

1965

Monday, May 17th

Was the day of the State Dinner for President ^{Park} ~~Pak~~ of Korea and his wife. It was memorable mostly for the extraordinary sweetness of Mrs. Pak and the tense, late hours that Lyndon and his staff kept on the Dominican situation.

Mrs. Smith had come down from New York to wrap up our various projects -- Luci's Solarium and my sitting room and the West Hall, and, more important, Lyndon's little office and the Fish Room, and an exploratory excursion into the Cabinet Room.

The first order of the day was the reception on the South Grounds. In my best Spring outfit, the yellow and white dress and jacket, I was in Lyndon's office at 11:30. I could understand why the General and the Hands would get ulcers trying to make these affairs click on time.

How can one ever get used to such pomp and display? The South Lawn was beautiful with Spring. Mrs. Pak's smile was radiant. The first blast of the 21-gun salute almost made my heart jump out of my throat, as always, but I am getting a little used to them. One of the nicest things was to think how thrilling it was to the Philip Baldwins, who were somewhere back in the crowd watching, and probably Susanne Walker King, ⁷ Jessy Davie's ^{Ch Nam} granddaughter who had come with Barbara Howar to watch and go through the White House, who would find it a thrill too.

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In all these meetings Lyndon always towers above the visiting Chief of State or Monarch, and I confess that pleases me. In their speeches, Lyndon renewed America's guarantees to stand by Korea so long as danger remained, spoke gratefully of the 2,000 or so South Koreans who are fighting with us in South VietNam. President Pak's achievements, it appears, are to have begun making a normal relationship with Japan and lending their aid to us in South VietNam. After all, they have one of the biggest military establishments in Asia.

On our way into the Diplomatic Room to shake hands with the officials, the way was lined with the beautiful young wives of our staff, a new frill added by Lloyd Hand. Lyndon escorted President Pak and I Mrs. Pak, in a glass-topped limousine, and we paraded down the ceremonial street, Pennsylvania Avenue, flag-decked, and back to Blair House, and on the way we talked about Mrs. Pak's delightful gift of 25 magnolia trees to the Ellipse and to other parks in Washington. They are Korean magnolias -- this is a gracious gesture on her part because of our beautification program. Her vivacity and enthusiasm speak in any language, and her lack of English (though she has some) did not prevent her from making contact. How wise she was to wear the native dress.

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The paper described it as diaphanous lake blue. It was long, flowing, embroidered. Your eyes were drawn to it in any crowd. It was suited to the delicacy and grace of her person.

We said goodbye on the steps of Blair House, and I breathed my silent gratitude to Robin Duke or Mrs. Kennedy, whoever was responsible for establishing that lovely, perfectly acceptable Guest House to take the place of the Queen's Room and the Lincoln Bedroom right down the hall from me.

Back to the White House I went, for more desk chores and decorating chores with Mrs. Smith.

And then I got a call from Lyndon -- a request to come swim with him. I have been trying to get him back to the pool, back into exercises, ever since last September! This was victory.

When I arrived there I found, however, he had Jack Valenti and Bill and Abe, and they were talking business while they swam. But just as well. We took Abe upstairs with us for lunch. He leaned over when Lyndon was on the phone and said to me, holding his thumb and finger close together, "We are this close to a settlement." He meant the Dominican Republic.

I do not know, try not to know, much that's going on. What I don't know I can't talk about unwittingly and in front of the wrong people.

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The names of Mr. G. and ^{Davidson} ~~B. G.~~ are the names that go back and forward. Sometimes I wonder if such people exist.

John Secondari drove ^{with} me to the beauty parlor to talk about our ABC program, in which soon I must become immersed.

The Peter Hurds were to be house guests. After much research and checking, relying very much on John Walker, with Clark Clifford speaking for the Historical Society, I have asked Peter Hurd to do the President's portrait.

And then a very unpleasant incident came up in the afternoon. Poor dear Liz, harrassed and angry, had to tell me about it. It appears that a letter that Mrs. Kennedy had written me in October of '60, asking me to come to a party to listen to the TV debate between the then candidate Kennedy and candidate Nixon had somehow left my files, my possession, and was going to be auctioned off by a New York firm of collectors. How did it get there? Who in my employ steals? The company would only say that it had come from someone who said I ^Hgave it to them as a campaign souvenir. Liz asked me. Of course I never did. On the other hand, with dozens, hundreds of volunteer help, of moves from two houses, it is quite possible it might have been lost, or stolen. At any rate, it was embarrassing and ugly and took up too many minutes

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of our time, even hours. Somehow I think Liz felt worse about it than I did.

I wore my lovely new dress to the dinner -- white with little flowers all over the sleeves, inevitable connection with the beautification program. The Humphreys, the Rusks, Ambassador and Mrs. Brown, joined us in the Yellow Room.

Lyndon, hurried, mind hundreds of miles southwards, rushed into his dinner clothes, but was nevertheless downstairs on the North Portico in time to greet the President and Mrs. Pak.

