

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Wednesday, May 17, 1967

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I was up early -- a little after 7:00 -- and at my mail. And then at 11:00 the first appointment of the day was in the Kennedy Garden with the multiple sclerosis people. The group included representatives of the Board, pianists and humorists who were presenting me with the Bronze Hope Chest, and Richard Jacoby -- the multiple sclerosis man of the year in a wheelchair -- a victim of the disease since '59, but still working and with ironic appropriateness in the Health, Education, and Welfare Department. And of course flanks of press and cameras. It was the most hilarious presentation that ever happened to us. Victor Borge had been warming them up I heard later with such remarks as when someone asked where I was, "She's on the other side cutting the grass." And when asked if he was going to introduce me to the Jacobys, "I will if I can remember her name."

He got through the actual presentation with good enough grace, but at the end he began to cough as I made my thanks to the volunteers and the researchers and the hope for the future that their work held out. And he coughed worse and worse, getting red in the face, and everybody began to laugh. And I never knew whether it was real or staged. At any rate, Mr. Jacoby and his wife, ~~who~~ were as amused as anyone which was all that mattered. I insisted that they have a private tour upstairs if they wanted to. Meanwhile we had been the subject of great interest to all the tourists that were filing by on the other side of the glass in the corridor -- some 4 or 5 abreast. It must have looked ridiculous to them -- all of us just

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bending over with laughter around this poor man in the wheelchair.

I signed and dictated and autographed until it was time to go to this Evie Symington's for lunch. And ~~Evie~~ indeed was an off-beat, different, delicious thing for me. A few friends -- its only purpose, fun. I love the aura of Evie and Stu's house in Georgetown. It's an old revolutionary house. And once she told me there was a tunnel down in the basement that ran down to the river, and it was used during the Civil War as a part of the so-called underground railroad -- an escape route for slaves. There is a sort of charm there that comes only from ~~the~~ generations of good taste -- the stamp of a family over a hundred years at least. There is a Botticelli over the mantel -- a stern Dutch face that looks like it might have been painted by Franz Hall -- a delicate Andrea Del Sarto drawing as you go up the stairs. And most charming of all, a portrait of a little girl about 7. It was Evie's mother. An elegant woman in a wedding dress of the 1890's I would judge.

There were six of us -- Carol Fortas and Libby Rowe and Mary Ellen Monroney and Marny Clifford. If I had planned it for my own special pleasure, there couldn't have been people I would enjoy more. We had a drink, and in the middle of the day, feeling very abandoned and delicious bits of conversation. I remember Evie talking about how when she was a little girl of 11 or 12 and her mother had a dinner party planned with the oysters all arranged properly on the plates and she was in the pantry --

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loved oysters -- and went around from plate to plate -- gullop, gullop, gullop, went an oyster off each plate, never dreaming that she would be caught. The story came into the hands of Mrs. Longworth and ~~xxx~~ she's never heard the end of it.

Carol and I sat on the sofa and talked about the Society for a More Beautiful Capital. I lean on her just as I do on Abe for wisdom and advice. We talked about the Common Market and the British bid to get in and the French. Of the French she said, "They are good dress makers and painters."

Libby Rowe was just back from her trip to London where she had gone with her husband just for fun. They had taken a car and found the little roads and explored the countryside. One place she had been to was the home of Beatrix Potter who wrote the Peter Rabbit books and all the adorable little books that I read to Lynda and later to Luci and that Lynda has now had rebound in leather and cherishes -- crayon marks in all -- *Jabatha* *Tefifa*
Chr. non *not correct ch*
Twitchet and Mrs. Tinkerwinkle was part of our life.

They said that Beatrix Potter's home was still there and Mr. McGregor's farm and all the pretty countryside where her characters lived. Every time another farm came up for sale, Beatrix Potter would write another children's book and buy the farm. And when she died she left all her holdings -- some 4,000 acres -- to the National Trust so that it could remain just as it was -- beautiful countryside -- for generations of children to enjoy.

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I thought of Lynda and what a good story that would make for her to write.

We ate off Lowestoft -- a very delicious feminine sort of lunch, including delicious eggs and some jellied mixture. And the talk ~~was~~ ranged wide and was full of ~~laughs~~ laughter and 3:00 came very soon, and I left.

Back at the White House I continued my self-indulgence by having an hour's nap and then had a Spanish lesson in preparation for tomorrow when I will be seeing all the ^d Diplomats' wives at tea. And then dressed in my very favorite outfit -- the champagne lace -- for the last of the big receptions -- the military. ^{Twelve Hundred} 1200 had been invited. We expected possibly 1,000. Hopefully we had begun to put up the striped booths in the lawn this morning. I love it when there are blue skies and crisp white summer uniforms and snapping ~~x~~ flags and striped tents for refreshments and the red-coated Marine band. But this has been a cold, gray Spring. Not once have we had the beautiful drama of a lawn party. So we met the guests of honor upstairs in the Yellow Room -- the Vice President and the McNamaras, and the four special guests of honor -- the Medal Honor winners -- Captain Barnham and a nice looking young Negro, Lawrence Joel, with his wife who was as dressed up and as thrilled at being here as I would have been at her age. And Lt. Moram and a Captain Williams who brought his wife and talked to Lyndon about their 4-year old daughter who had been present at the ceremony when her father was awarded the medal, and whom Lyndon had immediately taken to and she to him. And

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now everytime Lyndon comes on television this little girl, said her parents, walks up and kisses his face on the set.

