

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Monday, June 5, 1967

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It began with that most dread and frightening sound that can happen in this house. The sudden ring of the telephone in the middle of the night. It can never be good news. It jarred me from the soft web of sleep. Almost immediately I heard Lyndon's quick reaction, "Yes." And then a long silence, interrupted on his part by a few crisp questions. Then he finally hung up and fell back on the pillow. In an almost unbearable wave of sympathy, I asked him what it was. And he said something like "We have a war on our hands." I had looked at the clock. It was about 4:30 or 4:40, I believe. He turned out the light and dozed fitfully. An hour or so later, the phone crashed the silence again. And once more a talk ~~which~~ with a few clipped questions on his side and then long silences. When it was over I leaned over and kissed him, and then knowing that he would soon be up and that I could not help, I went into my room. But I cannot say I slept. Rather it was a long period of continuing night(ma)res in which I was lost and wondering, though sometimes the places were familiar. And finally at 9:00 I got up and had coffee. He had been gone a long time. Not since a day in October of '62 had I felt so tense, strained, such a feeling of foreboding shadow. I remember that day when I ^{had} stood in the bedroom at the Elms -- a beautiful, clear, golden day it was, and I looked out at the sunlight shimmering on the leaves of gold and crimsons and reds and I wondered ^{"Is this the last beautiful October day we shall see?"} But there is nothing I can do about

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the great clash of powers -- nothing at all except be quiet and sympathetic and cheerful and look as pretty as I can when Lyndon is home. And when he's not I might as well go on about my little business of the day. And there were four days left before I would leave on Friday for my New England trip, then return for the State Dinner and on to Austin the next morning to await Luci's baby. So I must use these days well.

I began by starting out on a drive with Liz and Sharon a little past 10:00 to see the beautification projects that were award winners. We were going to have the ceremony on Tuesday, and I wanted to be familiar enough with those things winning awards so that I could say a personal word to the people as they came down the line. Always, always I feel that I would give a prize to whoever would give us a better word than that one "Beautification"! It sounds institutional, clinical, it doesn't have any of the joy of the work in it. There were two commercial areas -- the Giant Food Store on 14th where our old friend Mr. Danzansky, the President of the chain -- at least in this area -- had done a good job of creating a park-like atmosphere out in front of his super market. There were shade trees and benches which screened it from the parking area somewhat, and some shrubs and flowers and a little plaque dedicating it to the youth of the neighborhood. We were told that it was maintained by a neighborhood youth group, and best of all it was well kept. As somebody who has spent a lot of her married years going to the grocery

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store, I especially appreciated it. Every time I see him he tells me proudly that he's started another one. He's on his third one now.

And then the other commercial project was the Guardian Federal Savings and Loan Association right across from duPont Circle where graceful white birch trees and magnolias in front of the building shaded the benches for patrons to wait. The rhododendrons were in bloom. It really was a charming spot.

There were two schools -- Hardy Elementary and Simmons Elementary. Actually here there seemed very little to be enthusiastic about. But Katie Louchheim who was with us -- and she is Chairman of the Awards Committee -- assured us that it was very much better than what they had begun with, and that a good deal of the reasons⁶ for giving of the awards^{was} for what went on inside the schools -- the Science classes that taught them about plants and soil and maintenance, and the anti-litter work among the students.

And then we went to see a neighborhood project in far-east Washington. It is an enormous city over there on the other side of the river. And we in Northwest almost don't know it exists. It was a very lower-middle class area -- certainly no slum. And the few blocks we drove up and down where this particular community organization was active was beautiful with climbing roses -- red, pink and white -- a joy to see. They had worked together -- these neighbors -- on alley cleanup and garbage and refuge control and rodent and pest control. And they had joined other

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citizens' groups in trying to get rid of Kensington dump. They had also worked to beautify their schools and police and fire departments. And particularly on two churches which we drove by.

It was a very good morning, and I could almost put out of my mind for awhile the lowering cloud.

We also drove by another school -- this is my third -- it must possibly be Sharon's tenth -- to see where we might spend the \$20,000 that had been so generously given to us by Phyllis Dillon. It was Kingsman school in far-east Washington. And a sadder one I never saw -- steeply eroded banks that years and years of children had tumbled and slid down. And why not -- that's the way with children and banks. Instead of hopelessly trying to grow grass, Halprin had suggested that we turn it into a sort of sculptural arrangement of steps and slides, relieved occasionally by a few flowering trees and wells. This is certainly a challenge. One thing, it couldn't be worse. We decided we would give it a try with the \$20,000 if Halprin could come up with a good idea.

Then we drove back to the White House a little before 1:00.

