

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Wednesday, October 4, 1967

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It really began a little after midnight when I flew into Andrews, and there in my car was Dr. Hurst. He had been in Washington for his Committee work, and when Lynda Bird had phoned me the afternoon before he had gotten on the phone and there was a note of sternness and concern in his voice that I have not heard in over 10 years. Lyndon had a bad cold. He seemed spent, depleted, low in spirits. He wished he could talk to me. I told him I would be in around midnight -- could he meet me at the plane. He was catching an earlier plane out to Atlanta, but he said he would rearrange it somehow and be there. And so I stepped into the warm circle of his smile after midnight. We got into the back seat and rolled up the glass and talked the 45 minutes to the White House. His feeling of mere anxiety had not abated. He did not see the bounce, the laughter, the teasing quality in Lyndon that he has watched over these 12 years. He thought he was running on marginal energy -- quite simply that he was bone tired. He repeated, "You know Bird, this is the first time I have said this to you." And he kept on saying that he expected a part of it must be a psychological result of seeing four papers every morning and three screens of television that kept on shouting all of the troubles of the world and all the things he was doing wrong -- the declining polls, the rising frustrations. I asked him point-blank if he thought as Lyndon's doctor that he ought not to run again because of his health. And here he came to a dead stop. He said it was beyond medical

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knowledge to determine what result it might have.

I wanted so much to tell him of our thinking, but yet I did not feel free to. The more people who know it, the more chance there is to have the story looking back at us from the printed page some morning, and I think it should come from us. And then I asked him what he thought I should do. The dear man -- he is so honest and good. He said, "I think you ought not to travel so much. I think it matters to him for you to be with him. Stay home." I told him I was going to after I finished this one trip to the colleges on the 8th and 9th. And then he said, "And when have you had a thorough medical exam lately?" "For his sake you ought to get one every six months." I cannot even remember quite when it was. That much I can do -- those two things -- and will. And it was comforting to see how much he cared even though neither of us know the answer. I tried to make one thing clear to him. That is that I wouldn't be leaving a thing behind that I yearned for whenever we left the White House. And also that I thought Lyndon approaching 60 could be quite busy and happy out of public office. Here I ran into a complete blank wall. He looked at me almost in astonishment. "No, I don't think he can quit."

"Why?"

"Because he hasn't done everything that he wants to. That will never happen."

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And so we left it on a sad but affectionate note at the Diplomatic entrance. He was to catch a 5:00 plane out in the morning.

As it turned out it was a short night for me too. Lyndon was still awake when I went up -- reading. His cold was very bad. He looked sick. We turned out the light and slept, but not long. It was a little past 6:00 when he was up and working again. And we had a long talk, going over and over the same old ground -- when could he make his announcement that he was not going to run again -- when and how. Our mood was bleak and dispirited and no answers come.

We had breakfast before 8:00, and a little later feeling washed out and dull, I got up and began my day -- a meeting with Liz and Sharon and Elspeth about my trip to Williams College and Yale. In three days we must hammer out, and I must practice, two good speeches. One bright spot was Elspeth Rostow -- so calm and smart and sweet, with a vein of humor.

By noon I quit, had 30 laps in the pool for which I felt the better, and came upstairs for a lunch of scrambled eggs and toast and bacon in my room. And then a long and much-needed session with Jean Louis -- signing mail under the dryer and returning to the White House, stopping first to greet the President of the Lincoln Life Insurance Company and a party that were touring the White House. He's financing the restoration

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of Ford's Theatre, or a part of it -- one of Stewart Udall's many enthusiasms and imaginative additions to this town.

And then a long session with Ashton signing mail -- mostly Midwest "thank-yous". My staff tends to their own. There are always bushels of "thank-yous" from every trip I make, and then come the flood of pictures to autograph.

I feel very good about my staff. Marcia Maddox could practically run for office at any of the towns or countries that we visit -- from Columbus, Indiana to Korea. And so could Simone and Liz.

About dark I went over to the bowling lanes and bowled two quick games, doing rather well -- 136 and 138. And then back in time to dress and go into the Yellow Oval Room to greet the President's dinner guests -- 30 Senators -- another in a series of his stag dinners. But since he's late, I welcomed the opportunity to go in and see them.

Senator Dodd was there -- the first time I've seen him in months. And I made a quick path across the room to greet him with extra warmth and talked about Grace and our Spanish lessons and wanting to get back with them. It must have been a crushing nightmare for him and for Grace. And I am not proud of myself for remaining silent.

Vance Hartke was there -- bouncy and jovial. And after the briefest, courteous greeting, I gathered up Senator Harry Byrd and we sat down in the corner and talked about our last visit at his father's

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home. He said he would like to see my pictures sometime. I'll make sure he does. He finds it very difficult to ever vote with us. But somehow I cannot forget his father and my admiration for him.

Stew and I talked on the safe subject of Jimmy and how his guitar playing at the party for the Kroeggs had livened things up. And all the time I was feeling that only those you've really cared for can hurt you. For me, Stewart is among those I've cared for for many years. And I find what he says now about stopping the bombing for a limited time and then feeling free to do anything we want to foolish and dangerous. He's been selling it glibly on TV, and he has sizeable credentials to do it.

Lyndon came in about a quarter past eight, and I was amazed at the change in him since 9:00 this morning. His cold seemed better, his spirits were vastly higher, and he looked jovial, full of controled energy, cool and tough. I would not want to put it to the test. But it was a remarkable feat -- something of a metamorphosis since morning. And I know a part of it was the necessity to rise up and work. But I also remembered what Willis Hurst had told me about working on marginal energy.

I said goodbye and went upstairs to the Solarium for steak with Lynda and Chuck. One more, back from the Ranch, I am on a diet. Marcia and her husband came. I cut in for a few hands of bridge,

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and then stopped to watch a TV program -- Lyndon and Walter Washington and Mr. Fletcher in the Rose Garden talking about the new Government for D.C. What Lyndon said was great. But there was a certain lack of spontaneity. And I was conscious of a little too much agreement by Walter. I don't want him to suffer from -- or Lyndon either -- any charges of "Uncle Tom" or "Rubber Stamp". This has gone pretty well up to now, although it seems to me we haven't quite gotten the credit for having achieved the sizeable step in something nobody else has been able to solve since 1789 -- an independent Government for the District of Columbia.

I said goodnight to my young folks -- I enjoy their company so much -- and came downstairs where Chief Nauser gave me a good massage while I watched "Gunsmoke". It had been recorded on Monday evening. And I lived it up -- reading myself to sleep by midnight.