

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, February 25, 1964

WHD

Probably the most memorable thing that I did today, was to go this morning at 10:30 to call on the volunteers working for Mrs. Kennedy, over in the EOB. I went as a result of a third-hand call from Susan Mary Alsop.

Susan Mary had told Bill Moyers that it would be very nice if I came by and expressed my appreciation. And Bill Moyers had told me and I am very glad they both did, because thereby hangs a wonderful experience.

I had made the appointment the day before and I went over at 10:30 this morning, was met by Nancy Tuckerman who took me from room to room - there are about four rooms, filled with volunteer workers, there are a good many foreign service workers - I met at least one Congressional wife, Lucy ^{More} Morehead, and was told that there had been a good many more. There are a lot of Army wives, there are a lot of just plain unidentified housewives, and there are women who speak all sorts of obscure languages. They had been organized and put together sometime after the first week, after November the 22nd, when it became apparent that it was going to be impossible for Nancy Tuckerman and a staff of two or three to handle the volume of mail. In fact, one day, a peak day, there were 44,000 communications; now it has shrunk to about 7 or 8 hundred a day.

Some of the foreign service wives with language abilities, were translating mail from foreign countries. There were envelopes bulging, marked Yugoslavia, East Berlin, Russia (this last one was not such a bulging one), large envelopes from every country in the world. And

Ch
mp
Lucy Morehead
ca

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, February 25, 1964

Page 2

then, of course, the most important part of the file was that marked
"Particularly appealing." Those were the letters that were taken to Mrs.
Kennedy to read. They came in poetry, they came in barely legible,
pencil and paper, they came in the exquisite language of the high and
well-educated and they came bearing all sorts of gifts. I expect Junior
Village, at least, has profited very heavily from these gifts.

One of the men in charge was one who had served on a PT
boat with President Kennedy, - and the most surprising thing of all was
that Susan Mary Alsop, that fragile, sophisticated, intellectual lady,
turns out to be the office organizer, the whip-cracker, the one who goes
around knowing everybody's name, complimenting everybody to the point
where they feel that they are absolutely essential and are sure going to
get down at 9 o'clock tomorrow morning to work. It was an amazing
tribute to the way a man had caught the imagination of his country and
had held it's heart.

I shook hands with everybody in all the four rooms and thanked
them and told them that I too, joined with all the people in the country,
and appreciated the hours and the effort, the heart and the love they had
put into doing this.

And then I stopped by to see those folks whom we must have
caused so much trouble, Lyndon, Lynda Bird, Luci, and particularly me -
the telephone operators. To my surprise it wasn't an enormous roomful
of them. There were about eight there - I suppose there are peak hours

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, February 25, 1964

Page 3

at which there are more. They were as busy as cats on a hot stove, they hardly had time to look up and say hello, but I did manage to go down the line and thank them all and tell them how much I appreciated their efficiency and their kindness to us in these past months, because we must have really been a chore.

And then I went to the files, which is an enormous room. Our files, at present, only take up, I would say, less than a fifth of the room, the others are still Kennedy files and will be moved to the Kennedy Library, how soon, I do not know.

The man in charge has been there through many, many Administrations, and it is a science and a love with him. I doubt if he has got any wife or children, or anything else, except those files.

I got back to our part of the White House in time to have a twelve o'clock conference with Walter and the indispensable Mr. West, in the Queen's Sitting Room, to discuss household expenses, which is my number two bete noire. The biggest one, of course, is keeping up the Elms. We went into all the ramifications of what expenses were allotted where, who paid for what. I came away a little bit relieved. We each had some ideas to offer about how to cut down on expenses. We decided to have an additional meeting with Miss Ann Lincoln, the housekeeper; and with Zephyr, and we are making a start toward putting this place on a more Johnsonian basis, and a somewhat more economical

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, February 25, 1964

Page 4

basis.

Then I had a bite of lunch in my room with Lynda Bird, and worked in the afternoon with Bess.

