

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Thursday, February 27, 1964

One of those too-full days. We left at noon, with me being afraid every minute ^gthat Luci wouldn't get back from her half a day at school to join us, but she did. And so, Lyndon, Lynda Bird, Luci and I got on the helicopter. At Andrews we were joined by both the Senators from Florida, handsome George Smathers, and Spessard Holland, who ^galthough about seventyish ^gis readying himself to run again this summer, and a full complement of Congressman from Florida - that is of the Democratic Party.

We went by ⁱjet to Jacksonville and then to another helicopter to go to Palatka - and Palatka is just my cup of tea. Just the sort of campaign trip I would have loved, if it hadn't been raining buckets. The purpose of the trip to Palatka ^gwas to throw the switch that began the excavation of the 107 mile ^gcross-Florida canal. This has been dreamed, planned, engineered for, for over 100 years but finally today it was done, with a big shower of dirt going up in the air, when the switch was pulled.

Meanwhile, in the 100 years, the intercoastal canal has gone all the way from New Jersey, down to [—] [—] I think [—] approximately Jacksonville and meanwhile, on the other side, the intercoastal canal has gone from the borders of Mexico [—] I believe it's Brownsville, Texas, [—] all the way along the gulf and down the western coast of Florida, to a little town ^gdelightfully enough, Yankeetown.

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This canal, the proposed one, will be the final, missing link that will join up Brownsville, Texas with the coast of New Jersey and will cut off 1600 miles of extra shipping around the long-long tail of Florida.

Well, there we arrived at Palatka, and it was raining, and there were about 10,000 people that had been standing around waiting for us to get there, we heard, for several hours. About one out of every five or six, had an umbrella and some of them had on a little plastic rainhat, and a lot of them were just plain, dripping wet and standing out there. But everybody was smiling and waving and glad to see us, and I was twice as glad to see them, and just wish I hadn't had to worry about my hair, or being in a hurry, and could have walked around and could have shaken hands with nearly everybody in that cow pasture. There was a little platform, with a plastic roof on it, to which we mounted, together with a - the governor of Florida, Mr. Farris Bryant and his very pretty wife, whom I had seen not long ago in Washington; all the Congressmen, and delightfully enough, Dale Miller, who is sort of an executive director of Intercoastal Canal, and, by virtue of whose article sixteen years ago, in the Congressional Record, I had been educating myself on the flight down, about what this canal meant to shipping.

Because of the rain, the 30 minute ceremony was shortened. The Governor, each Senator, each spoke very briefly, and then Lyndon

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spoke for 10 minutes, and let loose the blast. This is the sort of thing, where you feel you're really getting something done, or you're really watching some historic movement get under way. Besides, it was delightful to look around and see, in the pine trees, a little 10 year old youngster in his blue jeans, shinnying up in order to get a better view; and to look into the faces of all the people who had cared enough to come out and stand in the rain to see their President.

One little touching incident was the presentation, by a group of rather sad looking little boys, from the Roadheaver Ranch for Boys, which was right close to the spot, of a little ceramic bull, a typical Florida type, Brahma, I think, to Lyndon.

Next, we flew back to Palm Beach, and Lyndon and I departed to go and pay a courtesy call on former Ambassador, Joe Kennedy and Mrs. Kennedy. The children and yet everybody else, stayed at the plane, the children so that they could get all dressed up in honor of the reception to which we were going just a short while later.

I thought of all the other times we had been to this house, as we drove along. Once, when Lyndon was a Senator, and they very ~~courtesy~~ asked us to come by for lunch, Mrs. Kennedy that is. The Ambassador was not there. And I thought of the time, after the election in the fall of 1960, when Lyndon and I came down for him to have a conference

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with the President, and Mrs. Jacqueline ^{ine} Kennedy was just recovering from John-John's birth... It's a beautiful place and now there is so much tragedy there.

*Ch
to go*
I cannot begin to say how impressed I am with Mrs. Rose Kennedy ^{of Kennedy. She} as she must be more than seventy. She has a beautiful figure, she looks lovely, she dresses superbly and she keeps on talking blandly, amiably, just as a good hostess should, welcoming us, talking about the house, the family, people we know, being gracious, and I think, even grateful for kindnesses that Lyndon has tried to show to all the members of the family since the awful day in November. And skimming lightly over the surface of the fact that there sits her husband who is an invalid since a stroke, I think, December of 1961; and who, though well tanned, well cared for in every medical and material way, is still a terribly sad figure. I am not sure whether he understood everything that was said to him and in front of him. He does not talk, at least he did not to us, and I could not help but think as I looked at him, ^J that I would hope for Lyndon, ^J it would be a sudden going, although at a very far distant time and nicely venerable age.

Two of the little Kennedy boys came in, I think they must be the children of Ethel and Bob. All of them, I think all eight, had just been down there, staying at Phyllis Dillon's house, recuperating from colds, and these two had remained on longer.

We had a glass of orange juice and tried bravely to make

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interesting conversation with a man who must once have ruled in a sizeable province of the world, and who now is so removed from the use of power. And then we said goodbye, terminating a pretty difficult 20 minutes, and hurried back to the helicopter. It seemed it had just been a day of jumping in and out of helicopters, jets and cars, finally arriving at the Eden Roc Hotel, where there was a reception for the President's Club, that is the people who give a thousand dollars to the campaign.

