

MEMORANDUM

WHD
THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Friday, December 16, 1966

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The merry mood of Christmas which began Monday with the newspaper women's party and continued through the Arts Council dinner and the party for the staff and the lighting of the Christmas tree Thursday is dissipating under the onslaught of hostile articles.

Yesterday was the announcement of Bill Moyers leaving. The Manchester book is dominating the newspapers. Mrs. Kennedy is filing suit to block the book, and the Johnson's ^{"boorishness?"} ~~bullishness~~ on the ride back from Dallas, fills columns and headlines. Reston and the "credibility gap", that coined phrase "rapidly gaining credence", the critical Democratic Governors, were filling the papers. Nevertheless, life goes on and so does work with Bess and with Ashton, finishing up the albums for ^{the} T. J. Taylors and the Steadmans and the Rathers, -- some of the nicest visits that will ever take place at the White House. They were last summer, and these albums are Christmas presents to remind them of those hilarious days at the White House with a house party of 13 and adding the Davises -- that makes 17.

I had a light lunch in my room, autographed a "Living White House" book for Jean Louis, and then said "Merry Christmas" to him for the last time. And how much I will miss him. He had fixed me up for the children's party. It is always one of the happiest parties of the year. And if you are in the eye of the hurricane, no matter -- so is this.

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The children began coming about 4:00 -- 150 of them, from Friendship House and the Boys Club of Columbia Heights, St. Vincent's Home and School, St. Anne's Infant Home, the Washington Hearing Society, the YWCA Boys Club of Alexandria, and Barney Neighborhood House. All dressed up, very quiet and solemn, many of the little girls with white gloves on and hair ribbons. And very prim~~med~~ and well mannered. I looked in on them from a distance before I came down to the East Room where they were finally all assembled stiffly in chairs, ready to watch the puppet show.

I came in and sat in the front row with a floor full of children cross-legged in front of me. One of them soon got up and sat on my lap. Lynda, down the row from me, was being very helpful and was being clambered over by several.

The puppet show was by the Chandler borthers -- Mark and Chris -- who held us enthralled for about 30 minutes with their magic little figures -- a Spanish dancer, a very sad little boy -- an innocent gaily that is quite unique.

And then I went to the microphone and asked them to all come in for cookies and ice cream -- into the State Dining Room -- where the tables were children-size. And I sat at one with a little girl named Linda, surprisingly, on one side. And we ate ice cream that looked like Christmas trees and decorated cookies and drank punch, and there were plenty of second helpings without asking.

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And there was ^{my} Lynda at one table, and lots of teenage hostesses, daughters of Government officials, members of the Cabinet -- Lisa Connor and Christy Carpenter, and Diana's little Lisa who was very capably busy answering questions about where was the bathroom. The most important question at my table was, "When is Santa Claus coming?" ^a At least after the second go-around of the cookies.

Santa Claus was Sandy Fox -- much disguised with lots of pillows and a big white silky beard.

After about the 16th question at my table, he finally appeared and then the stampede began. He asked us to follow him into the Blue Room where the Christmas tree was. But it was more of a race than a following.

Safely ensconced on one side of the room, Santa dispensed trains and trucks and dolls with clothes -- and a joyous Pandemonium ensued.

Lynda Bird was good. She settled quarrels and got toys for the quiet ones that didn't get any. But all the little hostesses were helpful. And at last the floor was a wasteland of paper. And every child had one or more toys.

And by 5:30 the party was over, and the hostesses, whom I had tried to speak to, chaperones ^{from} ~~and~~ the various agencies of the United Giver's Fund, gathered up their charges and went home.

Dorothy McCardle wrote, "Thomas Jefferson and James Madison rocked in their frames, the Christmas tree in the Blue Room teetered,

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Santa Claus wiped his brow and staggered back. The Children's['] invasion of the White House was over for another year." Still, it is one of the nicest parties that ever takes place here. And the third year has not dimmed its luster.

A little later, I slipped down to the Library to thank ~~the~~ Santa Claus and all the assembled hostesses -- they had been such a help. I was so proud of them.

And then back upstairs to wait for the departure for Texas. It was one of those times when you feel suspended in space. The ~~the~~ things that you work with have been packed and departed. You need to do needle-point or to read a book.

// Lyndon was deep in serious talk with Ambassador Lodge, McNamara, Ambassador Goldberg, Governor Harriman, and the Vice President. He brought them over from the office. McNamara soon left -- "Margy is waiting for me," he said. The rest of us sat down for dinner at 7:45.

Lyndon had not come to the children's party this year -- the first time I believe -- a barometer of how serious is the mood, how tough the days. These men have staying qualities or else they wouldn't be around now. I admire them so much. It is very difficult to remember that once Lodge was pitted against us in a nationwide race. It seems almost fictional. //

It was a little after 9:00 when they finished dinner, and Lyndon and Lynda and I left in the helicopter for Andrews and departed Washington in

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Air Force I. This time we were going back to Bergstrom. The first time in a long time that the press would not be in San Antonio.

It was a swift and pleasant and fairly light-hearted journey in spite of the rising tide of bad stories which you can feel in your bones. It was a little past 11:00 when we reached Bergstrom. At 11:30 we were at the Ranch, and I could really feel that our personal Christmas had begun.