There was a good picture of Luci in the Star today, spelled "Luci" and that is quite a flap these days, as to which way it's spelled. As for me, why should I object so mightily if my L_U_C_Y chooses to spell it another way. [?] I remember when I was about 14, I spelled my middle name Byrd, after I had quite given up ever getting to be called Claudia.

The picture of LUCI is standing beside a piano and she's honorary chairman of the National Symphony Orchestra's Music for Young Americans, an annual series of free concerts for high school students visiting Washington each spring. I had the feeling that Luci is getting more and more incorporated into this life and willing to play a part in it, and I look for happier days for us and her.

Tonight is another one of those receptions for the Congressional people. There due at 6. I put on a sort of gold and silver lame dress that Lyndon had bought me in Paris, quite a few years ago, and that I had'nt been slim enough to wear for ages, and went down to the Blue Room to meet them. As I had looked over the list, Charlotte Brooks (Mrs. Jack Brooks) ^{inv} Betty Ford, of Michigan (a Republican), were the two main ones that I knew and could sort of rely on, to help me be hostesses. So I had them called ahead of time.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, February 25, 1964

Page 5

As usually happens, Lyndon was late getting there, and so I had greeted nearly all of the 142 before he came. Lynda Bird came down and stood in line with us part of the time, and mixed and mingled with just everybody. She's really just getting terrifically good at that.

It was good to see the George Huddleston^s, and the Robert Jones^t of Alabama. Clark Fisher was there without Marion. I must say I was interested to see handsome Dick Bow^lling there, with the new Mrs. Dick Bow^lling, ^{Alkin} Jim ~~Alkin~~ of Texas. There was Mrs. Tom Steed from my old 81st Club, Hazel, who was also a help; and Mrs. William Miller of New York, the wife of the outstanding Republican, who also happens to be a member of my international club, and somebody that I like - another example of how you don't always dislike the wives of your husband's opponents. I was glad to meet Congressman Perkins^e of Kentucky, into whose state I'm going very soon, because he's supposed to know more about Kentucky than anybody.

After we'd all shaken hands and had a drink, Lyndon called all the men into the State Dining Room, and also, of course, the couple of ladies who were Congresswomen. There were about 75 of them, and they had the briefing by Secretary of State Dean Rusk, which was described next day, ^yby one of the Congressman^s, as a brilliant analysis of U. S. foreign affairs.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, February 25, 1964

Page 6

Secretary of Labor Wirtz discussed the wheat shipments to the Soviet Union and Bob McNamara discussed the military status.

I took all the ladies upstairs, following the same format that we had done before, and found the same amount of interest as we went from the Yellow Room to the Lincoln Room, into the ^{Treaty} ~~Senate~~ Room and into the Queen's Room, which is the loveliest room of all, ^a And down the hall, where I like to tell them about the American cabinet makers. And most of all, the interest centered in my own bedroom and the little family living quarters, and the dining room. This time it took the men a whole hour to have their briefing, so when we got together in the East Room for a buffet and dancing, it was already approaching 8 o'clock. But at Lyndon's request, we had recruited quite a coterie of ^{sixteen} ~~four~~ service gentlemen who loved to dance, and they whisked the Congressional wives on the dance floor, and everybody seemed to have a mighty gay time - so that we really had trouble disappearing about nine o'clock.

Ch tape
10th Room

I took up my stand by the door about 8:15 in order to make it evident that in case anybody wanted to say goodbye, there I was. But, I'm glad to say that everybody had such a good time they wanted to stay and didn't want to say goodbye. And it was about 9:30 before the last person left.

Dorothy McCarden's ^{2nd} ~~story~~ the next day said Lights blazed at the White House... I'm a little sorry this business of turning off the ^{//} ~~has~~ lights/gotten to be such a thing because it's really so minor. But maybe

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, February 25, 1964

Page 7

it's a symbol of economy - and one guest did note that as soon as we had gone out of the room, ~~somebody~~ came along and began turning off the lights in it.