I had lunch on a tray in my room with Lynda who is bright and gay these days. And every time I see her, it's an adventure to see what she has on. She's turning into a regular fashion model. There is actually a spirit of excitement in her that had not happened before about her last article in McCall's -- the one on the generation gap -- I think because it

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aroused more a spark of excitement and controversy and questioning and interest among the leaders. And they tell her about it.

And then Liz and Simone came in, and we had a 2-hour discussion on my New England trip, beginning as I walk out of the house Friday morning at 9:00 and going on through each day, event by event, a full briefing on each -- the field, the color, the people there. They brought me reams of background reading. I like to do as much of this as possible. I always think of that motto in Union Station which goes something like this: "He who travels to find the riches of the orient must take the riches of the orient with him."

Then I went over the speeches -- this for about the 3rd time. They are pretty good. I made a few changes. And then at 4:00 Ashton interrupted me to take me down to the Library to see Mrs. Byron Skelton and her daughter and their three little grandchildren. They had had a swim in the White House pool, and they were going to have a very special tour, interrupted by cookies and sandwiches and cokes in the Library and a little talk with me -- happy and pleasant. I often do this with old friends, and I was touched and startled to find how many things Mrs. Skelton remembered of our contacts in the past, the letter she had gotten from Lyndon when one of her children married or when someone was very ill. We talked of old friends in Temple.

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And then I went up to the Queens' Room to have a meeting with Mr. Kruger of the Park Department and Mr. Kirkpatrick to see the new renderings for the Ellipse -- the special accent on the west segment -- ^{where} ~~that~~ Rose Zalles' gift will be used. It turns out there will be enough of that \$70,000 for only one fountain. But they have enough in their own budget -- the Parks Department -- to make a big start for paths and flowers around the fountain and the underground carefully screened comfort station, a much needed thing to take the place of a huge gray trailer that is parked down on the Ellipse. It looked fine to me. I wonder a bit about taking out the roads for driving that go through the Ellipse. A fine idea if you can change the habits of the American people. I also looked at a small model of the statuary garden that is right opposite the Archives, across Constitution Avenue, between the National Gallery and the Smithsonian. It is more formal than I like really, and I'll be sad to lose the enormous beach in the middle of that plot, ^{in plan} the envisions in that very place, a round pool -- a reflecting pool possibly with jets in the summer time, and a skating rink in the winter -- and quite formal areas of the statuary and a really good restaurant on the Mall side. But it must be in harmony with the whole Mall arrangement, and right across from it will be the Hirshhorn Gallery and Collection. Mr. Kirkpatrick assured me that overall planning would make them simpatico, and one would lead

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into the other handsomely. It is too vast for me to really judge, but I am sad to lose the beach.

I went back to work with Ashton at my desk, and turned on the TV. The news of the Middle East conflict was everywhere, but totally conflicting. The Israelis said the Egyptians started the fighting -- the Egyptians said the Israelis had invaded their territory with planes and troops. The Israelis gave the numbers of planes -- vast numbers -- of their enemy's that they had knocked down. And the Egyptians claimed victories over the Israelis, citing the number of planes downed, though not as many as the Israelis had claimed, with very little loss to themselves. And then there was the news that a State Department official had used the word "neutral" about the United States' position in the Mid East conflict. I felt dismayed and uncertain and a little chagrined. Then Rusk had hastened onto the TV to try to clarify the word "neutral". And the U. N. was struggling in and out with its major action arm going in session with 5 or 6 hours, going out with presumably private talks among its members, and then promising to go back into session any minute.

Like ^{millions} ~~many~~ of others, I suppose, I strained with hope toward the U. N. and what ~~what~~ it may produce. And I remember with dismay the expressions that I have heard applied to it these last months by many observers -- "That mountain of jello", "dish water U. N." It all adds up to impotent.

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I turned off the TV and went over to the bowling lanes where I used up my energy in three games, hurling a heavier ball than usual and running up scores in the 150's -- but all by myself. Not much fun, but exercise, and while I'm doing it I don't think much about anything else.

And then back to my little room where I worked with ~~the~~ great white lights of the TV setups behind Lyndon's office glaring at the side of the White House and into the room.

It was a little after 10:00 when Lyndon came home to dinner. Mary Slater followed him, and the three of us sat down at the table. He looked very burdened and the lines deeper, and I felt it would be the greatest cruelty for me to ask him to talk about the war in the Middle East. So I tried some brisk, bright words about what I had been doing today, and it fell quite hollow. And he did use the expression, "Something very unfortunate happened this afternoon." -- referring to the use of the word "neutral."

At 12:00 his light was out. I prayed that he slept because last night he had had only about 4-1/2 hours.

The evening paper headlines were, "War Rages in Mid-East", "U.N. Attempts to get Truce in Israel Battle", "Johnson Pushes U.N. Effort".

And so the anxious day came to an end.