

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Thursday, February 23, 1967 (New York)

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I did that sinful thing -- waste time. I threw away 10 good hours of my life. <sup>10</sup> Expecting to catch the 9:00 <sup>a.m.</sup> shuttle back to Washington, I woke up in the Carlyle at 7:30 <sup>a.m.</sup> Huge, fluffy white flakes were falling. The air was thick and the city was wrapped in a soft white shroud. Nevertheless, a phone call said the planes were flying but the 9:00 would probably be the last. So I had breakfast and packed and dressed and said goodbye to Lynda, and then came that inevitable call -- the 9:00 plane has been cancelled! No news on when there will be other flights. Jerry had cannily made a reservation on the 11:00 train. So here was I with more than 2 hours to use in New York! Too early to wake anybody up. And I couldn't really see Reiss Playground in motion in a snow storm. So I went to Bergdorf Goodman's and bought a pair of shoes, tried to go and see C. R. Smith's paintings -- discovered that it would be a close thing to make the 11:00 if I drove in that direction, and wound up frustrated and annoyed with myself in the dirty Pennsylvania station 30 minutes before train time. <sup>a</sup> I had a stateroom, and I remember when the height of romance to me was to take a train trip in a stateroom -- the most privacy, the most isolation, the most time to myself. Also I had a good book. <sup>But</sup> the magic did not work. I did not feel pampered or excited or luxurious. And I got the rather frightened feeling that I might just be getting old or satiated. Hopefully, this dull mood was only because I had slept less than 6 hours last night and was too groggy to feel fully awake and not sleepy enough to

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go to sleep. <sup>It</sup> I read fitfully, still "The Arrangement" by Elia Kazan, reached Washington a little before 3:00. How many times I have come into this station with bottles of formula and babies and endless sacks and suitcases on 20 years of trips between Texas and Washington! But the last one was September of '58.

Back at the White House, I simply went to bed, but still not to sleep. I studied the guest list, my introductions. I dressed in my white satin and at 6:00 was with Lyndon for the only real business of the day -- the fifth Reception for the members of the House.

Bess and I have been concerned with the number of regrets. True, most of them say "out of town", frequently making a speech, or sick. Very few give no reason. And many say they hope they can be invited to another one of the parties. Nevertheless it is a serious and unpleasant situation. I wonder if the erosion of the months of bad press has <sup>been</sup> ~~read~~ this sort of hostility for the Johnsons, or even a sort of disrespect for the White House or whether the fact that we are having a series of six such parties has the opposite effect from what we intended and dims the luster <sup>of</sup> the Congressional Reception. <sup>It</sup> Nevertheless, the guests who do come -- almost all -- seem thrilled and delighted. Tonight was especially good. After the receiving line in the Green Room and drinks in the Blue Room, Lyndon invited them in into the East Room for their briefings. Secretary Rusk had returned and Ramsey Clark was there. Faithful Bob McNamara. And I gathered

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up the ladies and we went upstairs to the Queens' Room where our program was on the Arts, <sup>g</sup> And the work of the National Council of Arts, in being a sort of a mid-wife to the cultural explosion all over the land. I had looked <sup>with</sup> for a bit of jaundiced <sup>eye</sup> on this particular program, not quite sure how wide an appeal it would have. But then I hadn't counted on Agnes de Mille.

I introduced our moderator, Roger Stevens, who made a brief, unimpassioned statement <sup>outlining</sup> the work of the National Council in its brief life.

And then Father Hartke made a humorous, charming little talk that warmed up his audience. And then came the biggest surprise of any program that I have had in the White House -- Agnes de Mille.

Midway during the speech I realized that I was holding my breath practically; that every person was absolutely motionless, that we were really caught up in an emotional web that Miss de Mille's words were weaving. Later Elspeth Rostow said, "She's a barn-burner". And someone else said, "You can see that de Mille coming through", -- she is Cecil de Mille's neice.

