

1967

THURSDAY, JANUARY 19

It began with a surprise snow. The Secret Service and Administrative Assistants came in late with tales of taking two hours to get to work where it ordinarily took twenty minutes. I slept late--past nine. It was 10:00 o'clock when I left for my Spanish class, arriving at Mrs. Lopez Maguire's in Georgetown. Mercedes had gone on a two month's trip and we were to meet at La Profesora's to find that only Grace Dodd and I had braved the elements. There were calls during the morning about should we postpone the reception for the Senators this evening. More snow was forecast for the rest of the day. If Washington were immobilized, it could be a forlorn party. I took a chance on going ahead with it and strongly urged that we do so.

Back at the White House, I talked with Juanita in the President's Office about the Executive Suite in the Library. She was working on her seventh drawing of it and will be ready to discuss it with Max on his next visit to Washington. I went to the Queen's Room from which Andrew Jackson's great bed had been removed, little gold chairs put in in a semicircle, a small library table in front of the fireplace, for the podium, hopefully made more informal by a bouquet of flowers and plenty of ashtrays. It was covered with a lace cloth out of courtesy for our speakers--Short skirts are a problem these days.

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The room looked as cozy as we could make it for fifty women and I went over the scenario with Bess and Liz while we had a cup of bouillon in my room.

The event was a buffet supper for half the Senate like we had had in '64 and '65 and probably the first of a series, two for the Senate and no firm decision yet on the House. I had been determined to wait Lyndon out today for lunch, but usually I am too hungry after only coffee and juice at breakfast, but he came home fairly early today--2:30--and I joined him for lunch with Congressman Phil Landrum, of Georgia and a new Congressman, I think named Jack Brinkley, Tom Johnson and George Christian. Tom is coming along just fine, young and bright and quick. George is back to work already from his rough operation.

In the afternoon I lit the fire in my little dressing room office. It is a cozy, attractive room, and working at my desk and then ran out to Mr. Per's for a comb-out, returning in time to be dressed in my blue satin for this first of the receptions. We were trying a new format and I was uncertain and nervous about it. We had exhausted showing them the second floor and having a movie. So tonight we would have a talk session and the topic was beautification. At first, we had the receiving line in the Green Room. All of the fires were burning merrily, drinks and heavy hors d' oeuvres because it was a long time until dinner.

Forty of the fifty Senators had accepted and for the briefing

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there was Gardner Ackley of the Economic Advisers, Charley Schultze of Budget, and Dean Rusk and Bob McNamara and a brace of our staff members, Califano and Kintner and Mike Manatos and David Bunn and Henry Hall Wilson, who deal with the Congress all of the time and Marvin Watson and Larry O'Brien. Mostly it was the ranking Senators, beginning with Mike Mansfield, who came without Maurine, ~~she~~ she was not feeling well, and Everett Dirksen and Louella, who had to leave early because the Republicans were having their own State of the Union at 9:00 o'clock on Capitol Hill. So he and many of the Republicans must leave well before then and they had with them a most unusual team, their daughter and her husband, the new Senator and Mrs. Howard Baker, of Tennessee. Allen Ellender came, joking about when was I going to come to another luncheon at the Capitol where he did the cooking. "Just name the date," I said. Bill and Betty Fulbright--she has always been warm and friendly and charming, and Clint and Henrietta Anderson, the Albert Gores, the Sam Ervins, and Spessard Holland among the Southerners, John Sparkman without Ivo and Betty and Herman Talmadge.

It was a quick line and I was anxious to make it run on time, partly for the convenience of the Republicans. So a little past 6:30, I took the ladies up to the Queen's Room and Lyndon and the men went into the East Room for briefing. As we were about to get settled a funny thing happened. A very pretty, very young girl whom none of us knew, came into the back of the room, an Aide bringing her. I went over to

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meet her and sure enough, it was Senator Strom Thurmond's date. He always brings a young and lovely girl and Bess' explanations politely put that because this party is part business, it is limited to Members of Congress and their wives, falls on deaf ears. Last year the young lady was Miss Peach Blossom, of Georgia. This year she was equally pretty but from South Carolina.

