

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Monday, December 12, 1966

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Monday, December 12th, erupted into action after the cave-like quietness of Saturday and Sunday.

Lyndon was up early and at work, and I spent the morning signing Christmas presents -- Asian pictures, old White House prints. By mid-morning Liz and Nash Castro and Mr. West and Mr. Tolson who has taken over a phase of Nash's job with the National Park Service as overseer at the White House, met in the West Hall over coffee to talk about the sales of "The Living White House" -- how were they doing? I am concerned because the sale of the "Guide Book" ^{has} have been going down in '66, and so have the visitors to the White House. I had a count done on the number of days -- visitor days -- that it was closed because of ceremonies in the East Room, Press Conferences, State luncheons. They had grown. This house is not ^{just} a museum. It must serve its purposes as both the home and the working center of the President of the United States. But I can't help but feel sad about families who plan their vacations, coming from Idaho and Vermont and Florida, and get here only to find that it is closed that day to visitors. All the steps we can take, scheduling cooperation with the West Wing, getting a tent that will make the Rose Garden more useful for ceremonies next Spring and Summer -- all of those have been taken. I hope that the "Living White House" ^{will} to raise the sale of our books. I am proud of it. I feel too that I have had something to do with bringing it into being, and very much whether we get those drapes in the State Dining Room and in the great hall and maybe a few more works of art. Those depend on the

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sales of the books from the White^{House}/Historical Association. So we had this meeting. They had gone on sale on November 28th -- the backlog of orders of 4,000. The sales had been brisk since then. We thought of other ways to make them more a part of Christmas giving. A special table with Christmas decorations on it with a handsome package of books about the White House. The "Guide Book", "The Presidents", "The Living White House", the books to be sold at a kiosk in the Ellipse on the way to where the crowds go for the Christmas pageant. Lynda could make her purchases there. Everybody had ideas. Nash, so abundantly. And we ended with a feeling that we've gotten something done.

I lunched alone at my desk. Always when I return from the Ranch I go on a black coffee for breakfast, scrambled eggs and half piece of toast and half piece of bacon for lunch, ^{or} And steak for dinner -- diet. My strength of will lasts about three days. And that much helps.

In the afternoon I had a meeting with Jim Ketchum about some of the furniture affairs of the house, dictated and went bowling. And then downstairs for a preview of the Christmas decorations. That was when my heart began to sing. They were so beautiful! I hope I have the grace to know that every day I spend here is a privilege. And never more/so than at Christmas.

The Christmas tree was a dream of toy soldiers and drums and cookies and strings of real popcorn -- so colorful and old fashioned and gay.

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And everywhere the woodland smell of balsam or spruce or fir. And the brightest holly on the mantels and mistletoe from Texas hanging from the light fixtures. I was still in love with Mrs. Howard's crèche -- nostalgic for it. But this one which Jane Englehard had so generously provided and Mrs. Parish had put together had very wisely gone quite the other way. It was contemporary -- gold fabric and papier-mache against a background of twigs and tiny sparkling lights -- beautiful in its own way.

So I went back upstairs singing. Jean Louis came for my comb-out. And I put on my brightest dress -- the new pink one with the beads around the neck for the party that was the real beginning of the Christmas season -- for the press women of Washington.

There was a buffet supper for the 611 women of the American Newspaper Womens Club, the Womens National Press Club, and American Women in Radio and Television and all of their honorary members.

First, I posed with the Presidents of these three organizations in front of the Christmas tree, giving to each of them a copy of "The Living White House". Liz is not one to overlook a chance like this to make the book known to a lot of people!

Lynda came in looking absolutely glowing in a deeper pink than mine -- terribly smart -- her dimples flashing and said, "I just wanted to ~~we~~ show you I am not on Treasure Island, or wherever it is, and I am not married."

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(There had been a story in the paper I think the day before that she and George had married and were honeymooning on Treasure Island.)

