

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Wednesday, March 15, 1967

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Wednesday, March 15th, is one of those marvelous days that I owe to the White House and that I will always cherish.

I woke early in the bedroom of the Governor's Mansion in Nashville. I had just coffee and juice. I wanted to do justice <sup>to</sup> the breakfast at the Hermitage.

And then after much pondering, I put on my green silk ensemble dress and coat and the Roman striped hat and left at 8:00 with the Governor and Katherine for the airport to meet Lyndon. He was just a little late -- only a few minutes. It was later that I learned the dramatic reason. He had gotten a call the night before at 10:00 informing him that the grave of President Kennedy would be moved during the night, and that there would be a 7:00 ceremony at the grave site -- would he like to attend? He decided that he should. So he stood in the rain, sharing an umbrella with Bobby Kennedy, with only Mrs. Kennedy and members of the family present on the gray, misty slope of Arlington while Cardinal Cushing prayed. And then he dashed as fast as he could to the airport and turned out to be only a half an hour late.

But this I didn't know at the time, and I was fearful that the good ladies at the Hermitage <sup>with</sup> and their grits soufflé wouldn't be inconvenienced by his not being on the dot. How often one cannot understand, simply because one doesn't know the facts.

Buford had repeated to me over and over that they weren't making any attempt to get a crowd at the airport. And when Lyndon touched down about 8:40 wearing his white raincoat and a big smile, only a few hundred people

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hundred people lined the fence. These he waved to, and shook a few hands, and then we were off to the Hermitage.

There were several thousand people along the roadway and so many American flags. All day long through Tennessee, I saw flags. <sup>And</sup> ~~But~~ never without a lift of the heart.

Many times I had been to the Hermitage through the years. On our trips to and from Texas, with Aunt Effie and Uncle George, and much later with Lynda and Luci. I looked forward to it eagerly.

But this visit was to be different from all others.

For the first time in many years -- I believe it's only done for Presidents -- when we alighted there was an old fashioned horse-drawn black carriage (it must have been very elegant in its day) with a dignified old Negro in livery and silk top hat, sitting up front with the reins. And at the horses heads, an equerry in a gorgeous scarlet suit. Such pageantry! I would have been crushed not to ride in that carriage.

Lyndon chose to walk up the block-long avenue, cedar lined, that led to the white pillared front porch of the Hermitage.

Catherine Ellington and I and Mrs. Fulton, the wife of the Congressman, <sup>mounted</sup> ~~rounded~~ the high step, and I sat at the window relishing every moment. I wanted to take in everything at once. The inside of the coach -- it's ancient but elegant appointments, its upholstery, the lifts to the windows, handsome lights.

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The gravel driveway was lined with people -- many children -- many with flags. And though it was cold and threatening rain, it was a marvelously festive atmosphere.

At the front porch, I alighted with due respect for the photographers, pausing a moment on the steps. This was one picture I wanted!

And then there were our hosts to greet us. Pretty, white-haired Mrs. <sup>did</sup> Horace Buntin, the Regent of the Ladies Hermitage Association, and a distant kinswoman of Lyndon. We chatted about it a moment. And the others who sat on the dais with us -- actually it was the front porch -- the Governor and Congressman Fulton and Catherine, Assistant Postmaster General McMillan who had brought the first issues of the stamp honoring the 200th birthday of the seventh President, and bearing the picture that we have in Lyndon's office by Sully. Of course Secretary Gardner, my traveling companion, and Pauline Gore, the Senator's wife.

I made my little speech, and actually this was one I was glad to make.

"One senses a great presence in this stately mansion. It bears the mark of a unique man and his times. <sup>? ch. words</sup> [Later on, together we are] an authentic American, a rare man of heroic stature. Of all the presidents of the United States, there are only a few, I believe, whose image remains strongly with us today. Men whom we can visualize as having once been flesh and blood and not vague shadows on the pages of history. For me, Andrew Jackson was one of those men. A rugged man from the West. It was a proud day for the people. General Jackson is their own president. The people were touched by him.

