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EDITORS' NOTE

Unpack one-suiter, repack two-suiter

What went on in the White House during the tense weeks before the Vietnam bombing halt is shown in this week's picture essay—as only Yoichi Okamoto could have shown it. Okamoto is the official presidential photographer, charged with recording history behind the scenes.

In our Presidency issue, last July 5, when we published his essay on life in the White House, the story was put together by an old friend of Oke's, our art director, Bernard Quint. Some time ago, when the first rumors of a bombing halt were in the air, Bernie thought of Oke and gave him a call. If Oke ever had any pictures on the background of the halt, said Bernie, he would dearly love to see them. When the halt was announced he checked again. Oke said he had the pictures. Bernie said he'd be at the White House gates first thing next morning.



FRANK McCULLOCH

That evening Frank McCulloch, Washington bureau chief, was covering Nixon in New York. His expertise was needed to put the story into shape, and he went to the capital with Bernie. What followed was, even for the fast-moving McCulloch, a remarkably hectic week. He jotted down this log when he got back:

FRIDAY. New York. Quint and I catch 7 a.m. shuttle to Washington. In White House by 9:30. For six hours, without break, scan and edit thousands of picture frames. Winnow pile down to about 150 shots. Too late to get information for captions because President and staff have left for Texas ranch. Also too late to turn story over to Cissy (deRosset McQuade, LIFE White House correspondent) because she's with the President's party. Only solution is to chase the President to Texas. Back to bureau for some pressing chores that have built up over last two weeks. Will grab morning flight to San Antonio.

SATURDAY. San Antonio. Cissy and I work through afternoon with Tom Johnson, deputy press secretary, on research material. Get much of what we need but all agree further talks with White House insiders necessary. Call Washington, arrange Sunday afternoon appointment, best plane connection I can make.

SUNDAY. Washington. Spend afternoon interviewing, once again going over contacts, picking up more details, making corrections. Home by early evening. Spread 150 prints out on living room and dining room floors and furniture. Wife and daughter help get them in chronological order. Unpack one-suiter from Texas, repack two-suiter for longer New York stay. Cissy and I will make 8 a.m. shuttle to New York.

MONDAY. New York. Matching notes against photographs, begin to make first layouts with Quint. Session ends after 7 p.m.

TUESDAY. At 7:30 a.m. begin to write rough version of basic research and captions so writer will have something to work with when he reaches office after voting. (I can't vote—not back a year from Vietnam.) Try to pull together details and often conflicting versions from three different notebooks. Checking copy for accuracy begins in evening. Back to hotel at midnight to see election returns on television. Fall asleep while watching.

WEDNESDAY. See story through final layouts, edit captions, get story back to Washington. Use of final layouts, edit captions, get story

LIFE

The Nixon Era Begins

ALSO

AN EXCLUSIVE
IN PHOTOS

Inside the White House

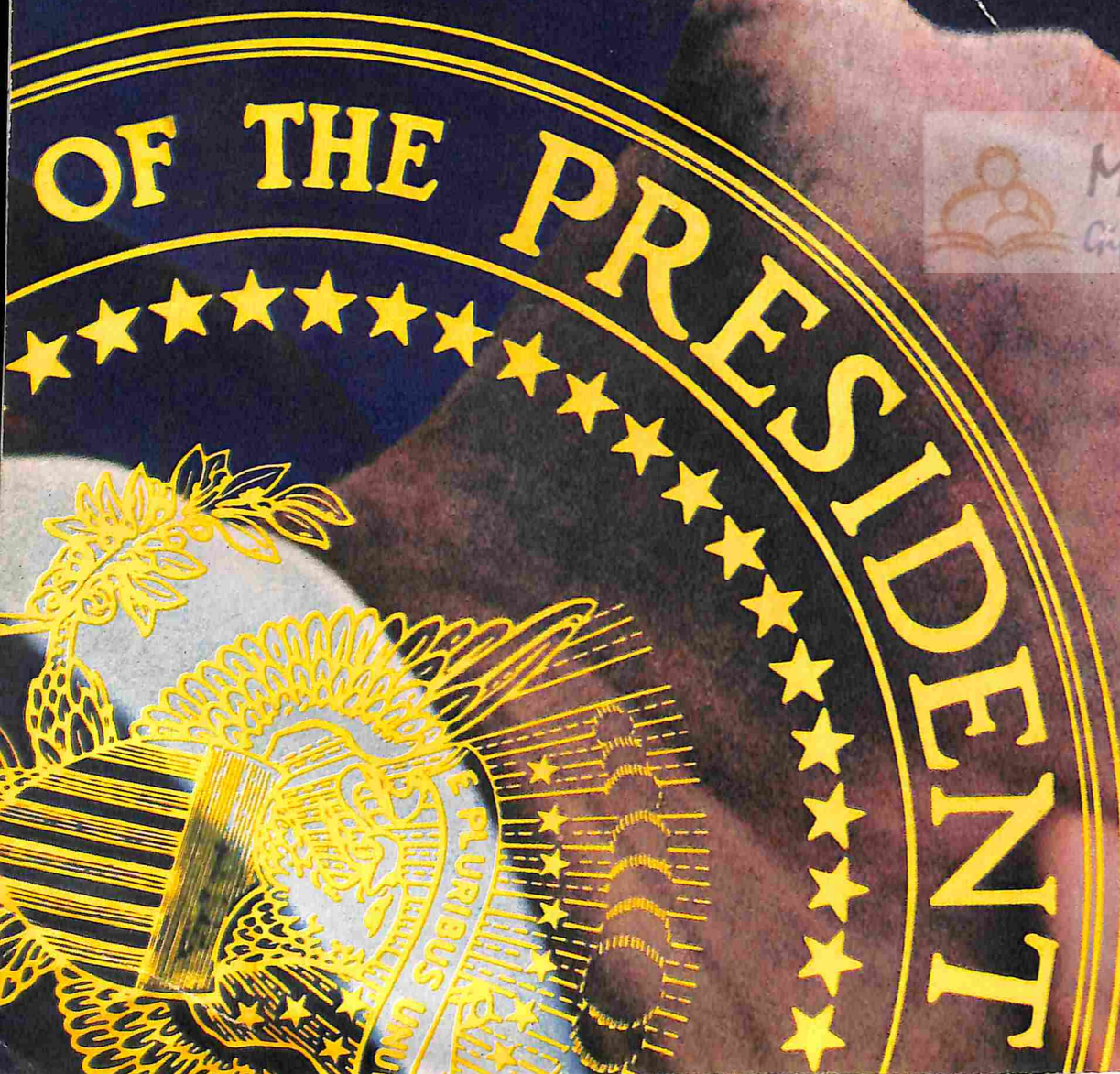
TWENTY-THREE
TENSE DAYS

as

the decision
to halt the bombing
was made



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