

DUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Thursday, March 9, 1967

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It was one of those rat-a-tat days. It began early with breakfast with Lyndon. And then to Spanish class. Two hours in a capsule, two hours of application to only one thing, of relaxation and indulgence. Maybe I don't learn much but I like it.

Back at the White House I had a quick conference with Max Brooks. He and Marietta are spending several nights with us. She is here on UNESCO Committee business, and later going on an art trip, something that affluent middle-aged and elderly women of my acquaintance are doing more and more. And then a session with Liz about the 8 speeches that I will be doing on the trip to West Virginia, North Carolina and Tennessee. Actually, they are rolling off so easily I am worried for fear there is something wrong with them.

Then a fitting with the nice people from Bonwit Teller with my Ben Zukerman clothes -- the last three of my Spring outfit I hope. I can't get over the slightly ridiculous feeling that clothes should take up so much time, that you stand and stand and look at swatches and make lists of last year's things and what you need to fit in for the big events of the year that require new dresses -- the Congressional brunch, the Senate Ladies lunch, the Diplomatic Reception, a long party dress for the Military Reception, and of course arrival ceremony clothes.

I have a sort of a schizophrenic feeling that I'm cast in a role that I was never meant for. And it is probably not right to spend as much time and money on clothes. And on the other hand a sort of vain, feminine,

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increasing delight and thinking I look rather well in them, a bit younger and slimmer than a good many of my contemporaries.

The fittings lasted until just time to join Lyndon at the elevator as he went down to his press conference, televised in the East Room. I always have that riding <sup>in a tumbler</sup> ~~and a little~~ feeling. He looked confident, breezy. I was very proud of him.

I wore my mint green silk and sat in a lone chair on his right, and the ordeal began.

It was a very interesting press conference to me. Knowing the strain that Lyndon had been under I marvelled that he could be so restrained -- almost bland, dignified, calm, even perhaps a little bit too slow.

He began with a surprise, asking Congress to restore the investment credit and the use of accelerated depreciation for buildings.

Chuck Bailey asked the inevitable question about pause in bombing. It seem to me everybody must know by now the story

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And then there was an inevitable question. Mary Ann Means asked it. That is, plans for '68. Would you end all the speculation first and tell us if you intend to run in '68? And if Hubert Humphrey will be your running mate?

It was like a play. This was one of the big lines, and the audience was very quiet. Lyndon rose to it like a good actor. "I am not ready to make a decision about my future after January, 1969, at this time. I think down the road...", etc. And then glowing words about Hubert.

He was very much in charge throughout and it never showed more than when they began to question him about his critics on Viet-Nam, hoping, I am sure, for some expression of bitterness or hostility.

They got a very soft answer. "I'm just not in a position to know how much information each critic of my policy in Viet-Nam happens to have. I might say that it seems obvious to me that some of them do need more information sometimes." A mild laugh rippled across the room.

And then it was over and he took my arm. I threw him a congratulatory look with my eyes, which I meant to be all balm and velvet. Then we rushed out between the mass <sup>ed</sup> lines of reporters with Joe Califano and Jack Valenti and Jake and George Christian in our wake.

Upstairs, we went through the postmortem -- always one of the most interesting half hours. And we all felt pretty elated, I think.

Some time when Lyndon was out of the room, Jack used the expression in describing Lyndon's years as President. This was a quote from somebody else -- I wonder who. "Never has one President done so much and ignited so

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few." But will the doing be recorded in history? That is one of today's puzzles that I hope to live to see tomorrow give an answer to. Or does it matter if you get the job done, whether you get the recognition? I think it does because you don't have the fuel to continue getting the job done without the momentum of success.

More fittings in the afternoon and desk work. I had called Ed and Alice Weisl to ask them to spend the night with us so that we could have a good talk before or after they went to a dinner for the Democratic National Committee. They couldn't. But they would be by for a visit.

I wore my gold Ayub Khan evening dress which Mollie Parnis had made up, and joined them in the West Hall a little past 7:30.

Lyndon was late and we had almost an hours visit, notifying the people at the dinner meanwhile that we would arrive in time for the speech.

It was a comfortable and happy time. Ed is one of our oldest, our truest friends. And he slipped easily to a talk of the day and its problems against the background of more than 20 years of facing them together. But it was not I who could take the credit for remembering to ask them to spend the night. Last night, Jack Valenti had reminded us that they would be here for the dinner and how good it would be if we could have a little private time together. I said, "Let's ask them to spend the night." That's always one of our best ways for a quiet visit here.

The talk ranged from Bobby and New York politics to Angela and the delights of grand parenthood.

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Lyndon came a little before 9:00 and had one quick drink and he jumped into his tux. He changes like lightning. And then we were all off to the Washington Hilton where as we marched through the crowd to our table -- they were all round tables and ours was in the middle -- we saw old timers like India Edwards and Gladys Tillit and June Thorney. And a satisfying representation of the younger phase of the Democratic Party -- Texas beautifully represented by B. A. Benson. And in Frank Irwin's absence, there was a Board of Regents meeting today, <sup>G</sup>And that commands the highest loyalty. -- Bill Davis was standing in.

Lyndon gave a quiet, adequate ordered speech, and then put his script down and launched into a very warm, personal, arousing, off-the-cuff talk that did more in a few minutes to give spirit, spark to the gathering than any prepared speech would. It was a great performance. What a day this has been for him! A big meeting this morning with Rusk and McNamara and Fowler and McCloy. The Congressional Medal of Honor to a Negro Private. The Press Conference. Lunch with Labor leaders. The Press Conference. And now this. But he feeds on it, up to a point.

He had asked the Wassermans and the Krims to come back to spend the night at the White House with us. And a little past eleven, four couples of us wound up in the West Hall over a night cap, I mixed <sup>the</sup> drinks, and had as pleasant an hour as I remember -- the <sup>sort</sup> ~~thought~~ that seals friendships, where exchange of opinion flows.

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My only regret was that I forgot to say to <sup>ew</sup> Lea Wasserman a special "thank you" for the painting they gave -- it hangs in the Red Room.

Close to 1:00, the Weisls left and the Wassermans and Krims went upstairs to bed. The old House was full tonight with Sam Houston in Luci's room and Marietta Brooks up in 303.

I thought of what Jack Valenti had said about igniting so few. And I thought with satisfaction that at least this dinner group tonight had caught on fire.