

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Thursday, March 10, 1966 WND

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I had coffee and juice with Lyndon about 8:30, but these days I feel like I'm part of a staff meeting.

Jake, Jack Valenti, Marvin Watson, Bob Fleming, and swiftly in and out, Bill Moyers. They come into his room when he first wakes up, and while he drinks cup after cup of tea, give reports to him, asks decisions, analyze the business of his day. Yesterday's disasters and triumphs, and the appointments for the day. It is a morning pattern of intense mental strain, totally unrelated to any luxurious idea of breakfast in bed.

And I await my time to get a word in edgeways.

Today was Spanish, so I walked out early and on the way, encountered Liz, ~~just as~~ fresh from the Big Bend country, where she'd spent four days. Her thumbnail description - "It's not Marlboro Country - it's roll-your-own country." I think Bull Durham country might fit it. She said, "Folks out there drive 75 miles to the super market. I tell you, the Lord just overbuilt." Just enough to whet my appetite for hearing all about it.

And I dashed off to Spanish, where amazingly enough, I am one of the most faithful of those who attend. June White, Ann Celebrezze, Grace Dodd, Abigail McCarthy, Bethene Church, and Mercedes Douglass ^{Richols} ~~Kates~~, at whose house we meet. Also I am the least prepared. I had studied 15 minutes and it showed. But it's too much fun to quit, and I always plan to study harder next time.

It was a day of doing things I wanted to, after three days of desk work,

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standing to get innumerable hems pinned up, about 18 dresses in two days, and an infinitude of household chores. And so, after Spanish, I went to Rosemary Smather's apartment, to have lunch with her and Betty Talmadge, and Louella Dirksen, and play bridge. Bids are wilder than going to the horse races!

This is the third or fourth house that I've known Rosemary in, now that her boys are gone. It's a small, attractive apartment, high up in the Shoreham, and Rosemary is cooking again, She says, "just like a bride." Delicious lunch, Talmadge ham, with a poached egg with some Hollondaise sauce on top, and a white wine, and then a dessert made by Betty - strawberry meringue. How neighborly, how Southern - for one of the guests to bring in the dessert.

And then we settled down for bridge. They're pretty regular and quite excellent players. I am neither, but one who enjoys it. My hands were so consistently bad, that I was determined to play again soon, with them, to show I really could play.

In between, there were snatches of conversation, about the wedding in Betty Talmadge's family. Betty, who is much too active and efficient, to have a taste for the infinite details, that some women enjoy in selecting clothes, asked by her prospective daughter-in-law and her mother, to accompany them to decide on the bridesmaids dresses, and the brides dress. After spending countless hours, in the bridal shop, with the young lady and her mother, Mrs. Welch, discussing every tuck and gusset, and fabric, and shade of color,

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Betty emerged exhausted. The other ladies had, apparently, loved every moment, and as they approached the entrance, there was the manager, Mr. Rich, whom Betty knew. Her introduction went as follows. "Mr. Rich, this is Mrs. Rich."

I'm sure I shall understand this much more sympathetically, somewhere between now and August 6th.

And Louella Dirksen told us that their house in Florida, apartment rather, in which they spend a great many weeks of the year, and ~~xxx~~ ^{of} being snowed in for three days, during the big storm this winter, out in their country place. There was a phone, and electricity, but there was the white wilderness insulating them from the world, for three whole days!

Back at the White House, I did some recordings for Storer Broadcasting, for their radio public service spots on beautification, a generous gift on their part, but far from sterling quality work on mine, I'm afraid. Nobody made me do my best as John ^{Secondary!} ~~secondary~~ did.

And then I went down to the Green Room, where Joe Frantz, whose had a long love affair with the Big Ben country, met with me and Liz, beside the fire, with a scotch, to discuss our trip. The old folk tales of Jefferson Davis and the camel trains, that were to haul the Army supplies across the desert country; the ^{Fossils} ~~fossils~~ that can be found; a three toed horse so many millions of years old I'm afraid to say. The absolute miles of mountains and wilderness in which it is quite possible to get lost and die before you're found. And the Rio Grande, blue green at this time of year, Liz said, but so shallow

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in some places that as you ride the river raft, you can feel the pebbles underneath you just like you were on a Stauffer couch!

