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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Friday, February 25, 1966

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This was a good day from beginning to end. Up early, seven o'clock, coffee and juice, and then off at 8 with Liz and my straw bag (they always accompany me), on one of the many trips, <sup>2</sup>that had been such vivid parts of my time in the White House.

<sup>one</sup>  
This <sup>one</sup>was to Tuscaloosa, Alabama, to address a Leadership Conference of Women, sponsored by the American Association of University Women, and the Alabama Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, and the Alabama Federation of Women's Clubs, and the League of Women Voters, taking place at the University - and to a considerable degree, I expect, aided and abetted by Dr. Frank Rose.

The setting of the trip was not without its drama. Tuscaloosa is the home town of the imperial wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, Mr. Robert Shelton, and he had issued some sort of statement complaining about the University of Alabama allowing such <sup>"Pinks"</sup>~~Reco~~ tripe, <sup>"</sup>as my speech, <sup>9</sup>on the campus.

And I was also coming about a day after the announcement <sup>that</sup> Mrs. George Wallace was going to run, to succeed her husband.

I had a few kind words to say about women taking an active part in citizenship, in government - and I knew the newspaper women would light on this, like a <sup>duck</sup>~~light~~ on a June bug - <sup>9</sup>to answer simply, that I never take part in Democratic primaries.

So, if the stage was set for drama, <sup>9</sup>for the newspaper people, merely because it was going into the south, <sup>9</sup>by the wife of a liberal President, who

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herself has ties there, the day was only set with prospects of delight for me, and I was right.

It began with beautiful sunshine. It was filled with warmth, and interest and happiness all day through.

This time, we had a chartered plane, full of newspaper women - Frances Lew<sup>me</sup>~~en~~, and Helen Thomas, the regulars; Winzola McLendon; Jim Field of the Birmingham News, our only man, except for some cameramen. Another southerner, Margaret Shannon, of the Atlanta Constitution. Three members of the radio-TV media, Fay Wells, and Barbara Coleman, and Betty Lee Hanson. Norma Milligan of News Week; two from USIA, Josephine Ripley of the Christian Science Monitor, and Isabel<sup>le</sup> Shelton, and Nan Robertson, one of the most attractive of them all. Sometimes I think I spend more time with, and know best, newspaper women than anybody in town - and mostly I like them.

Between hot rolls and coffee, I did an interview with Betty Lee Hanson on tape. Reviewed all the events of the day with Liz, and read my speech.

Then at 11 o'clock, we arrived at the Tuscaloosa Airport. There was tall, handsome Dr. Frank Rose and his wife to meet me; the Mayor of Tuscaloosa, Mr. Von Tassel, his wife, with a lovely bouquet of charmingly arranged spring flowers; and Mayor Quarrels of Northport.

The fence was lined with several hundred people, lots and lots of Girl Scouts and Brownies. Later I learned why. A few negro women, waving United States flags, faces of all ages and types, were all smiling. I shook

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hands with a part of a fence full, and then we drove to the campus, <sup>to</sup> the white pillared mansion, <sup>that</sup> serves as a residence for the President of the University.

~~But~~ The welcoming ceremony, ~~that~~ took place on the balcony. — What a superb setting! The house overlooks the spacious quadrangle; there are enormous trees, going back to its founding days of 1830, probably. And ~~the~~ surrounding it, dignified, red brick, rather Georgian type, stands the older buildings, the very heart of the University. There was a band and a few hundred students. The only sign I saw was a double one which proclaimed, on one end, "We support LBJ on Viet-Nam". And on the other, "Draft Lady Bird for Governor of Alabama."

Dr. Rose introduced me as "the University's most famous ex-student," <sup>in</sup> ~~and~~ no wise deserved, <sup>by</sup> my six weeks term there one summer time, but a mighty pleasant beginning.

And then two very fine looking young people, a young man who is the President of the student body for men, and an attractive young woman who is President of the women students. Segregation still exists in that field, evidently.

There were flowers, and nice words of welcome - the million dollar band playing their school song, and then we went inside to see the high ceilinged, <sup>of</sup> elegance of the old house.