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~~He~~ was one of them. <sup>Some</sup> of the lines I liked. And if anybody thought there was any illusion to a similarity between President Jackson and the present President, in my mind they were entirely right. But most of the speech was about education -- beginning with the fact that the battle was fought and won for the principle of free, compulsory public schools during Andrew Jackson's time and going on til now with the 18 new laws under which we are attacking old problems with new methods, and a summary of my trip.

Mrs. Buntin presided, and Congressman Fulton spoke. And of course Buford Ellington introduced us both. And then the Assistant Postmaster gave us the new stamps -- an album each to all of us on the platform. And Lyndon was not even on the program. It had been printed before his arrival was known.

Buford rose to introduce him. I felt I could see the pleasure it gave him, and certainly me, to have that good friend introducing Lyndon. And that, of course, was the highpoint of the morning -- to all of the several thousand gathered out under the cedar trees in front of us.

Why <sup>are</sup> there always cedar trees at the homes of the old great ones of the South? There must be a reason.

The Chief of the Police said the crowd was 20,000. It seemed much smaller to me, <sup>but</sup> just as many as the grounds would hold. And all eager-faced and warm -- many with homemade little signs and flags -- flags everywhere.

After Lyndon's speech, we walked down into the garden which I remember so well, affectionately. And to the grave site of the General and his Rachael,

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and we placed a large wreath -- standing for a solemn moment. This was my nearly favorite president, excepting only Thomas Jefferson and probably FDR. And I love his house and his grounds. They are the home of a gentleman.

Then Mrs. Buntin took us through the house, much as I affectionately remembered it, but now I look at it with different eyes. The eyes of a wife of a President who thinks that someday our house may have a smaller, not so grand, but similar use as this and meaning sometime down the years. I loved what I saw -- the rooms, the furnishings, the care. I did not like the barriers at the door. They were too jail like. One must protect, but at the same time invite a hospitable interest in the interior of the rooms. All in all what the ladies have done is a great credit. Since 1889, they've acquired, paid for and run this heritage <sup>of</sup> ~~as~~ a Nation. Everything had been thought of at the breakfast.

We were seated at the long table in the great dining room -- I would think about twenty of us -- and began with sugared strawberries. And then had grits souffle (there is nothing better) and Tennessee ham (I couldn't have beared to leave Tennessee without ham) fried apples, beaten biscuit, turkey hash. It was a feast!

I was served on Jackson family china. The flowers, they told me, were Rachel's favorites. And there drifted into us from the sitting room the music of the harpsichord, charming, sad, the perfect touch, the perfect setting.



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I sat next to Mr. Buntin, and we traced the family kinship and the branch that went down to Texas. We talked about the work of the ladies in running the Hermitage. He's very proud of his wife and should be.

At the end of one of the most memorable meals I've ever had, Mrs. Buntin gave me a small boxwood from the garden at the Hermitage. I shall cherish it, either at the Ranch or Lyndon's birth place.

Lyndon had been the fourth President to breakfast at the Hermitage. President William Howard Taft, Theodore Roosevelt and Franklin D. Roosevelt had preceded us. And they showed us a delightful old picture of Teddy on the balcony and all the crowds around him.

We motorcaded into downtown Nashville through streets lined with people four or five deep and lots of bands, lots of flags. We drove up to the Capitol which is on a high hill overlooking the city. There we went to Buford's office and had a little time for rest. I had frozen at the Hermitage, so I had asked Liz to arrange to get my red dress and coat somehow spirited to the Governor's office. <sup>2 days</sup> Arrived, I gratefully changed sometime during the interim.

Buford told us that the Tennessee legislature was the only State legislature to pass a Resolution supporting Lyndon's stand in Viet-Nam.

A little before 12:00, we filed into the Chamber for Lyndon's address to a joint meeting of the House and Senate.

It was an impressive setting -- a sober and expectant audience. And most of the burden of the speech was Viet-Nam, as it has been over and over and over

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The clear expression of the history, and then the news that Bunker would ~~would~~ replace Lodge, with Gene Lock to back him up and Bob Komer to work on Pacification. And at the last, a salute to General Westmoreland, who had been stationed close to Nashville and is remembered with warmest admiration. You could see the tide of approval wash across the room.

Then we walked down the aisle with the Governor, between the rows of legislators and back to Buford's office, where there was a delicious buffet spread out and including some more Tennessee ham -- typical of these days is that food necessarily takes second place. You may have two good meals two hours apart, or there may be a lapse of ten hours with nothing.

