

MEMORANDUM

WHD

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Tuesday, December 13, 1966

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It was a full, vivid, exciting day at the White House. We were up early and I held myself resolutely to my desk signing Christmas pictures. Some time during the morning I became aware snow was falling. It is the most magic experience. I love it. I shall know I am really getting old when my heart doesn't beat a little faster and a smile naturally break out when it starts snowing! Soon the magnolia trees right outside my window were heavy with the white burden, and the whole South Lawn was blanketed. The sky was gray -- it looked as though it would never stop. And I wondered what this would do to our party tonight. Well, it did it.

I handled a good deal of business. I talked to Lee White about a speech, ^{to} Dillon Ripley about a painting offered to the White House, and to John Walker about a bust that someone wishes to give us. To Margery and Jesse Kellom concerning something very important to me -- a present for Beth's wedding. No, she doesn't have all her silver, Margery said. So it will be place settings with her initials and ours on the back. Then to Roy White about the cherry trees that Mary Lasker is going to give me for my birthday. ^{he} Doris and I talked about the possibility of my contributing the planting to the new Post Office that is to go up in ^{the Kennedy} ~~the~~ ^{the} And I put in a call to Brooke Astor. She is very interested in where the Temple of Dendure will go -- to the Metropolitan she hopes. What a variety of grist for my mill!

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Ashton and I worked at my desk. And Bess and I. And then Liz lunched with ~~me~~^{me} on a tray in my room. And then I went to sleep, with the snow still falling. And my heart was sinking about our party tonight. I had hoped for it to be one of the most glamorous we had ever had.

A little before 6:00, Bess and I went over the list. Yes, there were a good many cancellations. We invited some last-minute staff people. And then I began to get dressed. An elaborate up-hair-do by Jean Louis. He is so amusing and takes such pride in turning me out looking as well as I can. I decided to wear the terrificly elegant Philippine dress, beaded from top to bottom, and the tear-drop beads -- sort of an iridescent green -- very lovely and very heavy.

Lynda was getting an up-hair-do too to go with her long apricot ~~brocade~~^{brocade} ~~brocade~~ with the sable around the hem. It had been a real triumph in California last April.

A little before 8:00 we met the Roger Stevens and Hubert and Muriel and Lyndon's very special favorite -- Gregory Peck and his lovely wife. And towering, humorcus Rene d'Harnoncourt and his wife. And the William ~~Percival~~^{Percival}, and Leonard Bernstein, in the Yellow Oval Room upstairs.

The setting was Christmas and the theme was the arts. But very much of the talk was about "How did you get here?" Actually the snow storm cost us a great many guests that I felt real sad about. Van Cliburn, Marian Anderson -- she's one I had especially advocated for the Arts Council.

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Edward ^{Albee} ~~Uly~~ By. But they all furnished such lively conversation and gave us that feeling of being successful pioneers in having made it through the storm -- a sort of a cozy feeling.

The guests of honor were the members of the Arts Council -- 26 of them, including the outgoing and the incoming members. And others in the world of drama and literature and music and architecture and the dance.

From the Court there was naturally the Fortas' -- the most art-minded I think.

And from the Cabinet, the McNamaras, the Wirtz' and the Gardners.

— Senator Javits who had done pioneer work unsuccessfully on an Arts Council during Eisenhower's day, arrived with Mrs. Claiborne Pell, whose husband is out of town. And lo and behold, before the evening was over, Mrs. Javits arrived -- coming ~~on~~ on a train and delayed by the snow -- much the topic of conversation among the newspaper women for coming at all in view of her statements about Washington's lack of cultural interest.

— The Frank Thompsons -- faithful supporter of Arts in the House -- were there.

And from the staff, ^{the} Bob Kintners, who naturally knew a lot of the guests. And the Bill Moyers and the Harry McPhersons, who had been Cultural Assistant in the State Department.

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Roger Stevens, who is Chairman of the National Council on the Arts, I regarded as ~~the~~ rather the father of the whole evening. ⁱⁿ Although I was happy to adopt it. This world, particularly the drama, interests me and has furnished me with many happy hours. And I like to meet the people who make it up. But besides Roger, there was Dr. and Mrs. Barnaby Keeney, Chairman of the National Council on the Humanities, and the Harold Howes, he is the Commissioner of Education.

Inevitably there were the comparisons with this evening and some of the glamorous Kennedy evenings. And it came off quite well. It was star-studded in spite of the snow, and full of funny stories.

