

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Friday, February 7, 1964

This is a black day for the Johnsons. This morning, in the black dark, it must have been about five or five thirty, Lynda Bird came into my room, crying like her heart would break. I got up and ushered her out into the hall as quickly as I could, always with the idea of keeping her daddy asleep, if possible.

My first thought, so selfish <sup>are</sup> of we human beings, that she was desperately sick or that Luci was desperately sick and then she told me what was actually worse. She said, "Mother, Mrs. Kellam is dead." Carolyn had just phoned her and in a very matter of fact way, very strong way, typical of Carolyn, had told her mother had waked up about 12:30 in the nite, sick, gone to the bathroom nauseated, had come back complaining of pain in the chest. Jesse said "Honey, we're going to call Bill Morgan right away." Bill Morgan came immediately and Louise said, "Just patch me up, doctor, because I've got this wedding coming on in about a week." He called the ambulance immediately to take her instead to the hospital, but she died before the ambulance got there. In the passing of a moment, we got Lynda Bird to crawl into bed with us and tried to comfort her, but we could hardly comfort each other because we were all overcome with tears. And then Luci came in and she cried too - and we all stayed together and we got up and had a rather early breakfast and Lyndon went on about his business.

It was clear from the beginning that I would go down as soon as I could and I made reservations for a late plane that afternoon, along with A. W., but

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momently all day long, we hoped that it might be possible for business to let Lyndon go too. There was that state of sort of suspended animation between death and final farewell. You did all the necessary things, sent two wires, gave everybody instructions about what to do in my absence, talked it over with the children about whether they should go or not, and decided no. Also that Lynda Bird should cancel her trip to the Mardi Gras, but that Luci Baines might just as well go along on her little trip to see Leroy Bates over at the Academy. Sent flowers to Mrs. Ed Bartley's reception since I won't be able to be there this afternoon, along with a <sup>short</sup> ~~short~~ note.

And then one's mind again begins the patching up process, that is, all the things that have been good and how it is possible to say goodbye. And the good things are that in the last five or six or seven years, Louise has made the kind of return to life that few people make. She - her health has returned and she had been prettier, stronger, more self-assured, more of a joy to everybody about her, always cheerful, a bigger part of her husband's life, somebody I've just grown to depend on daily. In fact, my first thought when I heard that she was dead was of myself - how much I would miss her, instead of how much her children or her husband would miss her. I'm glad of ~~everyone~~ of those trips that Jesse took her on; to the Virgin Islands, to the Hawaiian Islands, and even of that one brief day that she flew up here and spent the night in the White House.

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I'm especially glad that so much of the renaissance in her life is the doings of Lyndon, thru his generosity and praise... Sending her to Eddie Senz, telling her how pretty she looks when she gets back from it, thanking her for everything that she does, that could have been taken for a matter of course.

He was involved in a Cabinet Meeting with very weighty agenda and it was a moment-to-moment deal as to whether he would get out and go or not. Finally, <sup>9</sup>he got out, <sup>1</sup>I think it must have been between six and seven <sup>1</sup>and he and A. W. and I left for Texas. It was a solemn trip down, we stopped in Austin, Jesse and the two girls came marching onto the plane like soldiers. Jesse said, " Well, Louise had a lot of problems and one of them was me but there wasn't a one of them she didn't lick before her time came." He looked so grey and frail and strong - all at the same time - and good, and I'd like so much to help him. We stayed a very brief while and then flew on to the ranch, <sup>1</sup>to bed.