Well, it was wonderful, and I was so proud. In what seemed like a very few minutes <sup>she</sup> covered the whole history of why Americans feel the way they do about Art, that it is not very necessary -- certainly not something that the Government ought to spend good tax money in huge sums to subsidize the way they do in Europe. Its rather the province of the rich

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and better left to the ladies, not he-man stuff. And she traced this feeling to our puritan ancestors and to the hard life that the pioneers lived carving out the virgin wilderness for their farms while they carried a rifle under one arm. And now here we have reached the age of affluence and we have leisure time which we are in mortal danger of frivolling away with aimless driving and aimless TV shows while there is all the richness of Art waiting for us as a Nation if we put our mind and our money into it.

Then there were questions. How can we begin exposing our children in elementary school to art galleries and symphonic music? Mrs. Mayne of Sioux City, Iowa told how her home town was one of the first in the United States to support a symphony from its municipal taxes. It works and they are proud of it now. She was one of the most attractive new members. I liked her very much. <sup>H</sup> Mrs. Bob Eckhardt from Texas asked a question that made you feel that the program had really stirred up some interest -- "What can we as Congressional wives do about it?" Roger Stevens said, "One thing is, you can inform yourself about what the National Council of Arts is doing and here is a little brochure that tells everything so that your husband and all the other Congressmen you know can weigh how they feel about the importance of Government help to the Arts when the time comes for a further extension of the program."

Figures about what this country spends on Art and what West Germany for instance does had really been staggering. We are niggardly.

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Then I invited everyone to join the Curator, Jim Ketchum, for a tour of the Lincoln Room and the Treaty Room and the Yellow Oval Room -- especially the new members whom I had introduced earlier in the evening. But many of the guests crowded around our speakers and congratulated and thanked them and asked more questions. That's a very pleasant feeling for a hostess to think a party is "going," and as I moved with the ladies into the Lincoln Room, telling Mrs. Abernethy and <sup>Mrs.</sup> Whitten who had just finished with weddings of their own, about how we had used this room for Luci's bridesmaids to dress in. I could hear all around me the chatter of people who were thrilled, warmed, excited, with the evening. It was a very pleasant feeling.

I invited several of the new members and anyone who wished to go up into our end of the house, pointing <sup>out</sup> especially to them the paintings that the White House has acquired since we've been here and expressing for the 790th time the hope that we might some day get a John Singleton Copley. Who knows -- somebody might know that somebody that might know somebody that might know somebody and might help bring here one of the paintings that I am after!

Mrs. Pettis of California is one of the prettiest new members, and Nadine Eckhardt, one of the liveliest.

I realized that it was getting late and asked Jerry for an estimate from the East Room. He came back with the word that the President was

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speaking and a good many people were asking questions. So I hopefully wrote a little note, folded it up, and said, "Jerry, take this to the President." It worked. I had hardly taken the next three people through the family dining room pointing out Daniel Webster's sideboard and Andrew Jackson's silver and Luci Johnson's wedding presents -- one from the Trumans -- before word came that the men were coming out and that we could join them in the dining room.

It must have been a good briefing. I kept on hearing so from all the men. Nevertheless I was glad I had sent the note because everybody seemed as ravenous as I was and I like to leave the audience a bit hungry while the performance is still at its top. I had a nice little talk with the Aspinalls -- he is "Mr. Conservation". And with the Glenn Cunninghams -- he had the same operation on his throat that Lyndon had last September, and still speaks in a whisper. And Sam Gibbons who is high up on the poverty committee. And Basil Whitener who wanted to know when I was going campaigning with him again. With ~~Betty and~~ Olin Teague and Mab and Jim Wright. John Young was there without Jane who is still recuperating from an operation.

I steered our star, Agnes de Mille, into the Red Room once she had her plate full and then steered Bill Wirtz and Jane in to join her. And later the Secretary of State. I wanted to make it a bright evening for her too, and to show my appreciation for the vitality,

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the star quality, she had poured into our program.

At 9:30 Lyndon went upstairs, and I soon followed.

Each one of these had been different. It would be hard to choose the one I thought most outstanding. Tonight approached the bright salon I would like to see it be.

Later, Lyndon told me disquieting things about the men's briefing. For the first time Dean Rusk, whom we always think is magnificent -- he says he would give him an "A" time after time -- did not do well. And Bob McNamara repeated himself once. They both looked tired, Lyndon thought. They are so indispensable, so wonderful -- the very idea gives me a chill. #