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Friday, May 21st WND

Something happened that may be of utmost importance in the art future of the Nation's Capital. I had asked Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Hirshhorn to come down from New York for lunch with me, inviting them intentionally thirty minutes before the other guests came so that we could have a quiet, personal tour of the State Floor and the Second Floor.

Mr. Hirshhorn has the greatest collection of modern sculpture in existence, according to Dillon Ripley and Roger Stevens, as well as an outstanding collection of paintings, including 32 ^{Eakins} ~~Aikens~~. For some time the Smithsonian has been talking of him as, I understand, have many other museums, including some from England (he is quite a flirt, Mary Lasker says) in the effort to get him to will or give his collection to them. He has agreed in a letter to give it to the Smithsonian if they meet certain requirements -- a separate and suitable building bearing his name, assurance of good care, and so forth.

So I had asked the Roger Stevens, the Dillon Ripleys, his friends the Sam HARRISES, and, delightfully enough, the Abe FORTASES turn out to be old acquaintances of his, so for my own comfort and benefit I had asked Abe and Carol to join us for lunch.

I had met Mr. Hirshhorn briefly before and gathered that he is one of those great American stories, a man of poor beginnings,

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intelligence and drive, who siezes an opportunity offered in this marvellous land and acquires great wealth, all in his lifetime. I still do not know much about it. I think uranium is the source of his wealth.

He has been collecting for forty years. When he began, of course he didn't have much money, so he told me. He had amazing, unerring sort of taste, and picked out the things that were going to last. That's Roger Stevens' estimate. He has seen his collection. I haven't.

Well, at any rate the Hirshhorns came and we had a delightful time. He loved seeing the White House collection and I love showing it to people who enjoy it. He picked out one by one the things I like best as the ones he liked best. The Rembrandt Peale, Thomas Jefferson's portrait, Benjamin Franklin. He loved the Whistler too and a John Singer Sargent. I hope, of course, that one of those 32 ^{Eakins} ~~Aikens~~ will come to rest in the White House, and have charged Roger Stevens and Dr. Dillon Ripley and Abe Fortas with that hope, because I am the world's poorest salesman.

And what a job I find myself in! I should be a showman and a salesman, a clothes horse and a publicity sounding board, with a good heart and a real interest in the folks in Dime Box and Rosebud, as well as Newport and whatever the fancy places are. Well, the last wide interest I do have.

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Lunch was pleasant -- a little [?]sensing, talking about the building. Mr. Hirshhorn is going to give a million dollars toward it. Roger Stevens estimates it will cost ten million. A design has already been drawn by Nat Owings. Much of his collection is statuary and will fill and adorn the statuary garden, then the building itself will house the rest and the paintings.

The design is rather avant garde but also quite thrilling when you get used to it.

In the middle of lunch Lyndon came in, met everybody all around, thanked Mr. Hirshhorn, and quite boldly said what I had been wanting to say and couldn't -- it was great, wonderful that the people of the United States were going to enjoy his works, but that it would be downright selfish if the White House itself didn't get one! Mr. Hirshhorn could appreciate him, I think. There is something alike between them. They are both aggressive.

Mr. Hirshhorn loves his things -- he calls them his children -- he has collected them for 40 years. I asked him to make the announcement, if he could, when we have the Arts Festival on the 14th of June, to which, of course, we hope very much that he will come. But he is going to Europe and I doubt that all the arrangements for the gift will be completed by then.

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But what a coup -- what a crowning event for the Arts Festival if they could.

The Arts Festival is something that I look forward to with shivers and apprehension. We could fall flat on our faces, or it could be great.

Lyndon bounced in a moment later, bringing Mr. Arandt from Birmingham, Alabama, our old-time lawyer friend who helped us follow the winding cobweb of Uncle Claude's estate years ago.

This opens a great chapter. We will see. Dillon Ripley used the expression that it was the greatest art gift that had been made -- that is, if it is made -- to the United States since Andrew Mellon in the 30's gave what formed the National Gallery. How wonderful to be associated ^{our} Administration ^{with} such a thing!

I sandwiched in a little talk with Luci about her invitations for graduation. It turns out she is positively determined not to send out any. She says, "Mother, it's just a request for a present. It's phony, hypocisy -- I'm not going to do it. Oh, yes, I'm going to see that certain people get there, like my friends here in town, but I'm not going to send out invitations." I lost that battle.

And then came the second event of the day. Four hours of work with ABC -- makeup by Mrs. Brown, help from Simone -- and then off to the Lincoln Memorial at five o'clock. A long script, many retakes, as twilight deepened and the light changed and each hue more beautiful than the last.

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Finally at dark, when there was a moment's pause, the guard asked me to walk around to the other side with him. And there, as we looked at the Custis Mansion, glowing like a pearl on the hillside, he pointed out down below a small, flickering light and said, "That's the Eternal Flame." It was President Kennedy's grave. I felt eerie. It is, without a doubt, on the axis, a most magnificent view, the most wonderful vista in all the United States, to my thinking.

John Secondari intersperses his taxes, while they are changing the machinery, with a vast repertory of interesting stories about other documentaries he has done. One concerned the ^{time} ~~thing~~ he had worked with the Russians on some film. They got quite talkative, quite friendly, he said, and talked about a State visit they had made to China. They said the banquets were elaborate, enormous -- course after course after course. There came a time in the middle of the long banquet when a cat and a snake were brought in to put in a little pit-like arena -- a stage, so to speak -- right in the midst of the diners -- and had a duel to death. Later on the diners ate the vanquished. This was a bit hard on the Russians. They said, "You know, the Chinese are such barbarians."

I had brought along a box of candy, which soon disappeared. We had a thermos of coffee. There was take after take after take, and every

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light between the columns at the foot of the statue of President Lincoln, and then finally after 9 o'clock it was over. And, very weary, I rode back to the Diplomatic Reception Room to find the Bill Whites and Vicky, their daughter, and Marianne Means and Emmet Reardon and Jack and Charlotte Brooks and John Chancellor and Jake Jacobsen and Vicki all gathered together and waiting for Lyndon to join us.

The chopper was on the ground, the holiday spirit was in the air, we were as good as headed for Camp David. In a few minutes Lyndon joined us and off we went in a very relaxed mood for a late dinner, reading in bed, and to sleep about one.

I think the Dominican situation must be lightening. I do not know how much to believe in the papers, but Lyndon's spirit is lighter and his face less weary, less lined with trouble.

I look back ^{with} ~~at~~ pride on his brief moment or two at lunch with the Hirshhorns. How quickly he did and said what they would remember a long time. Very gracious, very much aware of their gift, or possible gift. That's one of his greatest qualities -- being able to do in two minutes what could take two hours.