

1967

TUESDAY, JANUARY 31

Tuesday, January 31 ran all the gamut of emotions. Lyndon had decided he would go to the funerals of Grissom and Chaffee and he asked me if I would go to West Point to the funeral of Ed White. I was dressed and ready early. Freddie Teague came to the Second Floor of the White House and had a cup of coffee while she waited for me. Then we rode out together to National where we met Hubert and Patsy Webb and Mrs. George Mullum, whose husband is one of the higher echelons in Space, and Air Force Chief of Staff, General McConnell. It was only a thirty minute flight up to West Point, a bitter cold day. We were met by a very attractive young General named Bennett and I rode with him up the lovely winding Hudson Valley to West Point. He showed me Storm King Mountain, a delightful name, a part of the palisades of the Hudson, and as the road hugged its way along the mountain it has great cascades like frozen stalactites. They will be flowing springs in warm weather. It was a beautiful country. Then we entered West Point and your spine tingled. It was the very home of tradition, a great name in America.

We went straight to the old Cadet Chapel on the grounds of the Academy cemetery, a small quiet place. Hubert and Freddie and I were seated close to the front. In the first pews there were Ed White's fellow-astronauts--honorary pallbearers-- Charles Conrad, Thomas Stafford

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and Neil Armstrong, who had been at the White House so short a time before under happy circumstances, and James Lovell and Frank Borman. And then six soldiers, enlisted men, one of them a Negro. There was a long wait and then the family came in. Mrs. White so very young-- beautiful blonde hair covered with a black mantilla and Colonel James McDivitt, the command pilot of the space flight in which White had performed America's first space walk, gently protective-- very military-- as he guided her in, and the White's two children, Bonnie Lynn and Edward, and the parents, General and Mrs. Edward White, the General big and solid and tough. I remember them all from that happy visit to the White House and the hilarious time when the Whites and the McDivitts spent the night-- or rather to about three a.m., and Luci ran their clothes through the washing machine and I brought out dresses and coats for them to try on to get ready for their flight to Paris about 4:00 o'clock the next morning.

And then there was the Astronaut's younger brother, James White-- himself a Lieutenant in the Army-- pale and solicitous. He looked so like Ed that it was heartbreaking as he leaned over Mrs. White. The funeral service was brief and surprisingly personal. Ed White's own minister from the little Texas town of Seabrook where he lived close to the Space Center. The West Point Choir in the loft sang their Alma Mater and then the song of the Corps and I was caught up in the beauty of the

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voices and the words, very masculine and military. Later I heard that Ed White has a record of these songs and always played them in times of stress and Mrs. White had asked that they be sung, and we walked to the graveside. Only the family sat under the tent. We stood with several hundred people -- a beautiful view of the Hudson just below on my right. This is a beautiful place. Those who go here must remember it always afterward.

The Astronauts stood together closest to the coffin. At a time like this the value of discipline, tradition, becomes apparent, strength to lean on, to support. They had been important in Ed White's life. The Corps, the Church, the Astronauts. There is a brotherhood between these men.

There was a certain element of strength and beauty in this cruel day. Mrs. White wept softly as they presented her the folded flag from Ed White's coffin and then General Bennett was nudging me and I moved forward and leaned over to express our sympathy. She looked up at me quite clearly and almost urgently and said "Please tell the President that Ed loved him. Now will you remember to tell him that?" Holding on tight was almost too much. I went down the line and murmured words to all the family and to Bonnie Lynn and Edward I said "I have a good picture of you all in a happy time. You remember when you visited the White

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House and I am going to send it to you." One of the best pictures in "The Living White House" is Ed White, young and strong, his arms aloft, poised on the edge of the White House swimming pool. He had just tossed Bonnie high into the air.

On the way back to the airport, General Bennett told us how Ed White had brought his son, last summer I believe it was, he was twelve years old, to West Point to see it through his eyes. Ed White had loved West Point. He had several athletic records that have never been equaled since, I think the four hundred meter race and some sort of jump. I thought when I get back I must suggest to Lyndon that he write a letter to whoever will be President at the time that young man reaches the age to go to the Academy and request that he be sent.

We had lunch on the way back and Freddie and I talked of the Texas Delegation which has undergone many changes in the brief six years since I ceased to be a member of it. Then I worked on the mail with Marilyn and Ashton and went to the beauty parlor and was dressed for the second big event of the day. A very great change of pace this is and something I had looked forward to for months-- the unveiling of President FDR's portrait by Madame Shoumatoff. We asked Margaret Truman and Cliff Daniels to come up ahead of time and Lyndon and I had a few minutes to visit with them, during which she told me that no indeed, her Mother was not going to give her portrait, <sup>now</sup> hung in Independence, to the White House. See, Margaret had her name on the back of it. I asked how we best

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proceed as I would certainly like this house to have one of Mrs. Truman and she said maybe the same artist would do a copy. If it was a good copy she, Margaret, would take it and release the original.