We were going to drive to Columbia; Buford, Lyndon and I.

As we walked out of the Capitol, there was a band playing and an enthusiastic crowd, though I had heard there would be some pickets, I saw no sign of any.

We got into the back seat of the car and then started around a table-like pedestal on which the Capitol sits. Just as we rounded the corner, something happened. It was all so fast we could hardly believe. A youth broke from the thinning crowd and flung himself right in front of the car. The driver slammed on the brakes. Immediately there were officers at his side, but suddenly a young girl threw herself more successfully flat to the ground, practically under the wheels. They were picked up bodily and moved, and as we went on slowly it took only a split second and it would have been quite possible to have missed it entirely.

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I looked back and saw the young girl's naked legs -- her dress around her hips, her feet grabbed by one officer, her shoulders by another -- being removed from the road.

I wonder what would happen legally, psychologically, in every way, if our driver hadn't been so quick and the officers so alert, and they had been actually hit. Well, in this case the publicity was what they wanted -- they got sparse mention -- a brief paragraph in the paper and I don't think it even called their names.

It was an hour's drive to Columbia, Tennessee, to the Columbia State Community College -- a wonderful chance for Lyndon and Buford to visit. The college is rising from a bare field. You could see a foundation here and there as we went under the cold and dripping sky to the bunting draped platform, led by the youngish President-to-be.

I seldom make a speech in Lyndon's presence. Today, I found myself doing it over and over. In capsule, it was that new colleges like this one are being established at the rate of one a week across our country, mounting from eight junior colleges at the turn of the century to 680 now.

The main theme, the territorial expansion of our country, which had been very much pushed by the President who came from this very area -- James K. Polk, under whose Administration Texas and the Oregon country and California were all added to the Union amidst controversy in the storm of war. Now the territorial growth of America has ended. But there is a new age of national expansion. And that lies in education.



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And then a brief capsule of our trip. From Head Start to Teachers Corps to Columbia Community College -- the product of cooperation between the people of a County and their State and their Federal Government.

It was a tolerably good speech -- pleasantly received. And then Lyndon rose and made a speech I loved. Into a good text he interpolated a deep passion, lines straight from the heart, that his own college education had "meant everything to me at a time when my future hung in the balance. And then I hope somehow, someday, in the time allotted to me, I may repay the debt I owe. And I shall try."

A good many times I have heard him repeat the phrase "while I am President" or "in the time allotted to me" when there is always deep down, a tolling of the bell, in my thoughts.

I unveiled a bronze plaque, left a stack of books for the library, heard the words of praise from the head of the school, and then we went down the platform, shivering and heading for the car through the crowd. And it was a friendly crowd of several thousand, braving the dripping skies.

Then Liz, who touches every possible base, was there in front of me, the serious face of a Boy Scout, a colored youngster, three or four young folks from Ellensville School that I had hoped to stop to watch their use of TV in education, but had to be cut out of the schedule. She didn't want them disappointed. So she asked them to come there to represent their school. We had our picture made. I gave them a stack of books, a big smile and warm words, and then we were in the car and off, Buford and Lyndon and I.

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We drove to the home of President James K. Polk, which is really an indulgence for me. Some time I hope to go to the home of every one of the 36 Presidents. By now, I must have gone to at least 12.

There was a large crowd in the yard of the handsome white brick structure with the elegant front door. This, also, the home of a gentleman. No pioneer log cabin here. And it too had been kept and maintained by a ladies' association.

We smiled and waved to the crowd. And then inside, the ladies who were regents, who ran the place, were lined up to greet us -- headed I believe by Mrs. Austin Rhet.

We had a quick tour. The house was most impressive -- handsome furniture -- much of it original. Some had been in the White House with Polk. They did so many of the right things. That is, both of them had their portraits painted by G. P. A. Healy. Excellent ones. And Mrs. Polk's dress was designed <sup>by</sup> Wirth.

It interests me keenly to see a home of a President. And then <sup>across</sup> ~~the change of~~ against the hundred years, plus perspective of history.

