

1967

MONDAY, JANUARY 23

Monday, January 23 is remarkable chiefly as a second reception for the Senate. The morning was quiet with necessary chores, a trip to dear Dr. Turchin. One's own troubles certainly come into perspective when you hear those of the next fellow! Then, a little past 11:30 I met with Mrs. Archibald Brown, and Mr. Scalamandre and Bess to try to decide once and for all the draperies for the State Dining Room and the great hall. I am determined to have an American-made fabric, if at all possible. And as Mr. Jesse Kellam would say, I had, through Bess and Mr. West "thrown out a challenge" to Mr. Scalamandre. Can you produce something whose beauty and elegance equals the looms of any other country? He brought along a piece of antique gold brocade which he had purchased in France and said ^{was} Georgian in design, very handsome, he could reproduce it in any shade of gold we liked. Mrs. Brown, Bess and I all felt we were at the end of the search. We liked it. There only remained to decide which shade of yellow would look best in sunlight and gray light and night lighting. We would decide that this very night and then we went into the great hall. The borders of the off-white drapes were so handsome. I liked the drawing very much, but the treatment of the window at the head of the stairs from ground to first floor is not grand enough Bess and I both felt. After all, a guest coming to a State Dinner gets his first impression of the great first floor of the White House from that window.

Monday, January 23 (Continued)

Most of the guests enter from the Northeast Entrance, walk down the corridor and up the stairs and it is complicated by the fact that you simply have to hang coats and hats behind these drapes, those that belong to the few guests that come in the Front Entrance. Mrs. Brown thoroughly understood this problem. She thought she could come up with a suitable sketch.

Sometime during the morning we sat down for a cup of coffee and I liked hearing Mr. Scalamandre reminisce about his years in this country....How he had built his business...How it was always to the amazement of foreigners to discover how much handwork was done in his factory. His talk was very lively about former Administrations and the fabrics he had supplied for them, especially the Roosevelts. He always referred to President Roosevelt as having selected this or that. I insisted on giving Mrs. Brown a tray in my room as she was catching the 2:30 plane and then I lunched with Bess in the study while we assessed my clothes. Helen had wheeled in last year's on a rack and we talked of what I would need to fill in the gaps to replace those great necessities, coat and dress ensemble that gets on the plane at 7:30 in the morning and goes all day with constant pictures and a dress and jacket--everything must be bright color--that takes over in summertime. Bess is invaluable in working out smoothly and easily the times to see the designers I like, in helping me decide what I need, calmness and good judgment and real friendship are her qualities in abundance and I am very lucky.

Monday, January 23 (Continued)

Then to Mr. Per's for a hairdo, back for the big event of the day. Lyndon asked me to come into his room. Apparently there had been some questions at the press briefing about a meeting of Senators tonight, a briefing. He had not intended to announce it to the Press. As well as I can summarize what he said it inhibits the freedom of the briefing to have it known to the Press, turns it from a productive exchange of information, questions and answers into a sort of forum for debate for the malcontents, who know that the Press will be waiting for them at the gates with such questions as, "Did you ask the President how many civilians had been bombed in Vietnam today?" or whatever are the most hellish questions at the moment. So the spirit was quite taken off of the evening, which didn't at all cancel out the evening. We must get through it the best possible.

I put on my bright pink Christmas crepe and at 5:35 was in the State Dining Room to have a picture made with Lyndon. We are striving to get a good one together, hopefully to be in front of the Lincoln portrait and would be used on the program for the Lincoln Birthday Reception--sort of a souvenir for all of the guests.

Some day Okey is going to have all the time he wants to take a picture of us and he is going to faint with surprise. As usual, this was hurried. Lyndon came in breathless a little before six and then a few minutes past we were receiving the guests in the Green Room.

Tonight was the second half of a hundred. We divided them

Monday, January 23 (Continued)

pretty much on seniority. So the new ones were with us tonight. Handsome Mark Hatfield and young and attractive Hollings of South Carolina and stern faced, rather Lincolnesque, Senator Hansen, and young, terrificly attractive Charles Percy. His wife looks like a girl herself. And Senator William Spong of Virginia. Senator Griffin of Michigan is also new to me. He was an interim appointment after McNamara's death.

To greet ^{them} there was the "first line team"--Bob McNamara and Dean Rusk and Charley Schultze and Gardner Ackley. And then to help out there was staff--Henry Hall Wilson and Mike Manatos, who deal with them daily. Joe Califano and Doug Cater, with whom they often have contacts. I had invited Marilyn Walsh of my office because I want her to get to know something of the workings of this life so that she can write more intelligent letters. And Larry O'Brien, who has a sort of nebulous position--a foot in each camp--Postmaster General, but still a pulse taker on the Hill. Hubert and Muriel were everywhere. He is a happy man these days. He enjoys his job, his life and everybody must enjoy him. And our old friends Dick Russell and John Stennis and Harry Byrd, whom I somehow regard as just an extension of his remarkable father. We find ourselves so often alienated from them by philosophy, but not for me at least, ripped from the bonds of friendship. And the young comers, the attractive Gale Magee and Lorraine. He seemed quite philosophical about his being bounced off the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Monday, January 23 (Continued)

And the Walter Mondales and Edwin Muskie who is becoming one of my favorites. Ted Kennedy came without his wife. Bobby came to neither reception, as usual. The line went quickly and then Lyndon asked the men to join him in the East Room for a briefing and I took the ladies upstairs to the Queen's Room. There our young folks were, for tonight's program was to be about youth. The quality of today's generation, a very hotly contested subject with entirely too ^{many} ~~much~~ inches in the newspapers going to beards and LSD and draft card burners. This was the other side of it, the opportunities, the achievements of another kind of youth.

