

1965

Tuesday, May 4th

Back from my three days in Texas, my desk was in a hopeless state -- the kind that takes digging -- and so are my appointments.

Lyndon looks tired and worn. The Dominican troubles have taken their toll. Paul Glynn told me that he had had a bad cold, and Dr. Gould had been down doctoring his throat. Also, he gained back 3 of 12 pounds he had so proudly lost. When he had gotten up to 226, that's when it really struck home to him, because that was a little bit more than he had been 10 years ago. So in a little over a week's time he brought it down 12 pounds. Once in gear, his will power carries him along like a tank. No drinks -- but then he's hardly had any drinks for months and months. His undoing is 10 o'clock and 11 o'clock dinners, ^{figure} which he has had little lunch or no lunch and tea and melon for breakfast. And so he's ravenous and eats hugely, especially desserts.

He is very ^{quiet} ~~quite~~ and calm in spite of being so weary.

Lynda's article has come out in LIFE. It really looks and reads better than we had thought. Luci, bless her, is just bubbling with praise of her sister. Lynda is choosing the charities with a great deal of pleasure that she's going to give the money to. Bless her, one of them is my beautification project.

Because of being out of town for several days, and just because it's the Merry Month of May, my publicity pictures for good works had

1965

Tuesday, May 4th (continued)

mounted up till there were five. Then, because I hadn't been able to go to the State Department concert last night as I had planned, a group of Metropolitan opera singers headed by Rise Stevens had come for a tour of the White House and I had wanted to meet them.

So, first of the day, down to the State Dining Room, where they were all lined up. And how young and pretty opera singers have become! These were all Americans. Rise Stevens doesn't sing -- she's the co-manager. She's taking them to 70 American cities, Austin among them.

They are so full of youth and enthusiasm, I was delighted to see them. Opera indeed has a new face.

Next I went to the Red Room to meet two workers of PROJECT HOPE and to receive tickets to the Hope Ball, which makes money for the fabulous ship that docks in an African port or a South American port, equipped with hospital facilities, excellent doctors and nurses, and handles all comers. Young doctors donate months of their time free. It is sort of like being a missionary.

I'm sure when the history of this period is written, the volunteer spirit, particularly in this country, will stand out as a magnificent phenomenon. Volunteers, Foundations, automation, Space, and the war on poverty -- what a decade, what a generation I live in!

1965

Tuesday, May 4th (continued)

It WAS an assembly line! Next I went to the Blue Room to hear Mrs. Luther Terry and John Walker of the National Gallery explain about Pictures for Patients -- reproductions to be made available for hospital patients to hang on the walls of their rooms. They will be rolled around on a cart, sort of like a Bookmobile, so that the patient could make a choice, hang it for a while, and then maybe change it, or the next patient could. Imaginative delightful idea!

And then to the Green Room to meet the Multiple Sclerosis Mother of the Year, Mrs. Allen Somm, her husband and child. She, Mrs. Somm, in a wheel chair, able to talk only quite pitifully, giving you that uneasy feeling of, "My God, I do so little to deserve what I've got." And, of all people, in the group oddly enough Sally Jane Hight.

And then downstairs to the library for quite a change of scene. Two very happy, very elderly people, a lady and a gentleman, seated on the sofa beaming, just delighted to tell me all about the Episcopal Home for the Aged. She, Mrs. Whitehead, had worked herself for some 40 years with a project very much like HEADSTART and had plenty of information and advice to give me on it. They both seemed so happy. They wanted me to come to the style show which raises funds for the Episcopal Home.

1965

Tuesday, May 4th (continued)

Then out to the Jacqueline Kennedy Garden, where the Bethesda Chamber of Commerce (rather, about six men representing it) showed me a big colorful photograph of their 66 thousand beautification project, which will extend down the heart of the business section of Wisconsin Avenue. Fruit trees, flowers in large cement tubs, a charming drawing, a cross-section of men, architects, business men, Chamber of Commerce men who have been working on it for several years.

I was glad to do all of this, but it was an assembly line and seemed ungracious to them. I told Liz to let us not permit it to happen any more -- five or six in a row.

Then I was off to a big event of each Spring -- the Senate Ladies luncheon. And so it has been for me since 1949 a high point of the year.

