

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, September 12, 1967

Page 1

It was a full^{*} bursting day at the White House. It began for me with one of those sweet, happy things you love to remember. Hugh O'Brian -- our friend of many entertainments -- had been through the house the day before with his four Aunts. I had heard about it and asked them to come back for coffee with me this morning and a special upstairs tour. At 11:00, Bess had them out on the Truman Balcony, a sparkling, golden, autumn day -- the kind when merely to be alive is enough. And there they were -- all talking at once -- two of them about the trip they were taking to Europe on the last sailing of the big ocean liner -- the Queen Mary I believe it is. Hugh was treating them to it. And that was what was so dear and sweet to me. And the other two old Aunts had come to Washington and he was entertaining all four of them here. He was lean and handsome and joking. And they rattled on about what he did when he was a little boy, how thrilled they were to be in the White House. And then Lyndon came out. I love him for doing things like this. He always joins me when I have guests if he can.

What delighted me was the sheer, simple, kindness of Hugh's caring that these old ladies had an exciting time. And believe me, they were going to. Hugh asked us if we would like to see a magic trick. Oh, we would! So he got out some bright colored silk handkerchiefs and pulled them out of unexpected places like an empty hand or my

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, September 12, 1967

Page 2

hand -- all the dazzling and completely nonunderstandable to me, while his Aunts chattered on about how he had partly worked his way through school with his magic and even began as a little boy charging the kids to watch him.

A little before 12:00 I went in for an appointment with Bill Hardeman, the President of the National Association of Travel Organizations, a Georgia tourist man whom I wanted to hear discuss their opinion on the highway beautification bill. Sharon and Liz were with me. Sharon was very well organized, her opinions documented, quiet and persuasive -- a most intelligent young woman.

Georgia apparently has made considerable strides in beautifying its own highways with planting out of trees by 4-H and other youth organizations, especially dogwoods and by visitors' centers ^{at} ~~by~~ the State line. But I felt quite sure when we ended that Mr. Hardeman and his organization had sizeable reservations about the highway beautification act because it might take down some billboards advertising their motels and "attractions" as he put the word. Also I felt sure he didn't know much about what it was about. He was startled that of the 85 million -- small sum -- that's left by the Senate bill, 70 million would be for highway planting, 10 million for junkyard screening or removal, and only 5 million for payment for taking down some billboards.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, September 12, 1967

Page 3

Next I worked with Ashton and had lunch on a tray and recorded some. And then at 3:30 I went to the South Grounds for the most unique party that has ever been held here in my time or in all the times I've read about, -- a Country Fair for the children of Congressmen and Cabinet members and Government officials and White House staff between the ages of 6 and 18. There was a Ferris wheel and a merry-go-round and a pony ring around the fountain and red striped tents that had hot dogs and coca cola and taffy apples, popcorn and cotton candy! The view from the top of the Ferris wheel of the White House grounds dotted with red striped tents, about 500 children, milling, running, laughing, was one I will never forget.

Lynda Bird was there nearly the whole time dressed in a delightful costume -- a sort of camel colored culottes with a western cowboy hat.

In part this had all begun in my mind because I remembered what Lynda and Luci used to say when they were little and we would start out for dinner and they didn't want us to go. "Why are you always going out, Momma?" And then once Lynda said, "Momma, Washington is sure meant for the Congressmen and their wives, but it is not meant for their children."

I wore a navy blue dress with a red and white scarf, and all of the many hostesses were in red, white, and blue. ~~The~~ The men wearing

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, September 12, 1967

Page 4

red striped barkers vests and little straw hats. Tyler Abell -- handsome and laughing -- was running the Ferris wheel. Everybody had been roped in on a job. Jane Freeman was fortune teller and so was Scooter Miller, dressed up in about 30 strands of beads, a sequin blouse, her pepper and salt hair augmented by a gray wig. But the most fun to me were the antique cars. There were about 10 of them lined up on the White House drive with their owners who were the chauffeurs. There was a 1909 Mitchell and a 1915 Ford. And the youngest of the lot was a 1932 Ford with a rumble seat. And I am sure I must have dated in its contemporary at the University of Texas 35 years ago, and thought it very snazzy.

