

1964

FRIDAY, JANUARY 17 WHD

Today has been a rather light day although there may have been some seeds sown that will bear heavy fruit in time to come. At 11:00 this morning Clark Clifford came in to discuss art with me in great big red capital letters, to wit, what's going to happen to all of the sprouting varieties of committees which Mrs. Kennedy had established in order to bring the White House to its present state of beauty. There is the Fine Arts Committee of the Fine Arts Commission, the Committee on Paintings, the Library Committee, and the White House Historical Association, of which only the last is actually an incorporated business entity. The rest of them are rather nebulous without any precise standing or assurance of continuity. My desire, and I think Clark knows it and I think that is what he is working toward, is to make sure that there is continuity in all of the good things that they have done, preservation of everything that has gone forward. If there is anything more to be done-- and Mrs. Kennedy told me herself that she thought it was about as--they just about had every piece of furniture and every picture that they could possibly use, then it is a job of preservation, and I do want there to be a Curator who has an established position so that it will not be a whim of the First Lady, but something that will just go on in perpetuity.

Also, I want-- and this is not the least of it-- that the

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Johnsons not get the public image of letting the thing fall to pieces through being uninterested, ^{not} ~~but~~ knowledgeable about art. In other words, I want to make it a plus first for the country and a plus for us. So Clark is going about it in a very orderly fashion of suggesting an Executive Order to be issued by Lyndon establishing the position of Curator of the White House and the Committee on the Preservation of the White House. Now this new Committee would pick up several of the members of the White House Historical Association who are purely businessmen and very well versed in their jobs of getting out this guide book. That would be John Walker, Director of the National Gallery of Art, Leonard Carmichael of the Smithsonian, or his successor, Clark Clifford I certainly hope, Bill Walton, Chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts, and George Hertzog, Director of the National Park Service. And then, we would have four or possibly more public members and these would be people chosen for their taste and perhaps for their ability to contribute something more when needed. Mrs. Kennedy herself has a couple of suggestions for those, which couldn't be more wonderful suggestions, and perhaps we might want to increase the number of public members from four to six or more.

Then he had written out a proposed Presidential statement. I am going to run this through the minds of a few of my own friends

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who see me first--who see us first-- before they see any other considerations and then we will get together with Clark and Lyndon and perhaps one or two more and tie it up and I hope we'll have it a going concern some time in February.

I never expect art to be my major concern here in the White House, but I expect it to be a growing joy because the more I learn about the place, the more I love it. Education is a contagious sort of thing. The more you get, the more you like it.

Then in the afternoon I had a short interview with Mr. Gross of LOOK who is wrapping up an article for that magazine, and then tea with a very attractive young couple, the Governor of Kentucky, newly elected, and his young, cute, fresh candid wife. It was a joy to see somebody like that starting out in politics. Luci Baines came in from school just as we were about to bid them goodbye, with her arms so full of books, old tennis shoes and coats and wailing about finals, that I think the Bre^xthitts must have thought we were a fairly normal set of folks, but underneath all of the wailing I think I sense a lot more self-assurance and a lot happier little girl than she was a few weeks ago. I think there is a turn for the better in that child.

At 7:30 the Charles Engelhards and the Mike Mansfields came for dinner. Lyndon was late so I had quite a good long little visit

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with them before he and Jack Valenti arrived. Jane Engelhard was elegant as usual--so beautiful and so smart--and on top of it industrious.

Thank goodness, in reading about art I had read that the Engelhards had been the donors of enough furniture to furnish a dining room. It did not say where it was, but it spoke of an oval dining table, a buffet, a large sideboard, a small serving sideboard. They were made by some of the great cabinetmakers of Baltimore and Annapolis, so of course I asked her where they were and I said let's go look at them. It turned out that they are in the downstairs dining room and we went down there and she told me all sorts of interesting stories about what the Committee on Fine Arts did, and sometimes didn't, and among them an interesting one about she, herself, and Mr. Henry DuPont who must be all of eighty years old pushing and shoving the furniture around and changing it and making plans. Actually they contributed a good deal more than what was mentioned in the book. Perhaps I haven't read the second report where it will tell of the other contributions, but chairs in addition and new moulding for the walls which changed the windows from one height to another and draperies. I like her tremendously and yet I do have the feeling that when I venture in the vicinity of the Fine Arts

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Committee that I-- well I couldn't be more out of my media than if I were on the Planet Venus-- different backgrounds, different lives and terrifically assured women, most of them.

We also had a good little tour of the Queen's Room which she, like I do, thinks is the prettiest of all the rooms, and the Treaty Room, which to me is a little forbidding and-- well I wouldn't be quite at ease in there. It has more of a museum quality. She said that that was one of ^{Boudin's} ~~Boudair's~~ contributions to the job and he was a pretty controversial figure around the White House. In fact, I just picked up a lot of juicy little bits.

A little later Lyndon joined us and we had a pleasant dinner, only seven of us, the smallest group I think that has sat down yet to dinner in the White House except for one of those unreasonable hours of ten or eleven or twelve, or on the kitchen table when I just gave Lyndon a sandwich.