Duke Ellington cancelled when he lost his luggage coming down from New York. Bess told him to come on ~~and~~ in whatever he had on. He actually got a tux from somewhere, but arrived in a pink shirt -- the like of which has not been seen, but was just right for the mood. The Howard Tallmans, when they got to the airport and found that no more planes were flying, decided to take a taxi, and they came all the way from New York in a taxi with the Harold Princes^s -- he's a producer. And Eleanor Lambert changed into evening clothes on the train and came direct from Union Station. And Mike Nichols had left Los Angeles at dawn, the storm detoured him to Pittsburgh, he phoned us that he couldn't come. But then he hopped a train and got to the Mayflower at 9:30 and into a tux and arrived at the White House about 10:00, still wearing loafers.

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Oh, it was a gay evening. I had seated Erich Leinsdorf, my very old and dear friend, on my right. And Leonard Bernstein, one of the most interesting looking and talking men, -- I like him very much -- on my left. The others at my ~~a~~ table were Agnes ^{DeMille} ~~Dameil~~, Mrs. Walter Prudie the choreographer, and Roger and Eleanor Lambert and McGeorge Bundy -- my favorite in all Administrations. And Mrs. Halprin, the wife of a new member on the Arts Council -- a landscape architect. And John Fisher, Editor of Harpers. And Jean Dalrymple, ^{Chap} (Mrs. Philip DeWitt Gender) of the New York City Light Opera and Drama Company whose book "September Child" I had just finished, always very helpful to conversation, not that anyone ever needs it with her because she is as lively as a sparkler.

We had asked Betty Beale to represent the press. The David Brinkleys were there together and looking radiant and their friends relieved. And Art critic, Dick Coe, and his wife Christine Sadler. And Luci's great friend, Rebecca ^K ~~H~~ ^{ness}. I had lots of news about Luci to tell her, but not the important news.

Lyndon had two of the most beautiful women at his table -- Elizabeth Ashley, ~~and~~ an outgoing member of the Arts Council, and Jean ^{Vanderbilt} ~~Vanbilt~~ who is doing a play now herself, following in her daughter's footsteps -- Heidi has been acting since she was about 15.

Other new members of the Arts Council, Jimilu Mason who has done the very successful bust of Lyndon -- a triumph of patience, and Dr. Donald Weismann of the Art Department of the University of Texas. Our kindly,

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gentle friend, Rudolf Serkin. I am so drawn to him. The actor Sidney Poitier, and author Harper Lee added to the galaxy of stars. Isaac Stern had regretted, he had a concert in Philadelphia. His wife came. And before the evening was over, here came Isaac, having rushed straight from the concert to the station, caught a train, and arrived about 11:00.

Well, it was a party to remember. These were not Lyndon's people, and yet he made a splendid toast. He said he wants American art to be enjoyed at the grass-root level, just as it is by the top-hat crowd. If it can really be assessed -- and I hope I shall live to see it assessed -- I think his Administration has done about as much for art as any. I wonder how it will be measured?

After dinner, which ended with a baked Alaska entitled, "Flaming Muses,"

We adjourned to the Green Room and the Red Room and the Hall for coffee and liqueurs. And then I introduced Gregory Peck but with a few words of thanks to the Arts Council -- a thumbnail summary of their achievements, ^{you} their trips have sparked new life into community theatres and brought 16 professional theatres into being. As a result of ^{you} their activities touring groups of dance, opera, and ballet have been initiated. The President and I are so grateful, etc. And then Gregory Peck introduced the entertainment, the act from "The School for Scandal - ^{no - but recall name} Geradin" by the APA Repertory Company, delightfully costumed, ^{Ch. Tape - wrong word} baited of course with "the more things change the more they are the same." And later Tesel

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and Sopeta were hilarious in their predicament.

And then Alexander Schneider and his Chamber Music group entertained us with a serenade by Dvorak. I draw a blank at Chamber music. The other guests seemed to really enjoy it. I was very proud of our program itself with a quotation from John Adams in 1780 saying approximately this: "I must study politics and war, so that my sons can study mathematics and commerce and agriculture so that their sons can study painting and poetry and music."

After the program, the music in the rotunda swung into dance tempos and I found myself trying to grow a foot in order to dance with Rene d'Harnoncourt, and chatting a moment with lovely Maria Talchief and following Lynda proudly with my eyes as she moved with so much gaiety yet dignity among all these people who are really very much her people.

Lyndon went upstairs a little before one, and I stayed a good while longer. And there were sounds merriment from below until well after two. It had been a glowing evening from the beginning when the American Light Opera Company had serenaded us all once more from the stairs with their Christmas carols on through the last hilarious story of how I got here."