There was Jay Rockefeller leaning over slightly from his six feet six and beaming. I was so glad to see him. He asked me at once, with a true politician's instinct, if either Mrs. Bob Byrd or Mrs. Jennings Randolph were in the group. And I pointed out quiet little Mrs. Bob Byrd to him and steered him in her direction for an introduction. And this was my first time to meet Bob Taft III. He looked short and stocky by Jay's bean pole height. He was smiling but he looked nervous. Nobody was more so than I. Lynda was the moderator. When the ladies took their seats, she told them what tonight's program would be like and then she introduced Bob Taft, very aptly saying that he would be speaking in the shadow of the beautiful portrait of his great grandmother, Mrs. William Howard Taft. He talked about his three years in the Peace Corps in Tanzania and in a few moments it was apparent that he was good. He was that sort

Monday, January 23 (Continued)

of speaker that Jim Ferguson described as "get full of your subject and let'er fly." He was enthusiastic. He loved his years with the Peace Corps. He made it come across, as youthful, exciting, full of pitfalls and frustrations, and certainly no cure-all for the world, but when he finished I felt proud of him and of America and at ease about our evening.

I had taken out the insurance ahead of time by calling on some special friends--Vide Bartlett, Gretchen Byrd and Mary Ellen Monroney and Margie McNamara--to ask questions when the speakers finished. Tonight I needn't have. The questions erupted, and after a moment or two, we had to suggest that we wait until the second speaker was through and then ask all the questions at once of each of them. And then Jay unfoiled to his full height, smiling over at Sharon and his mother-in-law, who were on the sofa and beginning humorously in reference to Bob's great-grandmother up there on the wall by saying, "I had a relative who was interested in coming here to live once too." The room loved it. From then on he was in their hands. He described the life at Emmons, Kentucky so graphically you could feel the coal dust under your fingernails that had been there for months and see the rickety front porch where the perennially unemployed father of nine sat and whittled. He told the story of two boys--one who had made it after about three years. Jay had been his friend and worked on him and tried to help him. He was now on his way to College, and of another who had not made it. Who never would make it, would be on the Public Welfare for the rest of his life. When he finished, Mary Ellen leaned over to me and

Monday, January 23 (Continued)

said, "That young man is going to be in the White House himself one day."

The questions flew. Mrs. Wayne Morse began with questions that sounded like they were hostile, but were soon inundated by everybody else's questions. It was just that atmosphere of spark, of excitement of give and take that I wanted to create. I was beaming. After the program had gone about an hour, I intentionally, before their appetite had been satisfied, I suggested that Lynda Bird make sure that everyone had the opportunity to meet our young speakers. Would any of the rest of the ladies like to join me in the Yellow Room for a drink before we went down for our buffet with the men who would be ready soon.² I had alerted Libby Cater and Bess to ask the new wives if they would care to--Mrs. Percy and Mrs. Fong, Mrs. Hatfield to see the Lincoln Room and the Treaty Room if they wished. I went in to give them some sidelights on it myself and then continued to the Yellow Room with only a small stream of followers because the magnet was in the Queen's Room with everybody clustering around our young speakers, continuing to ask questions. We had a drink in the Yellow Room and about 8:00 received word that the gentlemen were ready to eat so we drifted down the stairs and the elevator to join them in the State Dining Room. As the last time, I spent most of my time walking around to visit with guests with just a bit of hors d'oeuvre instead of a plate.

Senator Allott was most complimentary. He said it was the best briefing he had ever participated in and more meat to it, very candid, he

Monday, January 23 (Continued)

said and time to ask questions. There was that beaming atmosphere of a good party and I felt happy.

Vide Bartlett had been especially articulate and interesting in her contribution upstairs about what youth had done in Alaska, principally VISTA. Lorraine Cooper was not singing for her supper tonight, but I was telling everyone how wonderful she had been last week in her talks. Senator Long had brought his daughter, since his wife was out of town and Russell Long was telling us that his daughter was going to be Queen of the Mardi Gras. I was tremendously impressed with the young Percys. He is very cordial. You would have to mark him as a "comer". He had to leave early, taking Sharon and Jay with him. I had asked Lynda to make sure that Sharon and Jay and Bob met everyone. I was proud of the buffet--sliced roast beef and chicken curry with mushrooms over rice, a lovely table and good.

I went upstairs a little past nine and the guests did not linger. They are busy people. It is well for us all that these parties end early. When my Agent told me that the guests had all gone, I slipped into my gold Madame Chang hostess gown and went downstairs to look at the materials with Mr. West in the night light. He and Bess and I walked off and looked at them up and down. A time or two during the evening I had shown to some of the Senators the drape in the Southwest window. It is absolutely disintegrating, full of holes and I laughingly told them it was obvious that we would pretty soon have to have an appropriation

Monday, January 23 (Continued)

for some more. We decided on the more brilliant of the golds for the background with the pattern done in the ivory so that there will be some contrast and then I was upstairs having a rub by 9:30, enormously satisfied with the evening from my side of it, but gripped with tension and distress of its being known to the press cancelled out its usefulness for Lyndon, for the Administration. So I read and went to bed rather early to be ready for New York in the morning.