On the way out of town, we stopped at a Dairy Queen. Lyndon had had us all scanning the street coming in. He gets famished for something sweet -- something to give him energy. Lem brought a handful of cones over, and Lyndon devoured one while waving left and right with the other hand.

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And then we drove back to Nashville, making one stop at a cross-roads to see the beautiful Tennessee walking horses. <sup>Some</sup> It belonged to Buford, one of which he had given us years before and which now has a lovely colt. This, a bonus for the photographers.

We were back at the Mansion by 4:00 with time to rest, with a cup of tea and reading my newspapers.

And a little after 5:00 the last event of this trip which was a reception and a seminar of educators invited from the region -- Tennessee, West Virginia, Alabama -- college presidents and superintendents of high schools and social workers in the pioneering new phases of education. It had been planned for outdoors on the lovely terrace of the Mansion.

Yesterday it had been in the 80's. Today, it had fallen into the 50's and cold and drizzly. And it really posed a logistic problem for dear Catherine and Liz and the sound men. But finally we were set up in the main living room and the sun porch thrown together where nearly everybody could have a folding chair, with a large segment of the press standing around. And a round-table discussion moderated by Doug Cater with Dr. Rose of the University of Alabama, Governor <sup>U</sup>Hewlett Smith of West Virginia and a striking, beautifully articulate Negro woman named Elizabeth Burgess, Head of the Foreign Language Department of all of the schools of Nashville, I think, and a sweet-faced woman who <sup>Teacher</sup> a classroom on wheels -- crippled and handicapped children -- in the Appalachian area.

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It was moving, thrilling, exciting -- what is happening in education in this decade, in this country.

// I gave the briefest summary of our whole trip, and then Lyndon spoke for about 50 minutes. It became one of those times when you were caught up in a spell, deeply stirred, but I hope it was being taken down on tape and don't think it was. And I knew for sure I was married to an extraordinary man.

Nevertheless, it got too long and I was writing out a note saying close soon and he with eyes in the back of his head, observed it and told the audience so, lightening the mood and making them laugh, and kept right on talking. Though it was too long, that many people went away, I believe, feeling that they knew ~~that~~ this human being, Lyndon Johnson, better. And I think with a lot of them some inspiration -- that rare quality.

The high point of the evening for me was John Gardner's short speech. He said, simply, that normally he's reserved but only because he was so affected by the trip, ~~that~~ But for the first time in his 20 months in the Cabinet he wanted to pay respect to the President in public. "It has been a privilege to see the generative power of one man's deep conviction." That for me was the gift of the trip. //

The Governor and Catherine and Lyndon and I shook hands with all of the educators in the hall as they filed by into the dining room for a very late refreshment. I think we must have talked at least 45 minutes <sup>longer</sup> than anyone had expected.

And then he hurried upstairs for a back-sitting room meeting with Buford and about 8 or 10 editors and publishers from Nashville and the area, including

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our old friend, Ed <sup>Ray</sup> ~~R~~, and an attractive, young man named Kennedy. It was a room where we've had so many meetings that have had import for the future.

I sat in with them for awhile, and had a drink -- very welcome at the end of this day -- and divided my time between there and Catherine's bedroom where Ann and their adorable grandchild, Malinda, and their son-in-law, Tim Wagner, and I all had a happy little visit, mostly admiring the baby and talking about Luci and Lynda, the things that she was going to do with the Mansion.

Thank heavens I remembered John Gardner who was still a guest in one of the rooms. So Catherine graciously sent to find him and bring him in to Buford and the men.

It was a long question and answer session. Little needling, but mostly earnest searching after facts, it seemed to me. And Lyndon was in great form.

It was a little past 9:00 when we went down to the dining room -- Buford and Catherine, Lyndon and I and John Gardner and the editors, for a delicious dinner. One of the many in this house for me.

And after 10:00 we left for the airport -- <sup>with C</sup> the weary and loving goodbye to Catherine and Buford.

X I went to the <sup>State Room</sup> ~~State Room~~ and collapsed, so much so that I was completely oblivious to the very rough weather, the tremendous wind, during the last part of our flight. And the sympathetic apology of the crew as I got off the plane was my first news that it had been bad!

It was nearly 2:00 when we were in bed at the White House. But I couldn't have spent 3 days of my life better, no matter how wearing. #