

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Saturday, December 24, 1966

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Christmas Eve, Saturday, December 24th, was a morning of little note. I rode around with Lyndon and listened to fence-building talk with J. W. Early and the Myer boy. We had bought the Danz boys' property, right adjoining the Danz girls' -- all of whom I expect are in their 50's *at least*.

I spent an hour or so of decorating and arranging things at the Cedar house, talking to the Philipinos about how I like for things to look, placing ash trays and waste baskets in the right rooms and seeing that there are coat hangers and extra blankets and extra pillows in the closet.

I slide through life too much without getting that done.

Lyndon and I went with Dale Malechek and Dale Meeks to drive through the Martin and Danz and discuss the feed that we were giving the deer. And then I returned to the Ranch house. We stopped by the communications trailer to invite all of the switchboard girls or men to come in and have eggnog and cookies with us after dark. And then into the Secret Service house which used to be the Mexican house right behind ours, and it has just been done over. And it is now for the first time a comfortable place for them to ~~say~~ stay. And a picture window where they can keep watch over our comings and goings.

After lunch, Lyndon and I left in the Jetstar with only Jake and Dr. Burkley and the Secret Service to go to Kelly Air Force Base on a poignant visit for Christmas Eve to greet wounded GI's who were returning to Texas.

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We landed and met the Henry Gonzalez', spoke very quietly to a small group who were lined up behind the ropes waiting at the Base. Lyndon did not intend to make a speech. And then the plane came in -- an ambulance plane. Lyndon went aboard and met the men and then came down solemn. We stood at the foot of the steps -- he and I and Lynda -- she had joined us. She had spent the night before with Warrie Lynn to go to her party -- the happily looked-for event which that dearest of girls had given for Luci and Pat and another young couple who were about to be married. And then they began to file down the steps -- 20 evacuees, including two children of servicemen stationed in the Far East -- with bandaged arms or legs and silent, stunned faces. Suddenly as the first one approached the bottom of the steps, the small crowd burst into spontaneous applause. There was utter stillness -- never had it felt so close -- a strange war. And then suddenly behind me there was a happy sound, "There he is, there's my boy", and a pretty lady brushed past us with a "Please excuse me, Mr. President", and a litter case came down the steps and a young man raised his head and grinned. His mother kissed him and then she turned to us and said, "I am sorry, Mr. President, but this is my boy. We just heard last night that he had been hit." How incredible! All those thousands of miles away and then suddenly this afternoon he is home. He was Private First Class Alex Hudson III. His father seemed stunned, but his mother only happy. They loaded him into a big ambulance in a sort

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of a hammock, and his mother sat holding his hand. The last of the 20 came down, and silently they went their ways and the clapping died. Then the three of us boarded the Jetstar. I felt buffeted by emotions, deep respect for those young men, and for an organization that could get them all the way from Viet-Nam back ~~there~~ to San Antonio within hours of being wounded. And a shattering sympathy for anybody that's got any "yes" and "no's" to say about this war -- McNamara, Westmoreland, Lyndon. //

We were back at the Ranch by 4:30, and it was Christmas Eve.

Tony and Martiana had arrived. I had so looked forward to their coming. It is nice to have family and to like family -- not merely love them. Having had only two brothers, I am in a position to appreciate large families and to be grateful for what I have.

Lyndon and I and Luci and Pat and Tony and Martiana drove around the Martin and the Dan/z. We stopped in Lela's house where she has her brother and sister-in-law spending Christmas with her, and we had a drink. We talked family and old times in an atmosphere in which I am sure not one person present thought of my husband as the President of the United States.

And then back in the car we decided to go and see the quail -- a Christmas gift from the John Hills -- 140 I believe, which because of the biting cold and hoping that they could get used to their new home we had put in ~~what~~ what used to be the turkey pen. We had put some food and water in for them, but the cold ^{was} piercing. And Lyndon said, "If we don't get them

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some kind of cover they are going to freeze tonight." He had asked Dale a little earlier if he couldn't find an old doghouse or a big box of some kind. I little later I heard Dale on the talking machine saying, "Jewel, go out and open those boys' Christmas presents. I need those boxes, Anything into the breach!"

Later I found out his sons had each gotten a small desk for Christmas. Just a fine home for the quail!

When we arrived at the turkey pen, night had fallen, and the car lights revealed that some of those quail had gotten out of that pen. So Lyndon and Pat and Tony and the Secret Service got out and began to patiently try to ^{shoo} ~~show~~ them in -- one holding the gate and the others cautiously walking behind and shishing the quail back into the pen, while Luci and Ma/tiana and I collapsed in laughter. Lyndon did not give up, and he and Pat worked at it until the last one was safely back in. What an hilarious way to spend Christmas Eve!

Back at the house a fire was going, and it was past 7:00. And pretty soon the telephone operators whom I had invited earlier in the day came over. And there was a great bowl of eggnog and lots of cookies on the sideboard in the dining room -- the house was beautifully decorated. It was Helen's doings, with balsam rope along the mantel pieces in the big living room and the den and wound around the stair rail, a mistletoe ^{bough} hanging from the light fixtures and holly from the White House and a great

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brass bowl on the dining room table. And Christmas carols going.

Lyndon invited in the Secret Service and the military personnel and the

~~Waco~~
Waco man.

We all filled our cups with eggnog several times, or a drink.

And I showed them the red-velvet nose on the deer which has been there each year since 1952, and the red satin Christmas stockings with our names on them hanging from the mantel which Neva had given us. We can't quite remember when but we think it was when Luci was 2 or 3 years old. And the lovely angel from Germany brought by ~~Halga Krops~~ ^{Helga Krops} husband.

Tony and Martiana were good help visiting with real interest with all the people who work around us. And it was a nice hour. Sometime or other Lynda had disappeared and had flown to Dallas to meet George. It was a late dinner when they returned, and we sat down at the table. Lyndon and I and the two Taylors and the two Nugents and Lynda and George and Jake and Marie. How good Marie is to have returned. She had been to see her folks for only about 24 hours and by her own insistence had come back to help.

After dinner we went into the office and had the onslaught on the Christmas tree. Mary and James and their three children and Gertrude and Lee joined us and it was an hour of Pandemonium with squeals of delight -- especially from Luci when she discovered some tiny diamond earrings which Pat had given her. I had an album of wedding pictures

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from Luci with an incomparable inscription from her. She has a gift of expression that will serve her well in life. And a folder of Soviet lithographs from Lynda with an hilarious one about the budget -- a fat woman being wrestled into a corset. This is a French budget in 1969! A watch from Lyndon and something I particularly enjoyed, a jug of wine from the neighbors, the Bergs, and a copy of Dickens, "Christmas Carol" from someone on the staff. *Ch. name*

Close to 12:00 the floor was a shambles and everybody had their presents, though not all of mine were opened til two days later. We realized that if we were going to make midnight Mass we had to hurry. So I changed quickly from a hostess gown into a dress. And in the station wagon with Lyndon driving, Luci and Pat, Lynda and George, Marie and Jake, and Maftiana and I, went to St. Francis Xavier at Stonewall. Tony bid us goodnight.

There were only about two cameramen outside. We were really a surprise to them. And the small church was full of familiar faces. And the nicest thing about it was I think it made Luci a little happier that we were with her.

By 1:00 we were back home, and I went to bed giving myself the luxury of reading before I went to sleep.