I sent to the Archives to get my pink picture hat from Woodstock, Vermont brought out and took a spin around at least three times. The brass on the cars were gleaming, but not as bright as their owner's smiles. Hubert came out. He said he had one just like the 1950 one at home in Waverly, and offered to give me a ride. The owner trustingly assented and off we put -- chug, chug, chug.

Lyndon came out with Yuki and immediately became a sort of a pied piper with the children following in behind him wanting autographs and taking pictures. And to my dismay, he picked up Yuki and they put on their act where Yuki talks to him. I could have done without that. Yuki ended with kissing his cheek. I think everybody was having a good

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, September 12, 1967

Page 5

time unless maybe it was poor Chuck whom the newspaper women were in behind in such ~~dress~~ ^{dress} that Liz got him to be my escort. And he was everywhere at my elbow.

I was mad about the sack races! A lot of determined children mostly between about 6 and 14 climbed into sacks which they clutched around their waists and at the signal set off in a race for the finish line about a half a block away down the White House lawn. There were many tumbles on the grassy slopes, and prizes. And there was one determined little girl with blond curls and red and white checkered dress who went in every race, time after time, no matter what age the children and won a lot of them. All in all, it was an hilarious afternoon. I gave up completely on discipline and had something of everything -- popcorn of course and a soft drink. And at great peril to my teeth, a taffy apple. And last I went whole hog with a hot dog.

There was a putting contest on Eisenhower's green. And then so close to the trees on the west side was a familiar black and white linoleum dance floor happily used in summers past. But not this rainy summer. But this afternoon youngsters from 14 to 18 were giving it a good workout with a fast, hot little band. Well, it was the most fun, and I took my hat off to Bess and all her planning and to all the wonderful hostesses who had helped out and to the generous people from the amusement parks and the candy companies and the toy manufacturers who had so generously helped on it.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, September 12, 1967

Page 6

I was surprised when I asked the time and it was 5:30 and I didn't think it had been over 30 minutes, and I didn't want to go in even then. In fact the crowd was scarcely diminishing at all. But I went upstairs and they began to gradually trail out to anxious mothers waiting in cars at the gates. What a day for traffic this must have been outside!

Jean Louis came and gave me a comb-out -- a fancy one in fact. Fall is here and it is time to go to work. This is the third of a series of small upstairs parties, ^{was} ~~Generate~~ round tables in the family dining room and drinks on the Truman Balcony or the Yellow Room. Hubert was here without Muriel. And Dean came late. He had been to meet the Japanese Ministers at the airport and Virginia was out of town. And the young, attractive Trowbridges were a very charming part of the evening.

I was in the Yellow Room by 8:00 in a gold lame' dress -- one of my eastern fabrics that Adele Simpson had made up for me, covering it with chiffon.

We had asked quite a few Senators -- the John McClellans. Norma is always lovely and so very feminine. And tall, handsome, my always favorite, George Smathers with my sometime bridge partner Rosemary. And Betty Talmadge with Herman -- I dare say one of the first times this year he has stayed up past 8:00! These four are among

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, September 12, 1967

Page 7

my southern favorites.

And in wider diverse parts of our country two other favorites -- the Gale McGees. I find both of them charming and highly intelligent. And the young Walter Mondales of Minnesota.