Well, now was the time to see whether our format would work and we would produce a really lively, interesting round table discussion. I arose and said that while the men would be conducting their business for about an hour, I would love to hear what was happening across the country in the home states and towns of our guests and to get the ball rolling, I had asked three of them--Mrs. John Sherman Cooper and Mrs. Birch Bayh and Trudye Fowler, all of whom had been making speeches on conservation and beautification to tell us some of their experiences, with Jane Freeman as the Moderator. So I turned it over to Jane, who is lively, quick, capable and kept it moving at a spritely pace and the ladies talked about ten minutes each. Lorraine Cooper was great. She gave us, with humor, the capsuled history of a little park in the center of their home town of Somerset, Kentucky and the best thing was she told us the hard knocks and frustrations along the way in trying to make a gift to a community. And then Marvella, who had some good vignettes, one especially of Columbus, Indiana--I think it was--it was called the

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Athens of the Plains because one philanthropic citizen spends his money to hire a big name--really great architect--for any public structure that is going up. Apparently it may be the Library, or the Post Office or the Fire House. So the town is prestigiously marked with quite distinguished buildings. And then Trudye, who — mildly amusing in a takeoff on her husband, ^{the} the man who was always mumbling in big figures, and who gave us some very good statistics in a palatable fashion. I was really proud of them all. Now the question--would anything start. I had done my homework a bit. I had called three or four wives. Bethine Church and Louella Dirksen and Henrietta Anderson and Betty Talmadge, and Liz had made a few other calls. To my pleasure, they did begin. They all chimed in with some suggestion or achievement or experience from their own home area, but, alas, I do not know how much of it was the result of our effort beforehand and how much was genuine spontaneous interest sparked by the discussions. [#] Bess had sent me a couple of notes that the men were nearly through so I arose and suggested everyone join me in the Yellow Room for a drink and then one of the crises! Another note--they were hung up on questions and it appeared likely to go on indefinitely. So I wrote Lyndon a little note suggesting that it would be a better party if he brought it to the end while everyone was still eager for discussion. Surprisingly he did in short order. Later, I found that he had read my note to the group. [!] So we were downstairs

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in the State Dining Room by eight for the buffet and quite delicious it was--roast beef and ham and mixed seafood over rice, a pretty table it was, but I spent most of my time moving among the guests, thanking my speakers, who were dears. They did so want to do well. I know it took time and trouble and I appreciated it. We talked to Mrs. Gruening, who was in a wheelchair. Lou Tower said she had some examples she wanted to give about Texas and Senator Tower said in a very chummy tone that his father, who was a Methodist Minister, had known my father and had admired him so much. "He must have meant a great deal to his community." It all sounded very nice, but never again will I hear a conversation like that without being reminded of Judge Whit Davidson and his hatchet blow. Sure enough, Senator Strom Thurmond got called away by a sudden telephone message concerning a death so we made sure that his pretty date met people and I hope had a good time.

I told Evie how sorry I had been to miss their party for Clark's sixtieth birthday. Clark's daughters and family had put on a skit--"This is Your Life," and it had been hilarious, all the guests said. I don't a bit like being recluses from social life. Stu is so gay and young in spirit and amused me so very much by gallantly recalling what fun we had had dancing when we first knew each other years ago, our good times with Neva and Wesley.

The ladies said they had had the biggest meeting ever at the opening day of the Senate Wives Red Cross--sixty members. All in all

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it was a chummy, pleasant evening which ended promptly about 9:00 o'clock and I had exercises and got a rub and was in bed by eleven. I could scarcely say I had gotten the social season off to a good start with a great intellectual salon, brilliant exchange of ideas, but it had been a pleasant--and I think useful evening. Lyndon felt the briefings had been good, a few superb and apparently they had come unscathed to the questionings.