The top brass was upstairs -- General Wheeler, General McConnell of the Air Force. But for the rest of the services, acting Chiefs of Operations. And of course the Secretary of the Army, Mr. Resor. And the Secretary of the Navy, Mr. Nitze. Since the Defense Department went under one head, these high officers have retreated into relative obscurity. I was delighted that Senator Margaret Chase Smith was upstairs with us. I think any honor or dignity accorded her, and this was because of her rank on the Armed Services Committee, is a highly appropriate.

This time a receiving line was just too much. So we went downstairs for pictures in the Blue Room with the Medal of Honor winners and their wives and the Vice President and others with General and Mrs. Wheeler. And then we began to make the circle where indeed there was plenty of low brass as well as high brass -- the guests ~~among~~ ranging from stewards to Lyndon's valets, the personnel of Camp David and of the Sequoia and Communications people who go with us to the Ranch -- to 60 4-star Generals and one 5-star General -- Omar Bradley and his recent bride -- very much the center of attention. And I was eager to see her because Marilyn had told me so much about how happy the General was. He looked it -- just beaming.

One writer said that the State Dining Room ^{looked} liked the subway at rush hour. She was right. And as I made my way through it, I kept on

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saying to guests, "I hope you will find a plate or a drink and your favorite friends and go out on the porch. The view is lovely. Or find a seat in the Red Room or the Green Room." Many did. But wherever Lyndon went like the Pied Piper a crowd swelled around him. He shook hands to right and left, and so did I in slower tempo. And we circumnavigated the State Dining Room and then the Blue Room and then I drifted out onto the porch. By that time I didn't see him any longer, and I was in the East Room. There were buffets and bars in both the State Dining Room and the East Room, and dancing in the East Room.

Chief Baltimore, Chief Mills, and the other two chiefs and their wives were there. Our one-time aide -- the Howard ^{Burris} ~~Burris~~ -- looking very handsome -- the both of them.

I met one General's wife named Mrs. Reedy who had been at the University of Texas with me in 1932... She remembered Nell Coggin. She had been a Pi Phi. Some vague bell in the recesses of my mind rung when she called her maiden name. The many guests who had been stationed at San Antonio some time clustered around the ~~State~~ chili con ^{Ches} ~~Caso~~ dip. There was one moment when I found myself going through a doorway and there planted firmly in the center of it was a large formidable looking woman in a festive ^{Tyrol} ~~tyrolian~~ costume. Lyndon was right behind me.

"Mr. President. Will you do something for me?" Always the greeting most calculated -- to make me at least want to melt into the furniture.

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It was ^{the Baroness Von} LaBaron ~~Entrap~~ from Vermont. Too slowly to make a deft introduction my mind clicked into the recollection that Senator Aiken had suggested it would be nice if we invited her. She is his constituent down visiting Washington. She wanted to go to Viet-Nam taking, as well as I could gather, the movie "Sound of Music" -- the ~~story~~ story of her life -- for the service men to see. And she wanted the President to intercede for her with McNamara. "Do you have ~~any~~ influence with Mr. McNamara?" Lyndon, who is quicker than I, said, "No, but my wife does." And away he went.

For two hours I both worked at it and enjoyed it. Going upstairs a little past 8:00 to join the Cecil Burneys who were our house guests for the night, and Herman Jones who is in town for an ~~Alaska~~ Alcoholics Board, and whom we had added to the Reception and invited to stay for dinner with us. It was only then that I realized how tired I was. It is physically great exertion for me -- just like plowing or mountain climbing -- to give out, to try to be pleasant, to think of a point of contact with a thousand people. I hope it doesn't show in my face or demeanor because I want to always remember that this maybe the only time some of them will be here to see this house, to see a President or a First Lady, and for some of them it will be as thrilling as it was for me when I was 26.

There followed two pleasant, relaxed hours. ^{Kara} Carol Burney had prepared for me a list of names of Latin Americans who were outstanding for some contribution -- cultural or economic or ^{service} government -- in

in South Texas. It is hard for us to keep current, to bring in new names--new blood for invitations to committees, to add their strength to our personal and political life.

Cecil showed me a delightful picture of a big complex of automobile sales businesses where hundreds of palm trees had been planted around the several-acre establishment, and a small sign, charmingly designed said, "Lady Bird. We don't think that there is anything man-made that is more beautiful than our cars, but we agree that cities should be made beautiful, and we are trying." I was pleased at the yeast, the vitality of the idea of conservation beautification and of the use this place I'm in can be put to as a forum, a point of leadership.

We had Lyndon's favorite Creole shrimp, plus party food. The guests left about 11:30, and Lyndon went to night reading, and I to bed with my current book. I was delighted that he had told Herman Jones that he wanted to appoint Bess to the first vacancy on the Committee on Retardation. She will work well and ably, along with Muriel, Mathilda, and the other capable people there. I am glad when we can put our mark on these committees and commissions. The eternal difficulty is always in finding the right person.

[NOTE: Page 8 was missing from the transcript for this date. Mrs. Johnson noted this on the bottom of page 7. This transcript was prepared by LBJ Library staff on 9/5/2014.]