I stood in line and met everybody and felt terribly gay and Christmasy the whole time. There were the regulars like Betty Beale and Nancy Dickerson and Muriel Dobbin and Karen Klinefelter and lively Wauhilla La Haye. Of course the "twins", Frances ^{Lewin} ~~Louin~~ and Helen Thomas. And Hazel Markely. And sweet Dorothy McCardle and Winzola McLendon. And ^{Ch} ~~non~~ Joel Ripley whom I admire so much. And Nan Robertson who does some of the best writing I think, and Isabelle Shelton.

And there were some newcomers to the field -- ^{Imelda} ~~Imelda~~ Dickson, Scotty Lanahan.

What a field Washington is with that kind of chatty social column!

And among the honorary members, there were two ~~grandpas~~ grandams of the town, Mrs. Robert Low Bacon and Mrs. Robert Woods Bliss. How many Administrations? How much Washington history have they seen? There were a good many women in Government among the honorary members -- Eva Adams, Director of the Mint; Mrs. Carol Brewster, the Senator's wife, looking very lovely; Dr. Frances Kelsey of the Food and Drug Administration; Katie Louchheim of the State Department; Esther Peterson; and Nona Quarles, whose husband used to be Secretary of the Navy I believe, and who now is Public Relations Officer at Dulles Airport. She is always so nice. And seeing her makes a bell toll in my mind/and ^{about widows} what becomes of them -- especially in this town. And Dr. Ellen Winston

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of HEW. And Kay Graham and Kay Halley came in together causing me to trip over their names. And there was Lynda's boss, Christine Sadler Coe with warm words about Lynda which I earnestly believe are sincere and made me very happy.

And of course there were plenty of old-timers. They have time to come to something like this. I too shall some day be in their ranks. There was Bess Ferman Armstrong, who has been writing about the White House for at least three decades, and ^{Carrie} ~~Cory~~ Davis, an honorary member. And Mae Thompson Evans from the Roosevelt days. And Doris Fleeson whom I can't help liking in spite of a fairly frequent slicing up. And dear Esther ^{Freeman?} Freeman. I was delighted to see her among the associate members. And Isabelle Griffin who is certainly an old-timer to me. I met her in the 30's at Mildred Douglas' house. And Rose McKee who used to cover Lyndon on the Hill. And Hope Rydings Miller of Diplomat -- one of the Speaker's "girl friends." And Esther Van Wagner Tufty, whom I had met at Liz' wedding. And May Craig, almost the dean of them all.

I had a chance to tell pretty, lively ^{Bonnie} Angelo how much I liked the little verse she had sent me along with the Christmas present of a holly-trimmed doormat. It was a montage of our trips of the last year and ended up, "We like this beat". And all in all I liked this crowd. I find I know so many of them and by and large I've gotten better from them than I deserve. And I find them very interesting company.

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So it was a gay, happy party, and the Christmas spirit was in the air.

The most delightful thing of all was the 60 members of the American Light Opera Company dressed in their choir robes singing Christmas carols from the stairs.

Lyndon came in and spent 10 or 15 minutes ~~xxx~~ greeting and smiling and walking around. We had our picture made with the singers. Sometime during the evening they gave me a Christmas present -- a paperweight -- a rectangular block of clear plastic in which was imbedded actual lead type with the message, "To Mrs. Lyndon B. Johnson - B.A., B.J. - You're Our Type", plus the Club name and the date. This from the Womens National Press Club. I was delighted.

There were two of my benefactors from beautification too -- Polly Logan and Mrs. Rose Zalles.

Heavily-laden buffet tables were spread in the State Dining Room and the East Room, and drinks were passed. It was one of those parties where everybody seemed to have the spirit you wanted to create -- laughter, gaiety, Christmas.

Eloise came in with Lyndon, and of course immediately found lots of people who were her friends. She is very popular.

It was 8:45 before I went upstairs and joined Lyndon and Eloise for dinner. Work and activity -- our natural milieu -- has ended the gray mood

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of the weekend, at least for now. And I was basking in that happy feeling that every woman has who thinks she has just finished a good party.

Later I went down to the doctor's office to try the wax bath for my right hand. It would be too laughable to have to give up at just 54 the rheumatism arthritis, too unlike everything I've thought of myself as being. And then a massage and to sleep.