

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Thursday, January 30, 1964 WHD

One of the highlights of the day, January 30th, Thursday was that I had Mrs. Alice Roosevelt Longworth to tea with only Lynda Bird and Warrie Lynn and me. It was one of those afternoons I had promised myself -- one of those completely unofficial things - no duty at all - just pleasure. But she's lived this life I've loved, in this town I've loved, and seen so much of it - and has recorded it with such a caustic wit and at such close-up range, that I wanted to spend an hour or so with her. And it was a good one. I rushed downstairs hoping to meet her at the front entrance in order to accord her the dignity that is due to her age and position. But, alas, was just a moment late. She had on her stiff, black hat, which is sort of a trade mark with her. And her big smile - came upstairs, sat in the little family living room. It was no trouble starting a conversation with her. I wanted to get her/reminiscing about the days when she was in the house. And it was not hard. She told us that it really was true that when one of her little brothers had been sick and they had taken his pony up in/his room - that was supposed to help make him well. And I can understand it so well - because Luci really needed Him and Her in bed with her one day when she was sick not long ago.

To show how much this town has grown - that same brother rode his horse, unattended by any Secret Service person - to school a few miles from the White House to what sounded like it was about - oh, out where ^{McLean} ~~McClain~~ Gardens now is. She told us about attending a Republican dinner for President Eisenhower - one of the appreciation dinners where Senator Goldwater and various people got^e[up] to deploring the sad state of social life when people

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Thursday, January 30, 1964

Page 2

jumped in swimming pools with their clothes on - and did the twist in the stately halls of the White House - and then she laughed and she talked about the time when her father had an American wrestler and a Japanese practitioner of the Jujitsu in the East ball room, stripped to the waist, doing their respective battling, to see which one would come off first. I guess one of the main things I like about her is her sense of vitality at 79 or thereabouts. We also spoke of a time when she ~~had~~ herself jumped into a swimming pool with her clothes on but it was on board ship - just one of the little shipboard pools and she had on the white, washable summer clothes that were the fashion for strolling the deck in that day.

This was the first time that I found out that it wasn't really her mother who was the first lady at that time - it was her step-mother. President Teddy Roosevelt had been married before. She was a child of the first marriage. Her mother had died at her birth - or shortly thereafter. And then her step-mother was mother of all the other five little Roosevelts. She must have been a pretty hard daughter to raise in the White House, coming in at 17. But she has added a lot of zest to Washington and the world. She sounded to me like she liked her step-mother and respected her, ^{but} But that it was not exactly a warm relationship. Maybe she's just too much of a free spirit. She said that when she got married, the marriage was supposed to take place at 12:00 noon, and at 11:00, the guests were already streaming into the house and she was still upstairs, not dressed - and her step-mother

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Thursday, January 30, 1964

Page 3

was about to have a fit because she wasn't prepared to receive the guests. I find myself somewhat sympathetic to the step-mother! And I can understand her when she was reported to have said to Alice when she left--"I am glad you're going."

She spoke about how her father hunted peccaries in Texas. I wonder where the peccaries would have been--maybe in the Big Thicket? And roped wolves! And she also said that the animal heads that hung in the State Dining Room were not the results of his safaries but were just good versions of American animal heads which he thought ought to be represented in the White House. And that when some artist wanted to put a lion on one of the marble mantelpieces, he insisted, "No indeed, it should be the buffalo, the bison, because that's the native animal."

Lynda and Warrie Lynn sat entranced and asked more important and revealing questions than I did. And this is just the sort of thing that I want Lynda Bird here for, to soak it up. In fact, it was a delicious hour and a half until I began to wonder about getting dressed in order to receive all the Senators for dinner. And so finally we said goodbye.

I don't know whether I would like to be around when she was describing the visit later on to somebody else because I don't know how we would appear in her eyes. I just know how she appeared in mine-- a woman who had lived a magnificent life in a glittering town that she had loved and had drunk it to the dregs. She mentioned rather often her

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Thursday, January 30, 1964

Page 4

granddaughter who is off at school and said that she would like ~~me~~ to bring her here to show her the house. And that is something I certainly want to see that we carry out.

The other event of the day that made an important day was our last dinner and briefing for the Senate. I wonder why I should feel sorry for our hard working Secretary of State, and for McNamara, and for Kermit Gordon when, after all, it's Lyndon who's doing all of this, and so much more too? Perhaps it's because I'm so used to see^{ing} Lyndon work so hard - also because I think he has a thorough understanding of how much good it may accomplish, and I wonder if they do.

It was fun to stand in line in the Blue Room and see my old friends from the Senate wives, Vidie Bartlett, ^{Ellen} ~~Lynn~~ Proxmire, Rosemary Smathers, and Betty Talmadge. And how wonderful to hear from Senator Dannie Inouye that he's going to be a father, after 15 years of marriage and no children! His wife is out in Hawaii. ^{Ted} The/Kennedys were there - I think the first Kennedy to cross the threshold on a party occasion since the assassination. She was looking very lovely in a red velvet dress. And Mary Ellen Monroney and I were just beaming at each other over what we think we've accomplished together on the upstairs rooms. Whenever I look at ^{Clayborne} ~~Clayborne~~ Pell, I think he is one of the most aristocratic looking members of the Senate and one of most aristocratic looking people I know. And that Abraham Ribicoff is one of the most interesting men I know. The evening followed the same pattern -

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Thursday, January 30, 1964

Page 5

drinks, briefing, ladies upstairs, interesting responses to all the things that I told them. One of the funny things of the evening was that Mrs. Gaylord Nelson arrived with one of her heels of her shoe broken half in two, saying that she was going to have to hobble around over the White House the rest of the evening. ~~Ekke~~ I promptly took off my shoe and tried to put it on her to see if we could send her upstairs quickly for another pair. They didn't quite fit and then Warrie Lynn, who always comes to the rescue, just strolled by and stuck out her shoe. It was the right size so Cinderella went off to get herself fixed up with another pair of shoes!

Lyndon had Maureen Neuberger on his right and the lovely Mrs. Kennedy on his left. He toasted Ken Keating, who was the top Republican present. And it was ^[with] a lot of pleasure, if not much advance notice, that I toasted Mike Monroney. There's a lot to toast him about too. One of the main things was the sheer courage of voting against raising the price of oil back in the days right - was it after or during the war[?] - when the price lines were being held to prevent inflation. And the oil industry ^{with} ~~was~~ a good deal on its side, was pushing and shoving for a raise in the price. And Lyndon and Mike were the only two from anywhere in the oil-producing states who had the - well, "guts" is the best word - to vote to hold the line.

After dinner, we went in to the East Room and there was dancing -- And we really had quite a good time! Senator Strom Thurmond -- and you just can't help liking him in spite of his political views - is a delightful dancer,

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Thursday, January 30, 1964

Page 6

as well as an accomplished passer-out of compliments. He danced with me as did pretty near - well, most of the people who participated in it. Of course it's most fun of all to dance with George Smathers. At least we put in a good day and a good try - and it was fun. And what's more they had ¹/₂ breast of chicken Washington. Our friends are really going to have to get used to a lot of chicken if we keep on having as many parties as we've started out.