

1965

San Jacinto Day, April 21st

Our house guests, the Odams and the Negleys, left too early for me to visit with them, but I had the satisfied feeling that I'd made them happy.

Much of the day was business. Talking with Don Thomas, a trip to the dentist, dictating with Peggy and Ashton, a picture in the Yellow Oval Room to send to two special friends.

And then at four o'clock the most interesting part of the day. Alice Roosevelt Longworth came to tea and brought her grandchild, Joanna Stern. She is fiercely undaunted by old age, bristling with the quality of aliveness, a very interesting woman. It's said of her that she has an acid tongue, but I like her as well as finding her highly interesting. We reminisced over tea, and obviously she enjoyed herself in recalling the days that she spent in the house. She said once her little half-brothers and their friends were playing hide-and-seek in the attic (what is now the third floor), and that President Roosevelt, hearing the noise, went upstairs to investigate. It was night-time and he was in his pink pajamas, rotund and blustering. One of the youngsters looked up and said, "Here comes Cupid!"

She told us she had had her appendix out in the Queen's Room, lying there on the bed the doctor brought from Baltimore. Then she was moved into what is now the Lincoln Room to recuperate. She said her stepmother had three good party dresses, and since the press was not present at their

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receptions and entertainments, but instead they gave out a description of them, they would describe a dress for one reception as blue-grey silk and for the next as light blue moiré silk with a lace portrait collar. And so on and so on. The same dress described in different ways!

She had not, however, enjoyed having dates in the White House. She had always gone out to a dear aunt's who lived here in town, where she felt freer. Lynda was with us and enjoyed talking to her and bringing out stories of the past. She knew so much of the history of that day. It was very pleasant to see how Mrs. Longworth was enjoying herself. This had been planned especially for her grandchild, but I think that both she and I enjoyed it more.

The slight rise up the hall as you pass the Treaty Room and approach the Lincoln Room I had always thought was a sort of architectural mistake, just something that happened in the course of many renovations. No, she said, she thought it had been put in there to accommodate President FDR's wheel chair -- a ramp of sorts -- because there had been a step there in times past.

We had a detailed trip through all the Second Floor and all the First Floor, and two hours of reminiscing on the treasures of this house, both in

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furnishings and in stories of human beings.

When she left I dashed over to the West Wing for a long-deferred meeting with Mrs. Smith, Jim Ketchum, and <sup>2</sup>Miss Linky about the Fish Room, our floundering project, and the President's small office.

And then in a rush to dress for the Italian Embassy and the return engagement of Prime Minister Moro. These receptions, intended in a most gracious manner, are a piece of madness that go under the name of a social function. The painted Eighteenth Century doors of the Italian Embassy and its rainbow-hued Venetian glass chandeliers were completely obscured in a welter of humanity, through whom we pressed -- Ambassador Fenoaltea, Lyndon, Prime Minister Moro, Mrs. Fenoaltea and me -- with the photographers in stumbling retreat in front of us and friends on each side getting a hurried greeting or, in the case of Virginia Rusk, backed to the wall by the crowd, a kiss from Lyndon. The whole affair takes little more than thirty minutes.

Prime Minister Moro is an amiable, earnest man. One likes him. But a reception is no format to learn anything about him or his country.

Back at the White House I changed into my green chiffon evening dress to go to the Pan American Union to see an art exhibit of paintings by young artists from all over South America, sponsored by ESSO. Harry and Clayton McPherson took me. Ambassador Moro met me at the front

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door, along with the Jamisons of ESSO. We filed down the receiving line, and we inevitably formed an entourage.

How odd there should be no realism in the lot! Only one out of about thirty exhibits -- a still life of a plate of fruit. Otherwise the paintings were way out, expressionistic -- or perhaps surrealistic is the word. Some nude pictures, even satire. Some beautiful arrangements of coloring, some grotesque, weird, searching, so that you wondered about the generation of artists who painted them. What is their world like that this is the way they see it? There is little communication between me and them.

And the sculpture -- once more, nothing recognizable. There was even one piece that squawked! I applaud the efforts of an industry in an underdeveloped country sponsoring and helping young artists, but I cannot for the life of me understand the work of most of the young artists.

Lyndon had invited the Max Freedmans to join us for dinner, and by the time I reached home they were there, and I had the luxury of a quiet visit just with Max before Lyndon arrived, and then the conversation revolved around him. Lyndon brought George McGhee, just over from Germany for a few days, with him, and the conversation was good. I asked George about the possibility of a united Europe -- a

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feeling that I had sensed was in the air when I had been to the Scandinavian countries and the Benelux countries in the Fall of '63. The apogee of that time is past, George thinks, DeGaulle having effectively prevented it. Germany is a crucial country, and Germany is still willing but no longer anxious, and the time for it to happen diminishes day by day.

Lyndon took his text on Vietnam and in vivid, earthy language, very clear, quite impressive, summarized our position vis-a-vis Vietnam and the ten-year course of the struggle. I knew he was working. I knew he wanted to explain it from his viewpoint to Max, and maybe Max in turn, by osmosis, could explain it to his readership. He has been hammering away this last month on TV, in press conferences, individual columnists, groups of Congressmen, to every forum he meets, trying to put Vietnam in true perspective, to win the war of words in which we have faltered even more than on the battlefield itself.

When you are right up so close to the scene it is hard to tell when something starts, but I believe I have seen it start these last few weeks -- a seizing of the offensive, not only of planes and gunfire in Vietnam, but here at home in telling about it, in convincing people.