The reception was stag, but in another room, the ladies were lined up and I was taken in there to meet the most be-jeweled and elegantly gowned group of women I have practically ever laid eyes on. Florida, of course, with the exception of such rural portions ^{as} ~~of~~ Palatka, is one of the most gilded states one could imagine, and I guess, Miami, the most gilded of all.

I simply put my hand in whoever was leading me around and went around shaking hands with all the ladies. I was thinking all the while that this was rather short shrift for what must have been considerable contribution on their part.

I did glimpse Rosemary Smathers and there was Elliott Roosevelt at the door, wanting to present his two little boys, and Mrs. Elliott Roosevelt was there.

Then we were hustled on to the Fontainebleu Hotel where we had a perfectly beautiful suite, arriving as usual, late, hair drenched, in need of dinner, work on hair, and dressing. And then to the dinner,

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at which it was planned we should arrive late.

Lynda, in her one reliable yellow long dress, looked lovely, and Luci Baines, in the most brilliant pink, looked just enchanting; she had my little white fur around her neck, and she's just getting to be a beauty. I wore a yellow chiffon, which reminds me of the first forsythia of spring.

When we started out, the crowds were very thick all around. Each time we came in and out of the hotel, they were that. Lyndon shook hands with everybody he could possible reach, and, ^{at one} point, ^I noticed that his hand was actually bleeding in two or three spots, from the vigor with which people had gripped it.

When we got into the banquet room, ^{most} of the speaking was already over, the entertainment, which were Toni Martin and Cyd Charisse, had been completed, and it was almost time for Lyndon to begin his speech. This was the Jefferson-Jackson Day speech, and later on I read that it raised \$400,000. It was naturally expected to be political and it was. I was glad, but I was a little shaky too, when I heard him come out quite ^{full} forthrightly for the/Civil Rights Program, and this in a State where integration in schools and other places, has still been a little bit on the token side. You might as well say it where it's hard to say.

In my opinion it was about a grade "B plus" speech; couldn't have been better delivery, he got from it everything that was in it. But

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it did lack that singing quality of so many of Mr. Kennedy's. At the end, he interjected something that did win the ringing applause of the whole room, when he said that he had asked the FBI to come down and investigate the bombing of certain railroads in Florida, that had been undergoing a very bitter strike. This issue close at home, has angered more folks than the troubles afar, and they were quick to express their approval that vicious and illegal bombings had to be investigated and stopped.

As I looked around the room, I thought that I had never seen more elegantly dressed people. Miami is really a center of wealth and of glitter.

One nice little moment was when my cousin, Esther Lanier Smith, who is not among the glittering and elegant ones, but who had been brought by a friend, came up and said hello to me. And we had a nice little talk about Elaine.

The governor of Florida, Farris Bryant, made a - quite an eloquent introduction of Lyndon, and afterwards I heard some good reports - "One well informed political source said Mr. Johnson would carry Florida's 14 electoral votes, a total second in the south only to 25 cast by Texas, unless there was a new Civil Rights blow-up or he made an obnoxious Vice-Presidential choice." By that, said the expert, he meant the choice of the Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy.

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We were at the dinner about an hour, and then left shaking hands with ⁱⁿ anumerable people on the way out, and I thought, .. 'here we are, at long last, going back to the suite'. But no, we went by to say hello to David Dubinsky and what we thought was a meeting of his garment union workers. It turn out to be that. ^{it} turned out that David Dubinsky and all of his chums, ^{had} gone to a night club, there to hear the same entertainers that we had missed, Cyd Charisse and Tony Martin. So we sat down at a table with David, evacuating, I'm afraid, four of his other friends, but putting me between two others who had a very interesting story to tell, about how they had come over as youngsters, one eight years old, from Russia, has made his way, and very successfully, and now here he was, sitting at a table with the First Lady of the land. And the other one said that he too was an immigrant and also was a successful one, and that another First Lady, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, had introduced him at a dinner. I think they were all officials of the Garmentworkers Union.

A nightclub is the last place I wanted to go at that time of night, but as soon as we came to a fairly dignified point to leave, a break in the program, we got up and made our goodbys and departed.

As I'm looking over the press clippings, this day, I can think of several things that I could do without in this life. One, is any comments on the LBJ modified five gallon hat which is to become the fashion for men this spring. Another, is how many miscarriages have

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I had. And another is the Beatles, either pro or con; I mean letters about them. All the teenagers are writing us, mad because Lynda and Luci didn't see the Beatles. Lots of mama's are writing us, praising us for not sending the children off ⁹/on a school night to see the Beatles. All these things are slight deter^rents to keeping your eye on the ball, that is, attempting to get something done.

One of the nice little events of the day was to get a real good family picture, which doesn't happen too often. ²All four of us, Luci looking as pretty as she is, and Lynda Bird, clutching ⁴in full view, ⁷a book on government, ¹one of the courses she's taking -- that little girl has a public relations sense that surpasses any of ours.