"Look" had been doing a story of reminiscences on her. She had spent the morning in her old bedroom and sitting room, now our family dining room and kitchen. She told of how she had had two pianos in her room. She often did piano duets with a friend and how one night late coming in she and her father had noticed that they were sitting at crazy angles, one end hiked up markedly several inches more than the other. Sure enough, the floor was sinking below them! There were no servants about. They called a couple of Secret Servicemen and lifted them over on what appeared a more solid portion of the floor and then the very next morning President Truman had architects and engineers begin going over the place and after the election of '48 when the Trumans went to Florida to rest, President Truman refused to let Mrs. Truman's mother stay alone in the White House. He moved her right across to Blair House.

I went straight to the podium to welcome this roomfull of President Roosevelt's family and friends and fellow-workers of those vivid years. There are three children, Anna Roosevelt Halstead, John, and Franklin, a dozen grandchildren, three great grandchildren, and I asked them to stand while the TV cameras swung in their direction. And quite aside from the family, there are so many whose names threaded through that

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whole period, Mrs. Henry Wallace, Margaret Truman Daniels, Francis Biddle, Grace Tully, Tommy Corcoran, Jim Rowe, Adolph Burleigh, Averill Harriman and many newsmen and women who covered him. A brief explanation of how when we first moved in we had begun to search for a portrait of Franklin Roosevelt for Lyndon's office. For two years it was fruitless and then Mr. Charles Palmer, of the Warm Springs Foundation, had brought Madame Shoumatoff to me and the portrait turned from dream into reality and here it was. I introduced her and Madam Shoumatoff pulled the cord. That was one of the great moments of the day and I think I sensed almost an audible wave of approval from this very special audience.

Lyndon spoke briefly and very much in the mood of the Roosevelt Era. "Times of trial can bring out the best in men and in nations.. His face and his voice became symbol<sup>ed</sup> in that other time of bitter testing of man's power to overcome," and another <sup>phase</sup> like I liked. "Like every one of our great Presidents, he was also a great politician. He proved again and again that politics scorned by so many is an honorable calling." And then we had the entertainment-- part of Sunrise at Campabello, on a slightly raised platform without benefit of stage or props or costumes. Charleton Heston, as FDR, and Mary Fickett, who played the role on the stage as Eleanor Roosevelt, and Ann Seymour as both FDR's mother and Missie Le

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Hand. Dore Schary was the narrator and also played Louie Howe. They told me they had been nervous beforehand. They needn't have been. It was marvelous. I was caught up in admiration and so proud to be offering it to this audience. Then it was over and we went into the Blue Room, which was as nostalgic as you could expect. As Marie Smith said, the White House was filled with memories, both spoken and silent. There was a long roster of cousins and members of his Administration, Thurmond Arnold, old but full of ginger, and Ed Foley and Abe Fortas and Tex Goldschmidt. We had had such fun the night before at Abe's reminiscences for early days at Interior and Senator Wirtz and the Leon Kiserlings, both of them in FDR's Administration, and Gladys Tillet, Vice Chairman of the Democratic National Committee during FDR's time, well-known White House figures, Roberta Barrows and Toi Bachelder, members of the press who had covered those vivid years, #m Ray Craig looked remarkably spritely in a bright pink dress and hat, her trademark, and Bess Furman whose book about the White House is still a classic, and Doris Fleeson and Merriman Smith, the Dean of the Corps, who had begun with FDR and who just married a very young wife. There were some widows of FDR's officials-- Mrs. Oscar Cox, very lovely but tearful, and Jane Ickes, remarkably durable, and Mrs. Emma Guffie Miller, age 92, long time friend of Mrs. FDR's, and National Committee

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woman from Pennsylvania, <sup>but</sup> ~~and~~ two widows I had especially hoped would be present ~~and~~ were not-- Roberta Vin<sup>cent</sup>~~cent~~ and Anita Williams. Aubrey Williams had been head of NYA when Lyndon was in it, Mr. Justice Reed, retired, was going around saying that he was the only one who had been there from the very first of the Roosevelt Era. Lyndon corrected him and said "no, I was here too, although I was just a Clerk in a Congressman's office." Bob Kintner had been a newsman in his time writing a column with his cousin, Joe Alsop, and since his career has led along heights and declines and finally back to the White House itself as Lyndon's Assistant. I had asked Mary Lasker and Anna Hoffman and Mrs. Sidney Hillman, a few would remember that old phrase "check it with Sidney", and I was very pleased to have Dr. Wayne Grover who is invaluable on the library and the Melville Bell Groveners of the White House Historical Association. There were the Armand Hammers, my friends from Campabello and there were a few not at all related to FDR days that I simply wanted to share the evening with. Mrs. Rostow's 87 year old mother, Mrs. Harriet Vaughn Davies, who has just written her first book, a delightful old lady, Charley Guy, of the Lubbock paper who was in town for the day, and <sup>Ethel</sup> ~~Ethel~~ May Brownley, who had been Jesse Kellam's secretary back in the days of the NYA and who was visiting relatives in town.

