

White House Diary

Written by Book Review by Kam Williams
Tuesday, 19 October 2010 16:49



“During my four years in the White House, I kept a personal diary by dictating my thoughts and observations several times each day... When dictating entries to my diary... I intertwined my personal opinions and activities with a brief description of the official duties I performed.

Readers should remember that I seldom exercised any restraint on what I dictated, because I did not contemplate the more personal entries ever being made public... Despite a temptation to conceal my errors, misjudgments of people, or lack of foresight, I decided when preparing this book not to revise the original transcript...

Throughout this book, I wrote explanatory notes to help the reader understand the context of the entries, bring to life the duties of a president, offer insights into a number of the people I worked with, and point out how many of the important challenges remain the same... In presenting this annotated diary, my intention is not to defend or excuse my own actions or to criticize others, but simply to provide, based on current knowledge, an objective analysis.”

-- *Excerpted from the Preface (pgs. xiii-xv)*

Jimmy Carter, the 39th President of the United States, ran the U.S. Ship of State from 1977 to 1981, four perilous years marked by crises in everything from the Middle East to human rights to the economy to the Cold War to the environment to nuclear power. To his credit, Carter in retirement can proudly reflect that during his tenure, “We obeyed the law, we told the truth, and we kept the peace.” This turn of events proved to be a breath of fresh air for a country which had emerged from the Vietnam War and Watergate scandal extremely cynical about its political leaders.

And thanks to a tip from President Nixon who made the suggestion the first time they met, Carter decided to start keeping a journal while he was in office. If you remember, Jimmy had a certain, down-home folksy charm which had endeared him to the electorate, and that same tone is reflected in *White House Diary*, a 600-page opus condensed from what was originally over 5,000-pages in length.

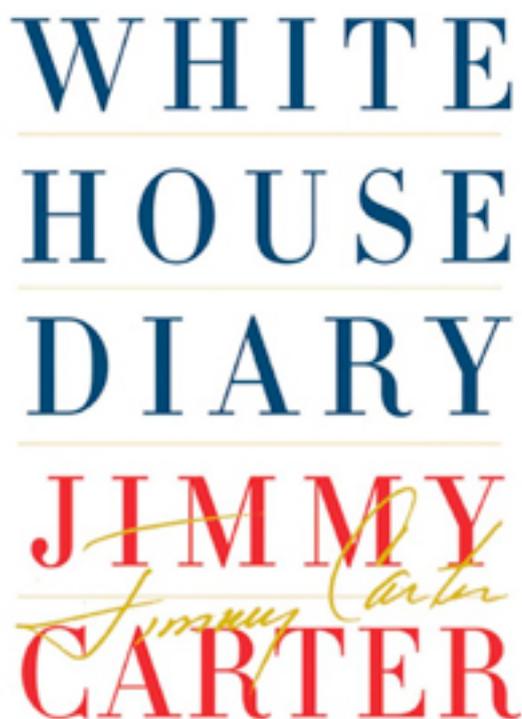
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The former president augmented the chronologically-arranged text with a sprinkling of present-day commentary where necessary to help elucidate the material. Basically, the book offers both a broad look at the scope of the Chief Executive's exhausting daily schedule as well as an intimate peek inside the workings of the man's mind.

Personally, I most enjoyed the humanizing entries, such as the one that starts, "Mama fell and broke her right hip" as he frets about the health of First Mother Miss Lillian. I could even appreciate the minimalism he employed while on vacation when "Fishing all day" says it all.

A delightful, eye-opening memoir which reveals Jimmy Carter as still a simple peanut farmer from Plains, Georgia who never compromised his faith, integrity or commitment to family while tackling the responsibilities of what might very well be the most demanding job on the face of the Earth.



WHITE
HOUSE
DIARY
JIMMY
CARTER

White House Diary
by President Jimmy Carter
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