

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Saturday, February 15, 1964

This is our week-end for catching up on rest, so it was a late start for Mary Lasker and me. She's in the Queen's Room and I kept on sending down messages that I would be down for a cup of coffee presently, while I managed to arrange for Lyndon to sleep a little longer.

Finally, about 11:30, she and I went to the Smithsonian to look at the pictures that they might let the White House borrow for a brief period. We'd called ahead of course, knowing that Carmichael had recently resigned and [that] discovering that Mr. S. D. Ripley, new director of the Smithsonian, was not in town, so we asked for the next assistant, and wound up with a very nice, young assistant curator named Carter.

On my way in to the Smithsonian, I found to my surprise, the very first thing I saw, was a Jackson exhibition. He's an artist from the far west, Wyoming I believe, and of the west, and he had an exhibition of bronzes, cowboys, horses and a large wall painting of burial of a cowboy on the plains, that's very sombre, and impressive and moving, and terrifically true to life as I know it. I'd had requests from several people, including Senator Gayle McGee, and Dr. J. Frank Dobbie, to go and look at this exhibition, and so I was delighted to come across it, and then later on, to be able to drop the little brochure in the mail to Dr. J. Frank Dobbie, bless his heart, and tell him I had been, was impressed, and had enjoyed it.

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They unveiled their treasures for us - ^{There's} ~~their's~~ a very splendid ^{Stephen} ~~Steven~~ Decatur, by Gilbert ^{Stewart} ~~Stewart~~, no less, which I considered for Lyndon's office except, although he was a builder of our country, there's no particular Naval orientation in our background that makes us yearn for a Naval hero. And then there was a perfectly darling Mary Cassatt, of a mother and two children, a very small baby on her lap, and a little girl of about three or four, leaning over looking at the baby - and I can almost hear what that little girl is thinking in her mind 'this is a sweet little thing but I wonder if it might be picking up some of the love that I'm used to.' Mary Cassatt's children always look more true to life, more flesh and heart and real than the mother somehow, but she's getting to be one of my favorites and the colors are delicious. I think that might be a good one for the family end off the second floor.

We made a call to John Walker of the National Gallery and he promised to get together ~~with~~ a group of things that they would consent to lend and have them available for me to see on Monday.

We looked in Lyndon's office, in the Fish Room, we did a lot of talking over the old plan for the society for the Preservation of the White House, possible members. Mary promised to send me a group of three or four names, after just a little more research, and then, by a bit of very fast moving, we got her on the 4 o'clock plane for New York, so that she could make her luncheon date.

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Oddly enough, and she's a very unusual woman, never did she mention to me specifically, ^{any} of the things that she herself had bought for the White House. She just said something vague about having contributed a check and let them do what they want with it, and that many, many others did so much more. — Although I've read in the guidebook, a good many specific and wonderful things that she did, such as giving a sofa that's in the upstairs hall, one of the Sheraton sofas, I believe. Most people are all too glad to point out what it was they gave. And so would I be, if I ever gave anything.

About 7:30 we had guests for dinner - the McGeorge Bundy's, Jack Valenti without ^{many} ~~Mary~~ Margaret, who couldn't get a babysitter; Ted Sorenson, with his date Sally (I can't remember her last name), and Joe Alsop. To my delight, Joe came about 10 or 15 minutes ahead of everybody else, and so I had him to myself. We sat down on the sofa, and talking with him is something like thinking I'm reading Madame ^{de Staël's} Destable's letters or some memoirs of a French court, because he always knows the nice, juicy bits about the interior life of the people of this town. Not that any of it is told in bad taste - it isn't - but it's told with ginger and with erudition, and I think, with considerable understanding. We talked about Bunny Mellon, only I wouldn't call her that - I'd call her Mrs. Paul Mellon, and I'm very interested in her, because it is she, working with Mrs. Kennedy, who has provided the beauty, the real

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artistry of these flowers here at the White House -- and on the grounds too, I understand, she contributed the rose garden. And he told me what sort of person she was, her husband's previous marriages and her own. Then he talked about his dinner party for ["]cousin Alice["] - Mrs. Alice Roosevelt Longworth - on her 80th birthday. And then we talked about The Silent Earth, the book he's just given me, which is the result of his long, long reading and interest in archaeology, especially in Crete and Greece, the Minoans and the Miocenians, and the result of a trip. He took off a number of months to go over there and visit with archaeologists, on the site of the diggings. Remarkable man, Joe Alsop, so many facets to his character, lover and connoisseur of elegant furniture, especially, I think, the French, recorder of the day's events, with a great deal of erudition and insight, and usually the sort of a feeling that Armageddon is just around the corner.

And now, I find that he is an archaeologist who has delved deep into the silent earth. He is one of those people who is the world away from me and Lyndon, and yet I don't find it hard to cross the bridge because the bridge is simply enthusiasm and the love of learning.

Mary and McGeorge Bundy are always the best company of the world. As for Ted Sorenson, I see him through a veil, dimly; he's inscrutable, I do not understand him, I respect him, I think I might even come to like him, although I would always think that he was laughing at me and at Lyndon. His date, Sally, is a round-faced, pleasant, sweet-

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looking school teacher, (with a Catholic difficulty about getting married again. That is, to a man who has been divorced.)

After dinner, we went down to see the short show, Mr. President; and then saw Tom Jones, which is hilarious. It's an adaptation of Fieldings' first novel, I think, the very beginning of novel writing in England. And Tom Jones jumps merrily from bed to bed with a peculiar and charming innocence, and always headed for the final bed that I -- well, that I think is going to be permanent.

Joe Alsop kept interjecting things like this ^when he would see the beautiful country house where the picture ^ a lot of it ^ was filmed. He says, "That's Cranborne, that's Cranborne - ^{they're} ~~their~~ as rich as can be but they're renting it out to show - so the film can be shot there!" And then ^[in] an interior shot, there was a certain table up against the wall, and he says "Oh, Oh, that console is 50 years out of time, they hadn't started using that type of furniture yet!"