

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Wednesday, November 3, 1965

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It was a complete departure from our days of quiet. John Grönouski and his family were coming down for him to be sworn in as Ambassador to Poland. And Larry O'Brien to be sworn in as Postmaster General in front of the Hye store.

But the morning dawned gray and misty. The plane would not be able to land at the Ranch. They would have to land at Bergstrom and drive out. That would entail more than an hour's delay.

And there were the 50 or so newspaper people arriving at our door in a few minutes. What will we do with them? Wait in the cars? Coffee in the hangar? We finally decided that we would open the doors and ask them in out of the rain -- what else? So we reduced the size of the dining room table to the smallest it would go, shoved it against the window, the chairs against the wall, put out two enormous urns of coffee and a steady stream of cookies traveled from oven to platter to table.

Lyndon conducted a tour of the rooms. Eloise, Homer and I moved from group to group chatting. And finally 11:00 arrived, bringing the Washington visitors.

First, John Grönouski was sworn in, standing in front of the fireplace, with his wife beside him. And Homer, very dignified, with sonorous voice, administering the oath.

Lyndon rearranged the two darling Grönouski children -- Julie and Stacey -- "Now wait a minute. Let's get these children in here."

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Get under that Bible so you will be in the picture."

He invested the occasion with special significance, predicting that American relations with Eastern Europe are bright with hope and disclosing that he planned to make some diplomatic appointments in the coming months calculated to give the world a true picture of this country.

He praised John Gronouski, said he was following in the footsteps of Justice Goldberg in taking on this new assignment and said his mission is to build new bridges, not just to Poland, but to the people of Eastern Europe. "He carries with him not only the official papers of an Ambassador, but my great personal confidence as well."

I could feel that he wanted to make it special for Gronouski because to leave a Cabinet Post for an Ambassadorship of less than the highest rank could well be considered a step down. But Gronouski is doing it with enthusiasm and grace.

And then we all piled into cars and drove to Hye where the Post Office is in a store with the red, white and green gingerbread trim that Doug Kiker describes as so authentically a general store that it could serve as a movie setting.

The next hour was deliciously funny -- nostalgia with a capital

"N". As one newspaper man wrote: "President Johnson's spun cracker-
hand
~~bow~~l stories while cows bellowed beside the highway and city boy

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Lawrence O'Brien joined the Cabinet as Postmaster General in a home-spun, front-porch ceremony at a country store and Post Office."

Across the street was the old gin where Lyndon had jumped into the cotton and in an adjoining field he had played baseball with the nine ^{Deike} ~~Bye~~ brothers. One of the brothers, Levi, is the current Postmaster.

As many of us as could gathered on the porch for the swearing-in which amazingly included the line where the Postmaster General promises to handle all money faithfully and properly.

Lyndon began his speech by saying that this was where he had mailed his first letter 54 years ago to his Grandmother. And that Larry O'Brien was going out to try to find that letter and deliver it.

"This little community", he said, "represents to me the earliest recollections of the America that I knew when I was a little boy."

"It was a land of farms and ranches and people who depended on those farms and ranches for a living. And that world is changing. But the price of progress must not be two Americas -- one rural and one urban, or one northern and one southern, or one Protestant and one Catholic. Larry's coming here today", Lyndon said, "reminds all of us in America that the large and the small are equally the concern of their Government and of us all." He said that he knew that Larry understood Boston, but he wanted to make sure that he also got the

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feeling and the understanding and the common touch of Hye as well.

In the little crowd that had gathered in front of us, a baby babbled every few moments, a huge cattle truck roared by, and one or two car loads of surprised passerby~~s~~ pulled over to the side of the road and got out to see what was going on here.

When it was over Lyndon said, "Let's all go inside and have some cheese and crackers." And then was my disappointment moment when I did not find the big wheel of cheese under a round box that I was expecting. But instead Velveeta and crackers wrapped in waxed paper.

In his story Doug Kiker said that the ceremony proved to be both charming and appropriate and everyone had fun besides.

I made sure that Mrs. ^{*iike*}~~Dye~~ and Mrs. Glidden, covering it for the Johnson City "Record Courier" met the stars of the day. And when everybody had shaken hands all around, I took Elva O'Brien and Mary Grönouski and their families and we drove back by the house where Lyndon was born. And then to the Ranch for bloody marys and beer and presently ^{*into*} lunch. I was proud of the dinner table -- our Mexican dishes and amber glasses. And the enchiladas I've been dreaming of since I started to reduce. ^{*c*}~~Chili~~ and pintos and tamales.

Bill Moyers came in with Bill Lawrence, Cassie Macky^{*y*} and John Pompret^{*p*} who joined us for lunch in the overflowing room.

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I had John Gronouski on my left and enjoyed very much hearing him talk about Poland and how it serves as a sort of listening post for what's going on in Red China. They recognize Red China and they recognize us. And every few months there is a confrontation between the Red Chinese and the Ambassador and the American Ambassador which is a unique opportunity to try to pierce the wall of silence between us.

He is studying Polish. His background as an economist heightens his excitement at this job.

But our guests had been up since about 5:00 Texas time, and they were anxious to start the ride back.

So as soon as lunch was over, we went out to the airstrip to bid them goodbye.

And then Lyndon got Eloise and Homer, Bill Lawrence and Cassie and ^{me} in the car with the top down. The rain had stopped but the sky was lowering. And we drove around over the Dantz place, got stuck in a draw and it took the muscles of two or three Secret Service men and considerable skill on Lyndon's part as driver to get us roaring up the opposite slippery bank -- minus I am sure a part of the underpinnings of the car.

Back at the house I went in for a nap. This morning I had slept until 8:00. It's odd that in this quiet period neither Lyndon or I have

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slept very well. This was the latest and the best I had slept since arriving.

I had a short nap and then talked to Lynda and to Luci, signed mail and wrote notes.

And then went in the living room and lit the fire, my most delightful companion.

Lyndon had had a long drive with Bill Moyers and the three newspaper people. And he brought them in for dinner -- relaxed, companionable -- everybody in a good humor.

In discussing foreign affairs, he said to one of them -- Pompret I believe -- "The truth of the business is that this country is in trouble because we cannot make things any longer bigger and better than other countries. We have put Germany and Japan back in business and they are selling their heads off."

At dinner when Lyndon saw the spinach come in, brought by the Filipino waiter, he gave a grimace and said, "Do I have to eat that stuff again?" By his own orders he has been having it two meals every day. The little Filipino waiter, affable and anxious to please, but not understanding much English, hastily grabbed it up and said, "Tapioca?" We all roared with laughter. One word I am sure they are learning from their sojourn with Lyndon, and that is "Tapioca".

Lyndon's session with newspaper people -- the sessions that

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he's had -- have been very long and relaxed ones indeed.

It was an early night. I was glad to end this full day by 10:30.