

Camp David Ringed By Bristling Defense

By Lou Cannon

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No signs point the way to Camp David.

The road winds narrowly from the village of Thurmont up the mountainside past a fishing lake and hiking trail, past Camp Misty Mount and Hog Rock. Halfway up, a Marine command post rises incongruously from a stand of chestnut oak and hickory trees.

The security which of necessity follows President Nixon everywhere is silent and well concealed at the White House. At the presidential retreat at Camp David in Maryland's Catoctin Mountains, it is stark and obtrusive.

Two rows of seven-foot-high electrically charged chain-link fence surround the 134 acres. On top of each runs a deadly looking roll of special concertina wire which one of the Marine guards said is "like a coiled razorblade." Between the fences there is a separate wire hooked to a sensor device.

Marines, sometimes accompanied by attack dogs, patrol the camp perimeter.

A Mile Away

More than a mile from this bristling defense line,

in the southeast corner of the camp, the President works on speeches and appointments for his second term in a comfortable lodge commanding a view both of the mountain and the valley. The living room of the lodge is paneled in red oak and has high beam ceilings and each of the four over-sized bedrooms has oak paneling and a private bath.

President Nixon, in a brief speech from the camp on Nov. 27, said that working at Camp David gave him a better sense of perspective than the Oval Office in the White House.

"I find that up here on top of a mountain it is easier for me to get on top of the job, to think in a more certainly relaxed way at times—although the work has been very intensive in these past few weeks as it was before the other great decisions that have been made here—but also in a way in which one if not interrupted either physically or personally or in any other way, can think objectively with perception about the problems that he has to make decisions on," Mr. Nixon said.

The President's extensive use of the camp as a substitute White House is somewhat of a departure from the practice of other presidents, beginning with Franklin Roosevelt.

The camp was carved out of 6,000 acres of state and national parkland and built by Works Progress Administration labor during the Roosevelt era. Mr. Roosevelt, a former Secretary of the Navy, staffed the camp with Navy personnel and used the retreat for entertaining foreign notables. Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden were guests on several occasions.

Mr. Roosevelt named the camp "Shangri-la" after a mythical mountain top in the novel "Lost Horizon." When Dwight Eisenhower became President, he renamed it Camp David in honor of his grandson.

In 1959, President Eisenhower met there with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev and a new phrase entered the language—"the spirit of Camp David"—to denote a

peaceful interlude in relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. Reporters and photographers were admitted on that occasion for a rare glimpse of the presidential lodge.

The mementoes of past Presidents—including Mr. Eisenhower's one-tee golf green and the ring for Caroline Kennedy's ponies—adorn the camp. It was an occasional hiding place of every President except Harry Truman, who preferred vacationing in Key West and allowed his aides to use the camp. During the Roosevelt and Truman administrations the camp was a 90-minute drive from the White House and relatively inconvenient.

Mr. Eisenhower made the renamed retreat famous but used it far less than does Mr. Nixon. The single tee was insufficient for Mr. Eisenhower, who preferred a full round of golf on his days off.

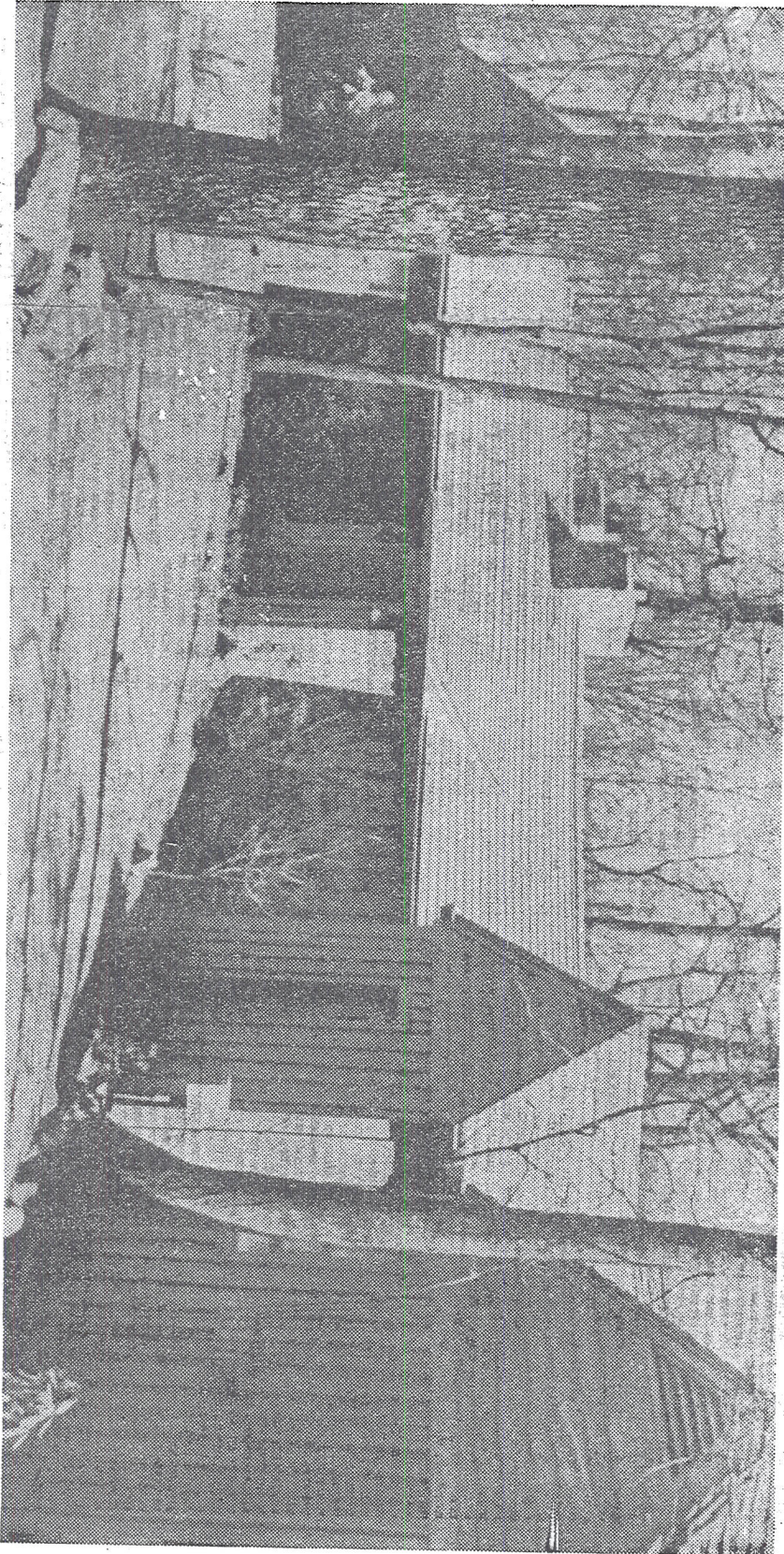
Presidents Kennedy and Johnson used the camp occasionally, but it was never a center of administration activity.