It fascinates me. It was built in 1840's when there were only several dozen students at the University. They planned ahead, those ~~early~~ Alabamians!

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It reminds me of what Thomas Jefferson said about the White House. Something like - "Big enough for two Popes and one Emperor, planned for the ages."

It was one of the two buildings to survive the Civil War, when everything else was burned.

We walked over to the Child Development Center, where Head Start teachers are getting on-the-job training, so to speak, as well as regular students at the University, who are preparing to become teachers.

The cameramen swarmed, there were delightful potentials for pictures, a room full of five year olds seated at low tables, in tiny chairs, having their lunch or listening to stories. They and I are equally shy with each other.

The young teachers were ~~an~~ extraordinary attractive <sup>by</sup> of young women, so were most of the young folks I met on the campus. Dr. Rose, it seems, has a contract to train the Head Start in not only Alabama, but several adjoining states, that have not been so quick to seize Federal opportunities, in this line.

Back at the mansion, we had a glass of sherry and talked about the University. "Is he having any problems like they have in California - long hair, way out, rebellious students?" Yes, some, very little really. The only thing he's told them they can't do, is having a Communist speak to them on the campus. One thing they've done, is supply more blood for the Armed

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Forces in Viet-Nam, than any other University. I supposed he meant according to size, but I was proud of it in any case.

The student body was about 12,000; the tuition marvelously low, and there was a President's fund, which enabled him to help through school, poor but promising students.

I was enormously impressed with him - the soft spoken, able, assured, tough man, who kept up the closest kind of a liaison with the Federal government, to immediately get for his University any programs, grants or help being offered. In return, <sup>he</sup> makes about two trips to Washington a month, he says, on Civil Rights business.

There was a centerpiece of the most beautiful camellias I've ever seen, in every shade of pink, white, rose, red - some as large as salad plates. Spring is not quite beginning in Alabama - there had been snow just a few days ago. The camellias in the back yard were coming out, and I'd seen a few vagrant jonquils.

The nice young woman came to do my hair. I put on my green silk dress, mentally counting the numbers of the times, dozens, in which these same newspaper women had seen me in it, and went forth to make my speech, feeling somewhat braver because of the hours Mrs. Provenson and I have put in on it.

Dr. Rose escorted me up to the platform of the large gym. It was rather overwhelmingly full, Alabama women leaders on the main floor, and in the balcony, the women students who had been asked. There was only a sprinkling

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of negro faces, and as I looked around for cousins, alas, I saw only one - Patsy's mother, very pretty and dignified in a flowered hat.

This auditorium was the one where a famous confrontation had taken place, or I was told, between Governor Wallace and Nicholas Katzenbach. They stared across a chalk line at each other, after Wallace's statement that he would stand in the door and block any negro student. Now there <sup>are</sup> is something between 50 and 200 negro students.)

The authorities tell me they are not quite sure how many there are since there's no little box to check on your entrance papers.

I got through the speech, rather well I thought, <sup>fighting</sup> ~~fighting~~ the battle of glasses all the way, finding myself actually shaking at some points, because I was intense about what I was saying, believed it, and wanted them to like it, wanted somehow my voice to carry enough selling message to get them to like it. I was quite pleased, when they began to clap, when I mentioned that Lister Hill, and once again, though not so much, for John Sparkman.

It's always a moment of enormous relief to me, when it is over. And this time I thought - well over.

Back at the Mansion there were pictures with the Conference leaders, and then I stood in line for nearly hours - there's nothing like a Southern receiving line! We visit, I like it, there were some delightful little vignettes. One woman who confided to me that her ~~neighbor~~ name was just as difficult as mine - "Sunset" - I thought that was a bit Freudian of her parents.

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The League of Women Voters told me that they had set up pole tax booths in supermarkets, and in the lobbies of schools, where PTA meetings were being held. "We have to go where the people are." What a good service! I was impressed. Ever so many told me how much they liked my speech - I don't know whether it was typical southern politeness, because I am so often quite openly sure that what I said was mediocre. This time I chose to believe them and basked in the warmth of approval and friendship.

