

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, March 10, 1964

This morning was one of those anticlimactic periods of waiting for the important thing of the day - the departure for Greece this afternoon.

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Picked my desk rather aimlessly - and then at 1:00 simply goofed off - and went with Lynda Bird around the White House lawn. - Spring is coming, the weather is soft and mild, the sky is blue with fluffy white clouds. We explored the grounds, talked to the gardener, noticed the ^{blooming} skilla under the magnolia trees - went past the tennis courts, and found a trampoline, carefully hidden in a surrounding hedge of holly, where Lynda Bird bounced up and down as though she was six instead of nineteen. Then we went over into the bowels of the EOB where there is a bowling alley, and Lynda Bird shot 134, while I actually, for the first time that I can remember, broke 100, making a score of 107.

Then I came back and dressed for the take-off. And then about 3:45 went down to the Diplomatic Reception Room to greet the Greek Delegation there to say goodbye to us.

The e too, was my co-chief of this funeral delegation, President Harry S. Truman, with a cane, a homburg hat, and a big smile, which accompanied him all the way of this four day trip, except for the solemn moments of the funeral.

As I record this several days later, I must say that being with him those days, is one of the big pluses of this period in the Presidency, for me. It's

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an insight for me, ^ginto history, a joy that a man has lived through so much public rancor, and condemnation, and has emerged philosophic, salty, completely unembittered, a happy man - and I would say, vindicated by history ^[on] and most of his major decisions.

On the lawn I said goodbye to Lyndon, we got in the helicopter, went to Andrews, and there on Air Force One, ^gI met the rest of the delegation. An interesting lot they were., ^dYoung Congressman John Bratemas, (his father a Greek immigrant), handsome, successful, one of the brightest young Congressman; Mike Manatos, of the White House staff; John Plumides, also the son of a Greek immigrant, with a South Carolina accent as thick as any Southerner's I know, a successful lawyer, head of Ahepa, hopeful sometimes, I think, to go into politics; and there was Judge John ~~Pappas~~ ^a Pappas, ^gof Boston, who had himself come over as an immigrant at about eight years old, ^gthe Judge is mostly honorary, he does have a court in which he takes occasional cases, but mostly he's in business, and very successful, ^gI gather. He and his brother are putting in a plant in Greece, to make pressed boards for construction purposes, a sort of a substitute for wood, which is lacking in Greece. He also spoke of Esso ^a Pappas, which I guess can mean just one thing, and that is a branch of the oil company.

But beside President Truman, the most interesting member of the delegation was Archbishop ^{Zakarias} Yavrikas, the head of the Greek Orthodox Church, all

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of North and South America, with about 200,000 parishioners, dressed in long black clerical garb, with a beautiful religious medallion hanging around his neck, and the black pill box hat from which flowed long black veils. Apparently, in the manner of all their priests, he was heavily bearded - and it took me a good many miles, *and* hours, *to* discover that behind that beard, there was a very handsome man, a man with a sense of humor, a very interesting human being.

General Harry Vaughn was along too, to keep care of President Truman, and he kept us laughing all the way. And Clifton Daniel, *of* the New York Times, sort of second on the desk, I gathered, under Turner Catledge - the son-in-law of the President, who was always, *gently, and capably, and unobtrusively* at his elbow to help.

Liz and Helen were with me, and Angier and Robin Duke, of whom I've become more and more fond of all the time.

By the time we had gotten *off* the ground, *after* a considerable wait, *it* was 5 o'clock, so I suggested having a drink, to which President Truman quickly acquiesced.

Then I began, systematically, having a visit first with Plumides, then *Br*afemus, and then *a* Poppas; and the Archbishop, *awed* me a little bit, so I insisted on giving him sort of a seat of honor across from President Truman, and kept him around most of the time.

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Presently, I moved over by President Truman, on that little bench beside the big chair, and began to ask him some questions about what it was like back in 1946, when he instituted the Truman plan in Greece and Turkey. Here are some of the things he said.

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"It was ~~called~~ the Marshall Plan, just an extension of the same plan that we had had in all the countries of Europe to try to help them recover. It's just that the Greeks and Jews and the Irish can holler louder than anybody else, if you heard more about it than you have any others."

And about his operation of the Presidency, he said, "Get all the information you can, make up your mind, and go ahead and tell them to go to Hell." By "them", he meant your inevitable critics and the newspapers.

He also said, "There is no gratitude for things past, gratitude is always for what you're going to do for them in the future."

I asked him, "What is the best thing a wife can do for her husband in the White House?"

He said, "Protect him, don't let people use you. If people bring you some sort of a proposition, they want you to talk to the President about, it's alright to tell him, but if you have doubts about them, be sure and tell him that." He said, ^{that} "Mrs. Truman always had good judgment and when she had doubts about people, if he didn't follow her feelings, he usually turned out to regret it later."

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General Vaughn was one of the delightful surprises of the journey. I think his image as ³Printed by the newspapers has been unfair and incorrect. True, he was funny, and what's the matter with that? ²At one point, President Truman looked over at him and said, "See, he is my funny man. He kept me laughing, he did more for me than anybody else did."

I asked him what he had been doing since he got out of the Presidency, and he ~~said~~, "I lecture to young people, in high schools and colleges. I've got three lectures, one on the American Presidency, one on the relation between the Executive and Legislative, and the third on periods of hysteria in American history."

This last proved a wonderful mine of conversation, and it ranged all the way from the witch burnings in Salem, ^gto the recent McCarthy days.

He told the story of a student in California, ^gwho began his question after his lecture was over, ^gwith the phrase, "We have a country boob as Governor." Truman promptly stopped him by saying, "The Governor, whoever he is, is the first citizen of the state. If you want to restate your question in a respectful way, do so." He had 3200 students in the audience that day and he said he believed that taught them a little ^{something of}/respect for elected officials. And he said that the same student came up to him afterwards, ^gand told him that he was wrong,

And then he told about a girl's question. She asked, "President Truman, what do you think the government is going to do about birth control? ²" And he answered, "Ma'am, that is your department."

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Immediately afterwards, a boy asked, "What if there is another atomic war?" He answered, "I don't know, but one thing is sure. If there is we won't have to worry about the answer to this young lady's question." about

He also talked/Presidents in American history who had not ~~sewed~~ ^{"well"} for what ~~their~~ ^{they're} worth - so to speak - that is, whose stature in American history was not as great as he thought it ought to be. Among them he mentioned President Tyler, who succeeded after the death of William Henry Harrison. The formidable Webster was the Secretary of State, and he came in to him and said something like this. "Now you are the acting President." President Tyler said, "I am the President, if you do not agree with me, I will find myself another Secretary of State." According to President Truman, that did a lot to establish the validity of the succession down through the years. And Tyler also performed the great service for the Union, of bringing Texas into the Union.

I had a marvelous time talking to him. We had an early dinner and then I went straight to bed, in the cabin of Air Force One, asking Mrs Matsas, the wife of the Greek Ambassador, to come in and share the other lounge, because with the strange way that time goes, we actually only had four hours to sleep. It was about one o'clock stomach time, the middle of the night when we were awakened to get ready to get off the plane, for our 8:30 landing.

Before we went to sleep, they came in with the news of the New Hampshire primary, in which both Rockefeller and Goldwater's chances took a pretty bad beating by Cabot Lodge, who was a write-in candidate, and clear

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across the world, in Viet-Nam. There was a creditable, but not a formidable number of write-in votes, *for* the Attorney General, *and* a sizeably higher number of write-in votes for Lyndon.