Willard Morris of the National Park Service escorted the party through the reservation and though he has been there but a few months was extremely enthusiastic and did everything possible to make the visit a pleasant one. The President evinced great interest in the structure and enjoyed the visit immensely. On departing from the Fort, Mr. Morris presented the President with a beautiful Queen conch shell which the President received with thanks and directed that it be sent to the White House. The President and all of his party signed the "guest book" in the Fort office. It was after noon when the President and his party arrived back on board the POTOMAC.

At 1250 the POTOMAC prepared to get underway and at 1305 left the dock at Fort Jefferson for Miami. We headed Southeast and this brought the POTOMAC into the trough of the sea, causing her to roll and jump around quite lively - to the slight distress of some of the more terra-fied members of the party. After the course was changed to the Eastward late in the day the motion of the ship became easier and there was some stirring about deck which was absent during the early afternoon.

A radio was sent to Secretary McIntyre at Miami that the POTOMAC would dock at Miami at 1330, in order that a Press Con-
Saturday
4 December
(Continued)

forence might be held before boarding the train for Washington.
The President issued instructions that the FOTOMAC should proceed
toward Miami during the night at a speed which would permit her
to arrive at a point about twenty miles to the Southward of the
channel entrance at 0900, the intention being to do some trolling
during the forenoon if weather conditions were favorable.

Rounded off Key West at 1730 and proceeded on a northerly
course toward Miami at nine knots.

After dinner the entire party played cards until 2215. This
was the final round and the pirates and buccansers gazed with
admiration at the President, Mr. Hopkins and Captain Woodson.

The late evening was spent in preparation for disembarking
on the morrow.
Sunday
5 December

Enroute in the POTOMAC from Dry Tortugas to Miami, Fla. At 0100 the POTOMAC slowed to six knots. At 0900 arrived twenty miles off the channel entrance to Miami.

The President and his party started trolling at 1000 and continued until 1300. Several of the party got strikes but had little luck in landing them. Colonel Watson caught one small "bonita" but it escaped just as it was about to be hauled on board, thus losing Colonel Watson three prizes, the first, largest and most fish caught during the day.

At 1245 the SELFRIDGE, which was not going to proceed into Miami, transferred her Secret Service operatives and Lieutenant Berthold, Communications Officer, to the U.S.S. POTOMAC for the passage up the channel. As soon as the transfer was completed the POTOMAC headed up the channel which was lined with pleasure craft, some of which followed the POTOMAC. At 1330 the POTOMAC docked at Pier #3, Miami Municipal Wharf. Mrs. James Roosevelt and Miss Le Hand boarded the ship immediately. Shortly after docking newspaper correspondents and photographers came on board and a Press Conference was held.

At 1400 the President and his party disembarked from the POTOMAC and drove to the railroad station through streets lined with people cheering the President. At the station Mr. C.E. Loftin, Receiver of the Florida East Coast Railroad greeted the President as he boarded the train, which left Miami at promptly 1430, as planned.