

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Friday, July 9, 1965

Page 1

Lyndon was to return from Washington for the weekend, and I told Elaine and the kinfolks I'd love for them to stay over and get Griffen to come back after them so Lyndon could see them all.

My day began in that most pleasant way of going up in my robe with my second cup of coffee to sit on the bed in the room I had given Elaine and Edwina to talk with them, as we have so much through the years, about politics and Alabama, all the kinfolks. I am delighted that they love so much our country and the Ranch. And particularly Lynda Bird as they remember her at 14 or 15.

They say Montgomery is changing greatly in its political climate, ⁱⁿ and time to save John Sparkman? Maybe. Not for sure. There is Lowndes County and Elmore County. They will not change til the present generation dies out. It will take another generation growing up.

I was surprised to hear that there were several members of the President's Club in Montgomery -- one of them Elaine's best friend.

I autographed pictures and books about the President's country for all the kinfolks before that last minute rush had set in ^{to} and prevent me.

I took a trip down to see how the trailer had settled in.

And then I spent the bulk of the day telephoning, setting up my work and recording. And it was about 5:30 when Elaine, Edwina, Berneice,

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

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Friday, July 9, 1965

Page 2

Griffin, Lynn and I left by helicopter -- and Liz too -- to join Lyndon at the Haywood Ranch.

Our departure was delayed a bit by word that the helicopter sent after us first was "put down" the word was in Johnson City. Lynn was pink and brown from having ridden all day with Clarey and the Malechek boys. The poor little ponies have been going up and down the river all day long. They helped round up a cow that had needed some medicine. Dale said the Ranch couldn't have run without them today -- to hear them tell it.

We met Lyndon at the Haywood. He embarked immediately from the small boat with George Reedy -- silent and sad looking -- and Vicki, A. W. in the small boat, while all my Alabama cousins and I and Liz and Jake Jacobsen cruised quietly on the big boat taking pictures in the sunset, lying on the top deck, looking at the full moon, turning from a faint outline to bright silver in the darkening sky. I've never seen the lake more beautiful. And there is nothing more pleasant than having people you like enthusiastically applaud the things you like. There is something of the beauty, the coquet^{te}, still about Elaine at 72, and it amazes me that she can be 72. And her language is almost as picturesque as Lyndon's -- her enthusiasm as infectious. While she worked ~~where~~ she was delighted with her job, Charles said she always liked to tell people what to do. And being a parole officer

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Friday, July 9, 1965

Page 3

she got paid for it. And now that she is retired, she says she doesn't see how she ever worked. She keeps so busy -- going fishing, playing poker, gardening in her back yard, traveling around visiting her friends. She has a zest for life that I hope for at 72.

It hadn't sounded quite all the story about the helicopter "putting down" in Johnson City, so I asked my Agent about it at a quiet moment, ^{so} And whatever the answer was, it would not alarm kinfolks. It turned out to be an adventure, and a dangerous one. Jerry Kavett, enroute back to the Ranch, had asked them to fly over "3 Springs" so they could reconnoiter it in case I wanted to go by as I had said the night before I wished we'd had time to do. As they hovered close to the ground, evidently the sun right in their eyes, they suddenly saw a small silver wire one second ^{before} ~~then~~ they struck it with the props and the engine. The helicopter crashed in the river. It was a wreck. They all got out -- shaken, but no one really injured. They crawled and ^{climbed} ~~climored~~ out of the river to the road, walked until they came to a farm house. It had no telephone. But there was a pickup truck with the keys in it. They commandeered it and drove into Johnson City to the hospital to be checked out. Later, it turned out that the wire they hit must have been hot. For in that vicinity the farmer's clock went off at exactly 4:00 -- the moment of their wreck. Jerry said he had the pilot's superb airmanship to thank for being alive. It was frightening.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Friday, July 9, 1965

Page 4

How closely we live to danger and uncertainty, and how blessed we personally have been these last few years -- our small family of four.

Later we all got together on the big boat, and I got Elaine and A. W. around the table in the cabin to discuss the Autauga County tenants. It was a sad sociological picture. Six tenant houses on what was once a fairly prosperous cotton growing land now pitifully unproductive and inhabited by families almost impossible to help.

One of the families, Charlie Cutler, has been with us since my grandfather's time -- 1912. He and his old wife I couldn't possibly ask to move. He'll live there until he dies. We decided the best thing to do was to tell him that I expected no rent this year.

On the other hand the heads of two of the families have jobs in Selma. They do not really farm. What ^{obligation} ~~obligation~~ do I have to them. It would be such a relief if they would move. As soon as any do ^{must of} ~~-- the~~ ₁ the land has been put in pines -- and I want to put all of it in pines. But what to do about a case of an elderly Negro woman whose name I don't even know or recognize, who has moved with her two grandchildren into a ramshackle house that I ^{once} ~~rent~~ to white tenants. I am ashamed of the house. I didn't want to rent it. Where can I shove her out to? And there is another family that consists only of children. Both the mother and the father have died and there remain eight children and

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Friday, July 9, 1965

Page 5

in the words of Mr. Canterbury, "more on the way." I only assume that the older daughters are now in turn having children.

It's such a tangled ~~skane~~^{web} of declining economy, lack of skills, and hopelessness that only the most vigorous poverty program beginning at the bottom could maybe in a generation correct. Needless to say most of them are on welfare.

I could not take my thoughts or my eyes off George Reedy. It has been announced that he is leaving for an indefinite period as Press Secretary with Bill Moyers replacing him -- the implication being "temporarily." George faces an operation on his foot with prognosis uncertain. He talked to me. He was quiet, but frightened. It was later that I learned that his father lost both legs from the same trouble. In spite of Lyndon's assurances -- and I love him for reassuring George -- that he would always have a job and a place with us, there was an air of sadness in leave taking. It is true he has not filled this hellish job of Press Secretary to the satisfaction either of the press or of us. But for 15 or more years -- probably 17, isn't it? -- George has been a part of our lives -- a big plus part. He's too gentle, too philosophical to ride ~~hard~~^{hard} on them -- the press. I must call Willie Day too because I know this is a low day in her life.

We had dinner on the patio; George was on my right. And we flew home by 11:30. The kinfolks and I kissed each other all around

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Friday, July 9, 1965

Page 6

in case I didn't get up in time the next morning to say goodbye. They would be leaving early. It has been one of the happiest times of the summer visiting with them. I am ticking off the little things on my list that are my own duties or joys to do this summer. And very frequently they coincide.

Edwina -- that least sentimental of people having been head of a women's prison and worked in all the forms of penology for most of her life -- was almost sentimental as we said goodbye. She said nice things to me -- which coming from her I appreciate with special depth.