

Bob Shryock: It was a significant front page

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By **Bob Shryock | For NJ.com**

There are framed copies of nine historic page ones of this newspaper hanging on the walls within 25 feet of my desk.

Seven carry the Woodbury Daily Times banner, including the Feb. 3, 1897 first-ever edition with a story about a saloon keeper cutting his throat among the top page-one stories. The writer reported “it is thought his mind was unbalanced.”

The other two, “Ford Inaugurated As Nixon Resigns” and “Republicans Lose Freeholder Seats” came in the years immediately following Harte-Hanks purchase of the newspaper in 1972. It was “The Daily Times” then, the new owners reasoning that it could be business-smart to leave Woodbury out of the masthead.

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Most intriguing to me is the June 23, 1967 edition headlined “Glassboro Summit Begins” because the Helly Push meeting between President Johnson and Soviet

begins because the Holly Bush meeting between President Johnson and Soviet premier Alexei Kosygin is still considered, 42 years later, one of the most significant Gloucester County stories ever. Perhaps No. 1.

My mind reverted to the summit recently when Rowan University student Sean Pivenger questioned me for a paper he was assigned for his advanced feature writing class.

I was sports editor of the Times in 1967, not managing editor, so I did not officially work on any of the stories. I may be the only one in the plant then who is still here. Staff reporters Mary Wiser and Larry Williams produced most of the Summit copy. All five page one stories on the 23rd were Summit-related.

There was no advance warning of the Summit coming to Glassboro. When the story appeared first on the network evening news, calls flooded the newsroom. The Times knew by 7 p.m. on the 22nd. And a small news staff gathered quickly for coverage deployment directions.

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The staff was disbelieving or at best skeptical at first. Why would an American president and a Soviet premier meet in tiny Glassboro, N.J. to discuss Vietnam and problems in the Mideast? The explanation: Glassboro was viewed as the midway point between New York City, where Kosygin was attending a United Nations General Assembly meeting, and Washington, where LBJ lived.

Johnson arrived first, June 22, and set up at Glassboro State College. President

Johnson arrived first June 22 and on time at Glassboro State College President Thomas E. Robinson's 118-year-old Georgian "Holly Bush" campus mansion after landing at Philadelphia and helicoptering to the campus athletic field.

Kosygin, 20 minutes late, was accompanied by New Jersey State Police down the New Jersey Turnpike to Swedesboro Exit 2, where the entourage sped through the toll booth at 40 miles per hour — without paying. Officials said Kosygin was tardy because he was "sightseeing." A crowd estimated at 500 found room at the Route 322 overpass for a glimpse of him while others stood along the road as he was driven to Glassboro.

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The Robinsons were informed of their visitors at the last minute. Mrs. Robinson reportedly said, "Good Heavens, where's the vacuum cleaner?"

Don Bagin, then GSC publicity coordinator and later a communications department icon, claimed he wasn't in the loop either. "You know as much as I do," he told reporters. But Bagin, ever the pro, hastily assembled maps and college background material for the converging media.

I was too busy covering Little League tournament games to watch history in my back yard, but did venture to Glassboro briefly on the 23rd and, for a fleeting second, seemed to catch LBJ's eye at Holly Bush.

I waved. He didn't wave back.