The first arrival was Cyril Magnan -- Lynda's friend. And the other single guest was Brooke Astor, just out of the hospital, a little less ebullient than I always remember her. She gravitated right away to the Averell Harrimans, and she and Marie it turned out had known each other all of their lives and there were some delightful sketches of reminiscences. From Brooke -- about her first marriage -- ~~she~~ ^{he} was 16 -- across Lafayette Park at St. John's church. She recommended it for Lynda. And from Marie -- that they were about to celebrate their -- I think it was 34th or 35th wedding anniversary (we were on the subject of Lynda's wedding). And a delightful statement from her that went something like this: "My dear, marriage in any case is wonderful." The longer I know Averell, the better I like him. It is more than that. It is an enormous respect and admiration for someone who is willing to work for his Government in any capacity so long ⁱⁿ ~~its~~ such tough jobs, with an apparent shrugging off of title or need of recognition.

One of the most interesting couples were the young William Huitts -- Republicans for Johnson in '64. He is chairman of the John Deere Co. Both of them are over 6 feet tall I think. His wife -- a very striking

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, September 12, 1967

Page 8

woman -- red haired, a good horse woman. She has just returned from Japan and was full of her trip and her admiration for the people.

And the Leonard McCallums were a comfortable addition, talking of George and Alice Brown and their hunting trips together. They ^{had} just finished one. George has lost the sight of one eye practically. But Leonard says he has adjusted his arm and his holding of a gun so that he can shoot pretty well with the other eye. And he enjoys the company and the trip just as much as ever. They are gallant folks, the Browns.

From the House there were the John Blatniks of Minnesota. I had not known them well, though he is one of the chief champions for the Highway Beautification Bill. They were a very attractive couple. He's tall and white haired and very solid looking -- almost formidable, but also pleasant. And the young Ed Edmondsons -- her leg in a cast from a simple household accident and she had flown all the way up from Oklahoma where she is keeping the children in school for the Fall just to come to this party. I was flattered.

At dinner, I had George Smathers on my right and Frank Church on my left. All the talk of his being recalled has abated and they even help his chances in the election. But he looks upon it as a rough one, and they are both campaigning hard. I liked his description, and I think it is right, of Bethine. He said ["]She can walk right through a picnic

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, September 12, 1967

Page 9

or a Country Fair and out the other side and she'll have more friends than I could have made if I had stayed there 2 hours."

The population explosion and birth control were most of his conversation for the evening. And I repeated what I've often thought that if I was destined to be born into politics I was mighty glad I wasn't born in India where the problems you faced would be so nearly insoluble. ^{that} It would be total frustration. And what of the problems of the next generation or somewhere down the line of American politicians or politicians anywhere? Suppose we learn how to control the weather. And think a minute of the economic, legal, and spiritual fallout of all the population-control measures. How is somebody going to cope with them 50 or 100 years down the road? So I guess we ought to relax with today's problems.

Frank was firmly of the opinion that sometime there would have to be enforced population control. With George, it was a much lower key -- warm and easy conversation, reminiscences about Bebe and our younger days. And my own keenly expressed regret that he -- or so it's said -- is getting out of politics when he finishes this term. He wisely did not affirm or deny. But the tone said that he is. You know if you are ever going to make a change there just comes a time in life when you have to do it or else you're hooked for the rest of your years.

The ladies had coffee in the Yellow Room while I showed a few of them who were not familiar with the White House -- Mrs. Huitt and

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, September 12, 1967

Page 10

Mrs. McCallum -- the Queens' Room. And Mrs. McCallum recognized Oveta's chandelier.

The gentlemen joined us rather early. It was a pleasant, successful, bright evening I thought. At least I passed the test of the hostess having a good time. And it was close to 11:30 -- and no surprise to me -- when Herman Talmadge made the move to go. And then quickly they slipped away -- the most hard~~ing~~ working ones of them first. Secretary Rusk, himself the most courteous of men, somehow manages to drift away like fog, unnoticed, at an early hour.

Lynda Bird had come in and brought Chuck around, introduced him to everybody -- a pleasant little ripple of excitement and approval following them as they walked around the room.

It was 11:30 when Lyndon took the guests down to the South Lawn to say goodbye. And I went to bed with my reading and that satisfied feeling of a well-done party.