Passing out of the White House grounds, I thought with a pang of embarrassment that we had closed off the tourist hours because of all our activities. Lyndon's briefing the Members of the House and Senate in the East Room, a joint Congressional leadership meeting, then a presentation to Admiral Smith of the Distinguished Service Medal in the Rose Garden. Oh, this old house has been rocking this morning!

The Senate Ladies are back once more in the Senate Caucus Room in the Old Senate Office Building, one of the handsomest rooms in this town -- classic elegance, enormous.

1965

Tuesday, May 4th (continued)

Mrs. Brewster of Maryland was Democratic Chairman, with Betty Kauchal as Co-chairman. Betty is getting to be practically professional -- this is about the third time in my memory she has done it.

As always, the decorations were important. This time, paisley green tablecloths, made by the Senate Wives themselves. Green and white centerpieces, and the most elaborate and delicious lunch. The first course, avocado with crabmeat Maryland, would have been enough itself. Mrs. Brewster's constituents, I am sure, provided that, as did Betty's the California royal squab and Muriel's the Minnesota wild rice. Practically all of the Cabinet was there and, among the oldtimers present (and how that word changes with the years) Mrs. Irving Ives of New York and Mrs. Prescott Bush of Connecticut. The two Mrs. Kennedys, Mrs. Bobby and Mrs. Ted, sat together and chatted with each other most of the time. Two of the prettiest women in the room.

It is a thoroughly relaxing occasion, because nobody has to make a speech. Muriel presided, and I thanked them for the green leather photograph album inscribed, "To Lady Bird Johnson, with affection, from the Senate Wives." And of course one of the high moments was to hear Mrs. Tobey's report on bandage making.

1965

Tuesday, May 4th (continued)

I am almost sorry that they are ahead of the record made while I was in charge. I almost asked, "Where's my maple sugar candy?" but, sure enough, there at the door was Mrs. Flanders from Vermont with the maple-leafed shaped candy we have received every year. A pleasant, easy occasion full of vital statistics about so-and-so's children or grandchildren and news of the Hill.

Back at the White House, I met with Mr. James Babb, who has carried the load for the White House library, and with the other committee members, friends, and donors of the library, to thank them for bringing it to its present state of completion. Except that it isn't really, because as long as life goes on and people write, there will be more to choose from and add to it.

And then presently we were joined by a cross-section of the world of books: authors, publishers, critics, for the ceremony to award the first National Medal for Literature to Thornton Wilder for the whole body of his works. It turned out to ^{be} ~~me~~, for me, one of the most thoroughly congenial and, in a way, lustrous gatherings that I have ever had in the White House. I was delighted to be with Thornton Wilder, and I thought he was a happy choice. He left me aglow with his remarks, and I must say for once I was pleased with

1965

Tuesday, May 4th (continued)

myself. I felt at home with these people and with what I said.

Donald McGannon of Westinghouse Broadcasting, who is responsible for the movie on the paintings of the White House, was there. My old friends Eliot Janeway, Robert Gutwilig of McGraw-Hill -- he's working with us on Mrs. Johnson's album -- Cass Canfield of Harper and Row, Oliver Jenssen of American Heritage, who is working on the booklet for Lyndon's boyhood home, the James Fosburghs from the Committee for the Preservation of the White House.

Mrs. Kennedy's mother and stepfather, the Hugh Auchinclosses, and the William Beineckes, great contributors to the White House library and friends of the Ed Clarks. This was one of the cultural events of which Eric Goldman and Roger Stevens are the "midwives" and I very happily go along with. I meant it when I said of all the talents I wished I possessed, the one I most envied was the ability to make words "march and sing and cannonade and talk the cool, demanding voice of reason."

Well, it was a good afternoon. A nice thank you to the Library Committee, combining it with a laurel for the brow of Thornton Wilder, made for a very pleasant time.

One of my problems of the day was a call from Van Cliburn to Luci, asking her to appear with him in the Hollywood Bowl July 6th.

1965

Tuesday, May 4th (continued)

to do Peter and The Wolf. My instinct, my mere stomach reaction, was against it, although I'd loved her doing it at Interlochen. But I have to tread carefully with Luci, my dear little free soul, so I sought the advice of people she likes and respects, who know the show world and/or California. Dr. Frank Stanton, the Lloyd Hands, and Margy McNamara.

It was after 11 when Lyndon came home to dinner. He had called over A. W. Moursund, in town for some REA business, and, very weary and haggard, he had dinner. He talked about the Dominican Republic affair, and got to bed, but not to sleep, well after midnight.