One lady said ~~she was~~ her husband was Edwina's doctor, and they were going to take good care of her - she was going to be alright.

Quite a few said they knew Carolyn Johnson, or the Patillos; one was a close friend of Elaine's. A nun came down the line, holding a single jonquil, which she said, "I swiped this flower for you from the campus."

Over and over, the most constant repeated rhythm - "We liked your Beautification Program - We're doing this - We're planning that project in our Community." And then came the most startling thing of all. Suddenly a woman in front of me said "The Lyndon Baines Johnson Library is going to be built on my parents home"- and slipped a letter into my hands.

The newspaper women had been gathered behind me, taking notes on what people said. I could just feel them scurrying away, like when you throw out a handful of corn in the chicken yard, and all the chickens run to it. In startled amazement, I murmured something and she handed me a letter and disappeared into the crowd, pursued by my friends of the press.

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Of all the things we thought might happen in Alabama, this would have been the last one.

And then finally, one cute lady leaned over and said, "I've got good news for you. The line is almost over."

It had been beautifully handled and I'd enjoyed every moment.

Mrs. Rose took me in the library, where her cute little daughter, Elizabeth, brought me some refreshments and then in a few minutes, we were off to the airport, but first with a drive around the campus, Dr. Rose explaining to me about the divisions of the University. The Medical School In Birmingham; the main campus here, the auxiliary at Huntsville; how well he has his pulse on the future of Alabama.

It had been interesting to notice the number of Huntsville women who had come down the line, more than from any other town, I believe. It had also been interesting to meet, <sup>2</sup>one lone man whose name was Meadows, who had the position of head of the Board of Education, I gathered, and who is from Lowndes County.<sup>1</sup> He seemed on very good terms with Dr. Rose, and I wonder what kind of terms he's on with Lowndes County.

As we drove around, it became more and more apparent to me that Dr. Rose somehow manages to run the University without being too beholden either to the Alabama legislature, or appropriations. This is partly solved by the tenacity,<sup>2</sup> and intelligence with which he searches out every Federal source of aid, <sup>us</sup> by a Board of Trustees or Regents. Reason for the latter,



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I discovered, is that back in the 1900's, some Trustee had been found making off with school funds. So they abolished the system of the Governor appointing the Trustees. From then on it was a self-perpetuating body, with a term of twelve years and the Trustees chose a successor, when one's term is about to expire, apparently with very good results.

And then I found why there had been so many Girl Scouts and Brownies at the airport. One of the ladies just told me that they had staged a clean-up campaign, particularly on the route that we would travel from the airport to the University, so when I arrived at the airport, I said thank you, thank you, thank you, to dozens and dozens of Brownies and Girl Scouts. And there was the most adorable one there, who made me a charming little goodbye speech and presented me with the flowers.

My favorite picture of the day is her giving me a kiss on the cheek.

By 5:30 we were airborne, full of stories, relaxed, ready for a drink, and I exhilarated that the day had gone so marvelously. The newspaper women crowded around, they acted as though we had been going into some alien land in Alabama, where they had expected all sort of dramatic turmoil. As far as I was concerned, it turned out just as I expected, and wanted.

I was at home, and happy to be there. I was proud of the calibre of women who attended, the faces that came down the line, and I felt they liked me, so I was expansive and jubilant, as we flew home, but tired - not really as Libby Cater was, who arrived at 10 o'clock, changed into dinner clothes and headed for the Potomac Marching Society, the best dancing group in town.

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We arrived at the White House <sup>l</sup>passed 9:30 and I went immediately to find Lyndon. He was in his office, the little one, with Dick Russell, whom we persuaded to come home and have dinner with Lyndon, while I listened to them.

It's a near miracle, he looked so well and strong, and last year he was so critically ill.

I was in bed by 11, still jubilant with my day's work. There's nothing like hard work well done, to make the satisfaction, even the sort of feeling of euphoria.

I'm always glad to find Dick Russell with Lyndon. Whatever lack of red hot enthusiasm he may have for the great society, when the ~~growing~~ going's rough, and Lyndon needs the advice of an old hand, a wise old hand, Dick Russell will usually be there.

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