

Trump Riffs on Impeachment, Adam Schiff Before Turkey Pardon

November 26, 2019 **by Dan McCue**



President Trump pardons Butter, the national Thanksgiving Turkey, as first lady Melania Trump looks on. (Photo by Dan McCue)

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump seized on the traditional pardoning of a Thanksgiving turkey Tuesday to offer an extended, off-the-cuff riff on impeachment and the Democrat leading the inquiry, California’s Adam Schiff.

Officially, the president and first lady Melania Trump appeared in a packed White House Rose Garden to pardon the national Thanksgiving turkey — this year a 47-pounder named Butter.

In doing so, Trump said he would also spare the 45-pound Bread, Butter’s partner and alternate, wishing them both “a lot of luck.”

But Trump couldn't resist joking about the impeachment inquiry, ignoring the script displayed on a large television monitor rolled into the garden to note that Bread and Butter "have been specially raised ... to remain calm under any condition."

"Which will be very important because they've already received subpoenas to appear in Adam Schiff's basement on Thursday. It's true, hundreds of people have," the president said.

He added: "It seems the Democrats are accusing me of being too soft on Turkey. But Bread and Butter, I should note that unlike previous witnesses, you and I have actually met."

The president's remarks were generally well-received by the Rose Garden attendees, which included acting chief of Staff Mick Mulveney, the President's daughter, Tiffany Trump, as well as Republican Reps. Mark Meadows and Matt Gaetz.

However, he did go a step too far for many at one point, when he tried to make a joke likening members of the press to "vultures."

"Ok, even I didn't like that one," he said, filling a brief awkward pause in the proceedings.

A short time later a reporter yelled, "Are you planning on pardoning anybody else?"

With that Trump turned and left the podium, he and the first lady disappearing back inside the Oval Office.

Presidents have been pardoning turkeys as far back as Abraham Lincoln's administration, when, the story has it, the president's young son asked his father to spare a pet turkey that would have been their Thanksgiving dinner.

Lincoln, a president known for his sense of humor, is also said to have started the tradition of bestowing the pardon after a light-hearted speech.

The National Turkey Federation became the official turkey supplier to the first family in 1947 and the formal turkey presentation ceremony has been around since President Harry Truman.

Truman was the first to accept a turkey from them — however, it must be noted, he did not spare it.

The Turkey pardon has been an annual event at the White House since 1989, when President George H.W. Bush revived the tradition to kick off the holiday season.

Bread and Butter were raised by Butterball turkey farmer Wellie Jackson in Clinton, North Carolina. Having spent Monday night at the Willard Intercontinental Hotel a block away from the White House, the duo will now spend the rest of their natural lives at Gobbler's Rest at Virginia Tech University in Blacksburg, Virginia.

In the meantime, the National Turkey Federation estimates that more than 46 million of their turkey brethren are expected to be consumed across the country on Thursday.

