

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Friday, October 8, 1965

Page 1

It had been a short night. I left a call for 5:00. The commanding voice of the telephone jarred me awake. I put on my best version -- 5:00^{a.m.} version of Eddie ^{Senz} ~~Simms~~ makeup and the bright red Christmas robe that Lyndon had given me years ago. I woke up Luci and walked into Lyndon's room with a cup of coffee about 5:40. There followed as interesting a 30 minutes as I will ever spend. The tableau when I walked in was this: Lyndon lying on the bed, about 12 people, mostly doctors in green coats and small green caps and trousers that covered their shoes and a few nurses standing around him. They were taking an EKG. Dr. Hurst seemed to be pondering the results. Lyndon said, "Do you want me to get Dr. Calvert to come out and help you?" It is sort of a standing joke with us that harks back to 1955. And then he said, "Ken, where is he? Off conferring with the Secret Service I guess. How many men do they have out there? Eight?"

There was a strange air of detachment, of unreality, about the scene as though I were the one who had been partially anesthetized -- no solemn feeling that my husband was being carted off for major surgery.

Bill Moyers and Jack were there. Bill said something about the final vote on the Highway Improvement Bill having been 245 to 138. Lyndon looked at Jack and said, "Reckon 'ol Jack is going to write a book about us?" Bill said, "I know he is. He always has a notebook

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Friday, October 8, 1965

Page 2

in his hand." And Jack said, "You're not going to come out very well in it if I do."

There was a high sense of theatre about the whole thing and no doubt who was the director. He asked me to come close and he said, "As soon as this is over call my family. Call Lucia and Rebekah and Sam Houston and tell them how it went. And call up George Davis. I would like to have him here when I come out."

Luci came in and he asked her to read him a poem from her book of poems. She read, "On Becoming 57". And then he turned to a certain page in the little blue book of prayers that Calvin Theilman had given him and asked her to read that prayer. As she started he sat up in bed, swung his feet to the floor and then seemed to crumple. There was one horrifying moment when I thought that he must have been trying to walk to the bathroom but was dizzy from his first dose of sedative and was falling. But no, he was simply getting down on his knees and on his own power. I have never felt a room more quiet. Luci very beautifully and clearly read the prayer.

And then before I could fully grasp how shaken I was, there was a complete change of pace. Lyndon hauled himself back up into bed and said, "Reckon ol' Beagle will want to come out and see me?" And Ken said, "Last time they said we could bring him out but we would have to boil him first." Then all the room convulsed into

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Friday, October 8, 1965

Page 3

laughter.

Then they wheeled up a long cart and doctors, corpsmen, everybody assisted Lyndon onto it. And then he said, "Let's go." And I felt like cheering. I felt too like he was putting on a performance to save us from being worried.

It was about 6:15, and Luci and I went back into our room.

About 6:45 I called the Reverend George Davis and got him just as he was walking out to the door. He said he was going to come to the hospital and wait. I told him about Lyndon's words -- that he would like to have him there when he woke up, but that he -- Lyndon -- would not be down from surgery for several hours yet. But Dr. Davis said he wanted to come on anyhow.

The surgery began at 7:00. Dear Jim Cain put his head in the door three times in the course of the next two or so hours to tell me that everything was going fine. And the last time at 9:15 to say that the operation was ended -- very successful -- the gall bladder had been just as they suspected, inflamed with one stone in it, that they were very glad they got it when they did. That they had also been able to extract the kidney stone from the urethra. This meant a double operation, a longer incision, more hazard and longer recuperation. But oh what a blessed relief to know that this other ^{sword} ~~sort~~ of Damocles was also removed!

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Friday, October 8, 1965

Page 4

I felt a wave of weariness engulf me.

In the next few hours, completely and exquisitely relaxed, I talked to Lucia, to Rebekah, to Sam Houston, to Dr. Billy Graham and to Lynda. She, I regret, reached me before I could get to her.

Bill Moyers came in. By 10:00 Lyndon was partially awake, and at 11:00 had spoken to Bill.

John Connally called -- the first I believe incoming call except for Lynda's. I was glad that it was from him.

It seemed a long time before Lyndon came down from the recuperating room. It was 12:00 when they told me he was back in his room. Luci and I went in. He was quite gray and still. The color was the first thing that struck me. And then all of the tubes -- some three or four -- like a replay of 1955.

I sat beside him. He did not say anything but his hand moved a little. I reached over and took it. And there was a flicker of a smile.

Luci had to leave for class before 1:00.

The afternoon was a montage. I talked to Liz and Bess -- learned that the party had gone on at the White House til all hours. I was delighted to hear it because I had worried about those actors who had given so much and who had not had anything to eat or drink. I had told Liz and Bess earlier that Lyndon would go on to the hospital and I would go back to the White House for cast and guests, for merriment

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Friday, October 8, 1965

Page 5

and refreshments. But that was before any of us dreamed that the
would finish ^{by that} show/at 11:15, and at ~~the~~ man-killing hour I had simply fled with
Lyndon to the hospital, leaving Liz and Bess to take the initiative
for better or worse, gather up Hubert and Muriel and the cast and
go back to the great spread that the Senators had only made a dent
in.

A great many of the Congress had come strolling in, the folk
singers gave forth, and the handle-bar mustache boys shook the
chandeliers with the songs about ^{"the} old 89th."

Sometime during the afternoon Lyndon came to enough to ask
me to have Liz and Bess write a very special letter for each member
of the cast thanking them, for his signature. I could have kissed him.

I talked to Larry O'Brien to get his evaluation of the temper
of the Congress when the Highway Improvements Bill was finally
passed. He didn't exactly comfort me. He said, "Yes, there was
bitterness and wounds. But nothing that wouldn't be recovered by
January." I was trying to evaluate whether I should telephone all
the floor leaders -- just who I should. Larry suggested I talk to
Alan Boyd about whether the amendments passed would really
cripple the Bill -- just what they would mean to it and what the next
step would be -- to take it as it was, ^W have a conference committee
between the House and Senate.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Friday, October 8, 1965

Page 6

A little past 6:00 Lynda arrived in the smartest brown and white checkered suit, her eyes sparkling, looking beautiful and so attractive. She and her Daddy have a nice flirtatious camaraderie. She resents his determination to make her better groomed, to dress better, and at the same time she rises to the challenge of it.

I talked with Jesse about business at the Ranch. And Mary Rather called. I would be lonesome if there were ever a time when Mary didn't call. It is so comforting to have Jim Cain and Willis Hurst within arms reach, and John and Mary calling.

Actually, after 9:30 or so when Jim had told me the operation was a complete success I had dissolved into an exquisite state of complete relaxation. Even having hot cakes and butter and honey and bacon for breakfast, though little else the rest of the day. And then a long nap in the afternoon -- a sort of the end of the rope giving up.

Lynda and I were in and out of Lyndon's room from 6:00 on. And then about 9:30 I enjoyed the ultimate luxury of going to bed -- the earliest hour in ages.