

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Thursday, May 14, 1964

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I slept well, woke up about nine and had breakfast in bed., Read the papers and absorbed the shock of the two Republican Congressmen's visit to my tenants, ^{in Autauga} ~~in Attala~~ County. It was ugly, it could have been worse, I've got to think of some way to turn it into a constructive end.

Then I recorded six days on my machine - and I'm going to try to catch up while I'm down here, because if I don't, ^I I never will...

Ate lunch with the girls, and discovered that they had stayed up until very, very late, talking about whatever it is 16 year olds have on their minds, and playing cards.

And then Jerry and I went walking. Virginia in mid-May is balm for any trouble. No silent spring here - the green arch of fresh spring leaves almost met over the rugged country road, brown thrush flashed through the underbrush; occasionally you would see a bright little chipmunk, perched on a rail fence. A flock of crows cawed in the distance, across the lush green meadow, over which the dairy cows, [—] Holstein I think they were, placidly ambled. And every time you came to a rise, ^[there] it was the lovely blue outline of the mountains in the distance. We walked for nearly two miles - at one point we saw a handsome country home, behind a fieldstone fence, not unlike those that are around Stonewall. And in the distance, ^a ring around which six horses, with riders, were going round and round and in the center of the ring, I suppose he must be the teacher. What a beautiful way to live! The melancholy call of ^u morning doves, ^I announced

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that it was spring. There were plenty of robins hopping about and once a cardinal flashed across the road.

Finally, we called them to come and get us, and Mr. Dry rode up, in answer to Jerry's "talking machine."

I called into the White House and asked Dr. Hurst, if he and Jim would like to drive out and have dinner with me, ^{and I} talk over Lyndon's problems about which they were going to have a meeting the next morning, together with Dr. Larry Lamb, who was coming up from San Antonio, and Dr. Burkley and Dr. Travel, here in the White House.

I wanted to be in on this because that's very important too, not even Luci more so, but maybe I could have more say, contribute more understanding, if I just talked to the two of them quietly, rather than being one in a conference of seven or more.

While they were driving out, I wrote out, for Lyndon, about a nine page analysis of what I thought his situation was.

First, in case he definitely decided that he wanted to use it, there was a suggested announcement that he wasn't going to run again. This would need to be polished up by Buz or somebody. And any medical items added by the doctors...

" Having, by the end of this present term, finished some 30 years of public service, ranging from my young years with the NYA, to the House of Representatives, the Senate, the Vice Presidency, and latterly this ultimate

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responsibility, I wish now to announce, ^{of} that I will not be a candidate for re-election. I wish to spend the rest of my life in my home state, in peace with my family, for whom the rigors of my duties have left me too little time for companionship. This decision is made easier by the fact that I can feel my conduct ^{of} ~~for~~ the Presidency, ^{into!} which I came in such a tragic hour of national rending, has not been without some solid accomplishment, thanks to the Grace of God, and the sturdy cooperation of the American people. To all those who have helped me throughout these years, my thanks and those of my family, can never be fully expressed."

I hope he won't use it - that's that!

Then I put the two alternatives - if he does run, he will probably be elected President. During the campaign and for the ensuing four years, he, I and the children, ^I will be criticized and slandered for things we have done; things we may ~~be~~, in part, have done; and things we never did at all. This will be painful. There will be times when he will be frustrated and torn by the inability of his staff, his family, and ultimately of himself sometimes, to achieve his vaulting ambitions, ^I for this nation. And, ^I that I should think, ^I would be even more painful.

There will be times of achievement, such as passing the Tax Bill, and settling the potential railroad strike, and that ought to be a satisfaction with no peer, I believe.

And lastly, he may die earlier, if he continued the role of the Presidency

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and works as hard. ^{Who} can tell? If anything, the last six months have shown us, ^Ithat you don't know what to expect of life.

On the other hand, if he does not run, we will probably return to the ranch and he will enjoy the country he loves, and me, and Lynda, ^Iand Luci, more than we ever had, and that will be good for all of us.

But, ^Ithere will be a barrage of newspaper stories, of questionings and innuendos as to his motives, what skeletons in the closet, what was he trying to hide, what disclosure next. Folks would believe anything but the truth, which would go on until we were forgotten.

And second, and much more important, there would be a wave, this time national and not statewide, of hollow disillusionment and "You let us down, Lyndon." among those people who really look to him as the best candidate of the Democratic party, ^aAnd perhaps the best candidate in the nation. Not unlike the wave that swept Texas after he went on the Democratic ticket with Kennedy, only this time, it would be wider and more well-founded. And that would be painful.

And then, with the limited amount of time you can ride around over those ranches, he could entertain himself, with his rather small banking operations, and the TV and cattle, and maybe a few lectures. But I hardly see how that could contain him and consume his 24 hours a day, in a constructive way. There might be periods of depression, and frustration, as he watched Mr. X running the country, and thought what he would have done instead. And he

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might look around for a scapegoat, and I would not want to be it, then.

And lastly, he might live longer if he didn't run for the Presidency. Who can tell. And if he did, would it be worth it.

My final conclusion, was that, I think he ought to run, facing clearly all the criticisms and hostilities, that would come our way, pacing himself as well as his personality will permit, with Sundays off and occasional vacations, and then some three years and nine months from now, February or March of 1968, if the Lord lets him live that long, announce that he won't be a candidate for reelection, and by that time, I think, the juices of life will be stilled enough in him, at 59 and approaching 60, that he can finish out that term and return to the ranch, to live out the rest of our days quietly.

I wrote this out, put it in an envelope, addressed it to the President, marked it personal, please.

And then about 8 when Jim and Dr. Hurst arrived, ^[it] put in their hand and asked them to give it to him when they met the next morning.

We began our talk in the small sitting room, and then went into the lovely dining room, candle lit, fire going, a bowl of lilacs on the table, steaks and wine for dinner. Our girls joined us, Luci said the blessing; it was wonderful to see how joyously she and Jim greet each other. She doesn't always like all of our friends, or rather, more exactly, she doesn't give out in front of them. But for Tom Corcoran, the Cains, Dr. Hurst, she is the most articulate, out-spoken little girl, a rebel, but delightful.

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Jim invited her back at any time, and said how much he loved having her and Jack, *J*as their house guests.

We had a really gay time.

After dinner the girls went back to their game of crazy eights and Jim and Dr. Hurst and I, *J*went back to the small sitting room, had our coffee, around the fire, and talked about the possibilities for Lyndon.

They were going to give him a thorough medical going-over the next morning, and tonight we only talked about the phycological aspects. Both thought that inaction, idleness, lack of command, would be a harder role for him *J*than the long hours and heavy responsibility he now shoulders. They both really thought that he should continue.

One of them will call me tomorrow after the conference. I don't know though, that either one really understands the depth of his pain, when and if he faces up to the possibility of sending many thousands American boys to Viet-Nam or some other place.

They left about 10 o'clock, and I immersed myself in Bill White's ^{book}/after calling Lyndon and finding that he was out at the F Street Club.

And then, when I was almost asleep, a little after 12, he called me. He had been to a stag party for Bill Douglas, and incidentally, I noticed that Bill's wife was in Europe. This was an anniversary for many years on the court for Bill. Lyndon was lonesome, I could tell from his voice. The night before he'd had a bad toothache and then that morning, *J*had to have the tooth

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pulled out because it was infected beyond saving.

It was a sad, happy talk, largely about the Alabama tenants, and about his restive desire, to seek a way out of the burdens he carries.