It was an interesting and intriguing hour, and then I went bowling. My fourth time this week. My scores have varied from 150 odd to the upper 90's, but they're consistently getting better.

There was a brief time upstairs for a little recording and then to call my neglected houseguests, Jim and Ida May Caim and Oveta Hobby, to join me for a drink in the west hall. They're here to be briefed tomorrow before they leave for Viet-Nam on Saturday. We spent more than two hours together, Jim and Ida May talked about bird watching in the Big Bend country; the coming wedding in their family and the past one. And Oveta described to me, an exquisite Waterford chandelier which she would like to give to the White House. I shall go looking from room to room, for the just right place!

They were both eager and excited about their trip and both with arms distended from six shots.

About 10 o'clock, I began phoning Lyndon's office, hoping to get him over to join us. He'd had a murderous day, meeting with the Leadership in the Yellow Oval room, that had lasted for several hours. I had met him after eight, going back to his office, and I think they had begun at five upstairs.

It was ten minutes of eleven when he arrived, and we sat down for a very family affair fare of stuffed peppers and cornbread.

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Oveta is one of those rare women, who is polished by the years, not defeated by them; and Ida May one of those thoroughly happy women who knows she is loved and has done well.

It was a pleasant evening, though how Lyndon could have opened his mouth after the day he's lived through, I don't know. But he gave us a fascinating thumbnail sketch of it. Problems of the Guatemala election, the turmoil in the Dominican Republic, it's like a string of firecrackers; always another one going off; De Gaulle's ultimatums; and the tightrope Wilson walks. In the course of it, he says, "Dean Rusk is too good a man to be in this bunch of cutthroats."

We talked about Soapy Williams successor. It would be hard to believe seven or eight years ago, that we would have become so sympatico with Soapy Williams, that his departure would be a real loss.

And then Lyndon told the long story of one of the few times he has been roundly defeated in politics - by Albert Thomas, it was. He said, "Albert Thomas is more responsible than any man, except Lee Oswald, for me being President of the United States." It happened in late 1940, after Lyndon, in one of the biggest bursts of effort in his life, and at President Roosevelt's request, handled the office/for reelecting Democratic Congressmen and Senators. It had been a great success; he had done the job; he was a hero with all the ones that got elected, or the newly elected Democrats. As a result, he was successful in getting a second place on the Appropriations Committee ^{tabed} for a Texan. He intended to try for it, thought that he

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had all the backing. Thought that it was sure that he could get it, and then Albert Thomas decided that he wanted it. Lyndon had met more than his match. Lyndon did not get the Appropriations Committee seat, because Albert had two or three months seniority, having been sworn in in early January of '37 and Lyndon was sworn in shortly after April 10th - and that changed the course of his life. He could not go on to a more strategic spot in the House of Representatives; he would run in the Senate, so from then on he was headed for the Senate, and other destinations followed in line.

I simply cannot keep up with him, physically, and a little after twelve I said goodnight. He was going to escort the guests to their rooms and talk a little longer.

I had a bit of a massage, it was one o'clock, and I felt sleepy enough to turn out the light.

One of the bits of work I had done during the day, a long talk with Walter Washington about the Beautification plans. The District of Columbia, and I know he must be a driving force in having brought it about, is going to receive \$480,000. Federal grant, this next year. The Department of Highway and Traffic will plant street trees. And Washington's Public Schools will landscape 22 schools; and the National Capital Housing Authority will do landscaping in play areas and patios in six public housing projects.

An interesting commentary of all the cities in the country, the first three to qualify for some of these beautification funds, were New Haven where

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Richard Lee is Mayor. — This should be a surprise to no one. — Pittsburgh,
and the District of Columbia.

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