And then we spent a very pleasant half hour, pointing out the Monument, exchanging the gifts -- a major one from them, a magnificent tenfold screen, hand-painted with Korean landscape scenes, very muted and soft, and the one I always get the most kick out of pointing out to the visiting Chiefs is a picture of their country taken from our satellite high up in the air.

How delightful that our Ambassador to Korea and his wife, Peggy Brown, should turn out to be the sister of old friends of mine in University days. Kitty Bell, Mrs. Francis ^{ll}Kenney Bell, in whose home I had visited when I was 18, and I had met her when I was in Thailand -- she was a refugee then from Laos -- too dangerous for her to follow her husband there to his diplomatic post.

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Downstairs in the line, we greeted the 139 or so guests. This time I had asked special friends of mine to make a point of trying to talk to the staff of the visiting Chief of State, who often seem so left out and lonely, and I found them able lieutenants -- Jane Freeman and Grace Dodd especially knew a lot about Korea, had been there, were very interested.

From the Senate there were the Hollands, pretty little Mrs. Jackson and her husband Scoop, the Cottons, Senator Burdick alone, Vicky and Roman Hruska. Vicky turned out to be one of the gayest and most helpful guests. And ~~Noel~~ and Joe Clark -- I was happy to get the opportunity to whisper to Noel that I needed her help on our plans for the Capitol Grounds.

Governor Jack Burns of Hawaii, Lincolnesque and handsome in a rugged sort of way, came without his gentle little wife, who is in a wheelchair, and the new Governor of South Carolina and Mrs. McNair.

Quite a coterie from the House, the Graham Purcells of Texas among them, and the most harrassed man in Washington -- poor dear *Adm.* "Red" ~~Ra~~^{Ray} ~~burny~~ ^{CIA.}

General James van Fleet, a special friend of Korea, they tell me, considered the father of the Korean Army. From Texas, Dr. *Douglas* and Mrs. Truman Blocker, Mrs. ~~Dudley~~ ^{Douglas} Chandor, widow of the artist, owner of a portrait of Eleanor Roosevelt that I wish the White House

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had. An amazing halo of bright red hair.

The Charley Gibsons of Amarillo, and nobody there had more fun, and our old friends, Irv and Marian Goldberg, always with us in trouble. How good to have them with us for a gala time!

And the Bill Hobbys, young, attractive and, I expect, ambitious.

Nicest of all was to see Mildred Stegall. That's the sort of thoughtful thing that Bess and Liz both do, even when I forget.

And playwright Archibald MacLeish. And I think the nicest thing anybody said to me all evening was what he said: "Meeting your daughter was an electric event." Lynda Bird had asked to be seated by him, had been all aglow afterward with how wonderful he was.

Dr. and Mrs. Robert Scalapino. In a teach-in he had taken the part of the Administration, ^{when} McGeorge Bundy left so suddenly on his cloak-and-dagger mission. The John Secondaris, Lyndon's beautiful young friend from New York, Jeanne Vanderbilt, and, of course, our house guests the Peter Hurds.

Guests that I hope to see more of were the Ernest ^B Sprocketts. *Ch. name*

His mother was Janet Baines, kin to Lyndon's mother. He is now President of Gulf Oil. Since I have been working on her book, I have become more respectful toward genealogy and more interested in it. I had hoped to talk about it with him.

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I had the President on one side, and English-speaking Ky Yung Chong, the Deputy Minister of Economic Planning, on the other side, with whom I had no difficulty at all in talking. But I admit it is work, even when I have read all the briefings and tried to learn the things of mutual interest.

Looking across at Lyndon, with lovely little Mrs. Pak^{pk} on one side and the wife of their Ambassador on the other, I smiled ruefully to myself. Dutifully he spoke a sentence or two, and then leaned over in urgent, tense conversation, first on one side with the Vice President, then on the other with the Secretary of State.

Our entertainment was a friend of Abe's, Mr. Walter Templar, who played an instrument with a delicious name, viola d'amor, and a very love-inducing sound it had. I had asked our guests earlier what time it was for them, according to the time in their country, and got the answer that it was something like two o'clock or four o'clock in the morning, so I was relieved when they made an early goodbye, but not until after Lyndon had grabbed Mrs. Pak^{pk} for a whirl on the dance floor to the tune of Hello, Dolly. She's a good sport, as well as a charming feminine person, and was equal to the occasion, although I daresay she'd never danced before.

Lyndon left very early after that, although I knew it would not be the end of his day. But I turned on the steam to try to make it an especially gay and lively occasion for those who had come after dinner.

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such as the Phillip Baldwins, who were obviously having a great time.

Had a sweet moment with the Goldbergs, the Gibsons, the Hobbys, strolled from group to group, and was upstairs close to one.

It was next day that I found that Lyndon spent practically all night, having gone back to the West Wing to the situation room. He stayed until 4:30.