As in any gathering where she is present, Alice Roosevelt Longworth



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was one of the stars of the occasion, a natural magnet for everybody wanting to hear something spicy, and there was another Roosevelt from that side of the family, Mrs. Kermit who goes to St. Mark's with me, and a real old-timer, Mrs. Nellie Taylor<sup>2</sup> Ross, Director of the Mint in FDR's time and one of the first woman governors. ~~But~~<sup>#</sup> it was by no means a bunch of old folks only because of grandchildren and great-grandchildren and Anna soon had a group of about twenty of them on a second and third floor tour at my suggestion. Lyndon sat on the red sofa in earnest conversation with Dore Schary and later with Mayor Bob Wagner, who he invited to be our house guest at the next State Dinner, and then when the line was over, I took my program and went in search of the stars of the day-- Madam Shoumatoff who next to me I think was the most thrilled person there to get her autograph and also all of the actors-- Dore Schary, Ann Seymour, who played the part of Mrs. Roosevelt on the stage too, and Mary Fickett. This is twice she has helped us and handsome delightful Charleton Heston. He reminisced about the time we were together at the pioneer parade in Nebraska. As I look at it, the only one lacking is Mr. Charles Palmer and none of it would have happened without him. He had quite a few members of his family and we all had our pictures made together, as we did with Madame Shoumatoff's family and then I went in search of the individuals-- the Henry Lindseys, she's Chandler Roosevelt, two of the most attractive descendants, I

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think, Isador Lubin suggested that he take me out to see Reston. John Roosevelt had a wonderful story to tell about a big German police dog they had, rather belligerent, who just loved his mother and he was in the room when his mother and father were greeting some Foreign Ministers. One leaned over to kiss his mother's hand. Major, the dog, misunderstood the gesture, jumped up and ripped the seat out of the Minister's pants. The Minister was taken to the dispensary for treatment and all the waiters were lined up in the kitchen to see which was the closest to the Minister's size. Then his pants were borrowed and he was excused for the evening so that the entertainment could go on. The Minister certainly had a tale to carry home!

I spent nearly an hour around the refreshment table visiting with everyone, particularly with <sup>Ester</sup>~~Ester~~ Mae, who has been very ill. How blithely I imagined that I looked younger than my contemporaries when I see them after an absence of twenty or thirty years. Then a little past seven I went upstairs for a few minutes rest and the third event of this packed day. I changed into my red lace dress and left for Lisner Auditorium a little past eight to see the Harkness ballet. It was a benefit for Indians and Jane Wirtz was Chairman, all good reasons for me to go, but the main one was that Rebekah Harkness had been so kind to the White House and to Luci. Their honeymoon at Capricorn will never be equaled for beauty and luxury.

In the lobby I met a young Indian girl quite pretty and wrapped

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rather surprisingly in a Spanish shawl. She was Guadalier Luhand, Miss Indian America. Stu greeted me. It was his birthday and he's off soon for ten days in the Near East. I was seated between Bill Wirtz and Rebekah Harkness and I felt almost like I was watching Rebekah's children perform, so intent was she. The first number was called "Night Song" with a most amazing lighting effect, called in the program "kinetic visuals," circling rainbows of light, the figures dancing in front of them. Rebekah murmured somebody had said that was what it was like to take LSD.

There was one number I thought was intensely beautiful called "Abyss", poetic, delicate, fragile-- a young couple that seemed all youth and innocence and very much in love and then onto the stage there slinked three Tartar looking figures clad in rags and fur. They were the very personification of evil, of violence. It was movingly, crashingly done from gentleness to brutality, as much acting as dancing I thought, but the audience gave it only a mild ovation and then it was proved to me I don't know the taste of the country when they gave a wild ovation to a rather conventional dance, lively, attractive, but unremarkable I thought called "Canto Indio."

Afterward I went back stage. It always surprises me to find it so grimy and messy and full of ladders and electric lines and such, when out front is such beauty. I met a good many of the actors, tried to

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congratulate them especially for "Abys" and tried to express my appreciation to Rebekah for what she is doing for the Center of Arts for Indian America and was wearily on my way home to the White House after a day of grief and nostalgia and pleasant enjoyment... There had been a sort of capsule from '33 to '67!