The camp became a secure honeymoon retreat in June 1971 for Edward and Tricia Cox. The Coxes tried to keep their whereabouts a total secret but were inadvertently foiled by President Nixon, who remarked on their wedding day, "I'll have to restrict my movements."

Because of his constant desire for privacy and his fondness for uninterrupted work, Mr. Nixon uses the camp far more than any past President. The camp, which is long on solitude and short on sunshine because of the dense woods, is less popular with staff members used to better quarters and outside access in Washington. It is even less popular with reporters who cover the White House.

At Camp David, the reporters are jammed into a 10-foot by 50-foot white trailer where they share 10 telephones inside and another 10 outside covered by plastic sheeting. Briefings take place in the helicopter hangar.

The press trailer replaced a duckblind where reporters



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Associated Press

used to watch the President land. The duckblind is now off limits, and the coming and going of presidential guests proceeds unobserved.

In recent days few reporters have bothered to make the trip from Washington. The briefings from Thurmout are piped into the White House press room.

Despite the armed-camp appearance at the main gate, Camp David is pleasantly rustic in the lodge area and well-appointed for a mountain retreat. Its comforts include a heated pool, a large separate dining lodge, snowmobiles and a modern movie projector. The Nixon family makes scant use of the private White House movie theater but in one weekend in 1969 watched seven films at Camp David.

Unlike the White House, the camp is completely off limits to the public and presidential press secretary Ronald Ziegler has repeatedly declined reporters' requests for a "75-cent tour."

When United Press International reporter Helen Thomas went to Camp David for an exclusive interview with Julie Nixon Eisenhower in 1969, Mrs. Eisenhower insisted on meeting her at a ranger station three miles from the camp.

The principal charm of the place for Mr. Nixon, Zie-

gler has told reporters, is its privacy and the President intends to keep it that way.

Marine and Navy personnel stationed at the camp have mixed feelings about their duties. It is a pleasant enough in the summer—two young Marines narrowly escaped court-martial in the summer of 1970 for sneaking a swim in the President's pool—but one Marine said it is "bad duty on bad days in the winter."

The servicemen are comfortably housed, however, in separate rooms among the 10 cabins which surround the two large lodges at the camp.

The President's living lodge is called "Aspen," the name given it by Mr. Eisenhower. President Roosevelt, who selected the site for the lodge and prepared the sketch for the building plan

of it, called it "Bear's Den." The dining lodge is called "Laurel" and all of the cabins are also named for trees.

Food at Camp David was described as "better than at the White House" by one staff aide who has eaten at both places. The Nixons thought enough of the camp food to give their chef Thanksgiving off and enjoy a turkey dinner prepared by naval stewards.

Until the Nixon era, the camp was almost entirely a meeting place for notables and a place to relax. Presidents Roosevelt and Johnson fished for recently stocked trout in nearby Owens Creek. President Johnson sometimes gave big parties there.

But for Richard Nixon, Camp David is a place to work and a place he finds congenial to his own pat-

terns of working. As the President put it in his Camp David speech of Nov. 27:

"I developed that pattern

early in the administration and am going to follow it even more during the next four years."
