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Friday, February 12th

Lincoln's Birthday marked a first in the White House ^a celebration of Lincoln's Birthday by inviting Lincoln scholars, Lincoln historians, actors who played the part of Lincoln, Civil War buffs, especially heads of the Civil War Centennial Commissions in many States, to the White House for luncheon. It was Dr. Eric Goldman's idea, and a very imaginative one, and as I read the mail some time after it took place, no social event in the White House has brought forth more warm gratitude from the people who participated.

It began with Lyndon receiving the Gold Medal of the U. S. Civil War Centennial Commission in the East Room, and then we met the guests in the Blue Room. Among the 111 were Major General U. S. Grant III, whose sister had been born in the White House and whose father had been assigned to serve with General Custer. Historian Bruce Catton, Paul Horgan, Oliver Jensen, Mark van Doren, many University professors whose specialty was Lincoln, and among them Frank Vandever of Rice University in Houston. Actors Gregory Peck and Raymond Massie, who had played the granite-faced Lincoln. And Directors of the Civil War Centennial Commissions of many States. I actually ran upon an Alabama cousin, Dr. A. B. Moore of the University of Alabama, who is married to one of the Myricks and headed the Alabama Commission -- and we had

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Myrick family reunions in Autauga County!

One of the historians offered to send me a letter written by Mary Todd Lincoln to hang in the Lincoln Room. We used the Roosevelt, Wilson and Truman china, and each round table had in the middle a piece of the Lincoln china, and its deep purple was reflected in the flowers -- heather, iris, freesia, chrysanthemums.

Lyndon's speech was measured, calm, strong, and very nearly great. "The memory of Lincoln is shrouded in legend and hope," he said, "But his challenge to us sounds clearly across the years -- love justice, extend liberty, remember you may be wrong but act when you believe you are right." I was proud of the whole day, and I think even Mary McGrory was impressed. Later she wrote that Johnson had kidnapped Lincoln, taken him away from the Republican Party, stealing their last ornament of glory, as if it weren't enough to defeat them so roundly last November.

In the middle of lunch I thought what an audience to take up to the Lincoln Room, sent Lyndon a note, asked if I could, and thereafter it was a rambling, casual, unplanned but quite delightful, luncheon party, the guests themselves being most unusual, and so happily

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appreciative that it rejoiced my heart.

When we finished lunch I went up to the Lincoln Room and people drifted in and out, Mr. Ketchum and I giving a little word picture of the history and uses of the room then and now, until everybody departed to get in the buses to go to the Lincoln Memorial, where Lyndon was to place a wreath. It added its own special luster to our life in the White House, this day did.

When they were gone, I met Mrs. Archibald Brown and Mrs. Ethel Smith to begin the project of redoing the West Hall, our little living room, dolefully in need of new fabrics and color, very much the stepchild of the house but yet the most used area. I talked about what I liked, showed Mrs. Brown pictures of the rooms, the homes I'd liked and of the rooms that I was fondest of here, and made as clear a picture of what I wanted as I could. She will return in a week with samples.

At five o'clock I had a meeting with Clark Clifford and Bill Heath on that phantom that I want to clothe with flesh, the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. Bill Heath presented us with a proposal that is almost too great to comprehend. The University of Texas wants Lyndon to put his papers there, and they propose land, a building, and a School of

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Political Science, or Public Affairs, to be named after him. It would involve the expenditure of some six or so million dollars and the setting aside of another twelve to maintain the School. It must be explored from many angles, but it is a solution I at once know I want to reach. Busby sat with us and was full of good ideas and good judgment.

Lyndon came home for dinner about nine, and I told him what we'd done. He said, "Why don't you get Bill Heath for dinner?" I observed that lots of people were in bed by nine, and sure enough, when I called Bill Heath at his hotel, I think he had gone to bed. But nevertheless he came quickly and we sat down to dinner at eleven -- Bill, Lyndon, Lynda Bird and Dave. We talked until 12:30, Bill outlining his plans to Lyndon and Lyndon showing far more interest in the establishment of the School than in anything related to the Library. We talked about the difficulty of getting competent men to serve in the government. He said how wonderful it would be if he could call upon well-trained men for the Cabinet or for Agency jobs -- from Texas, from the Southwest, from the South. He said, "It's awful hard for me to get a competent man for a government office unless he comes from Wisconsin or Harvard or California. Speaking of himself, he said, "I just broke through when they left the gates open." And of California he said, "The whole airplane

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industry went to California because one professor went there, an eminent authority in that field, and the industry followed him." You could really get caught up in his enthusiasm for training the brains of Texas, for bringing others there from all over the world. He talked of the people he would like to get to come down to lecture if such a School ever became a reality in his lifetime. It was a glowing, wonderful evening. If only something real could come about from it within five years!