

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Friday, October 20, 1967

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It was a many-faceted day -- beautiful golden Indian summer. I was up early and went to Jean Louis in order to look presentable for my daffodil planting.

In my bright green with the white lapels -- veteran of many plantings -- I left the White House in a mini-bus a little after 11:00 with Walter Washington, Katie Louchheim, and Sharon Francis and half a dozen members of our Beautification Committee, including of course our Garden Club member. And we drove to Columbia Island where Mary Lasker has given 800,000 daffodil bulbs that are to be planted in natural drifts along the banks of the Potomac and under the willow trees and on up to Memorial Bridge so that when you drive in from the airport in the early Spring, or come in from Arlington to work, or from the West from Virginia or Texas as a tourist. It's the major gateway to the city -- 166,000 a people a day see it. And it will just be glorious next Spring.

Mary's gift had already been purchased before the Congress -- alas, especially, Congresswoman Hansen -- clamped down on the Park Service funds for planting new material. So Nash Castro enlisted the efforts of all the garden clubs of Washington. The Park Service did manage to prepare the beds. And dozens and dozens of garden club ladies have been planting daffodils on Columbia Island. This morning

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I joined them -- some in slacks, some in tweeds, some with their children along -- everybody with a smile. We used a special tool that is used in Holland, and I got on my knees along with Walter and a whole coterie of the garden club ladies, and we planted and planted to the clicking of the cameras with a gorgeous view of the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial behind us.

There were autographs and jokes and general goodwill. And I went up and down the whole line thanking every lady. I think we will all look at this display next Spring with more proprietary, more special feeling, it's a little bit ours.

And then back to the White House into a sleeker red suit and out into the Rose Garden and the Jacqueline Kennedy Garden for pictures. The chrysanthemums are at their peak. The gardens are glorious.

We are still sending out Spring of '65 pictures of me, and I am striving for a better one -- a special one for my conservation-oriented friends. And then Lynda and I slipped into her inconspicuous black car, and we went off for lunch. We do it two or three times a year. It's our very special self-indulgence. She took me to the Jockey Club. The managers know her and the maitre d'. And they make a salad just the way she likes it. And they always greet her with big smiles. And she looks upon it as a kind of therapy for me. We can

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get housebound in the White House. It is fun to get out. Old friends no longer invite us out for dinner on an hour's notice -- that is except at the Ranch.

Today it was an interesting experience. As we walked in, a group was walking out and I heard a man speaking rather loudly say, "And the day of his Inauguration was his last happy day." I did not recognize him.

The manager greeted us with his big smile, and we went to a quiet table in the back. The place is so dark you can scarcely see. But very low lights to create that atmosphere of intimacy.

At the table in front of us there were about six men who must have been having their second martini. One of them talked very loud and quite continuously. I paid no attention to what he was saying. In fact, I never knew, but it was obnoxious.

A middle-aged lady in the corner with a gentleman smiled at me in a sort of deprecating apologetic manner as though deploring the loud-talking man. Presently she took him a note. He looked up and said in a very loud voice, "Thank you. I didn't realize I was talking so loud." And then proceeded to talk just as loud as they ordered their round of Irish coffee to taper off lunch.

One of the men in the group had come over, introduced himself and asked if he might give us a letter. I accepted it with a smile and a

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nod and laid it beside me, quite uncertain whether it was a get-out-of-Vietnam or a we-believe-in-you letter. Later, as the middle-aged lady started to leave, she walked by our table and leaned over and said, "Tell the President to have courage." That was a sweet thing. But more clearly than anything, it showed the depth of the wave that was sweeping the country -- an avalanche -- a tidal wave of stories that create distrust, frustration, uncertainty. If you could chart it, I wonder when you would see it began. Certainly it has had a great upsurge in the last six weeks and has borne pernicious fruit.

For Lynda, these lunch times are such fun as for me. She loves to give, and I hated for this one to be spoiled.

Just before we left, the man who had given me the letter came over to say a word about what was in it. It sounded quite innocuous. And I explained to him that I was so sorry, I simply couldn't read in that darkness and I was saving it until we got to the daylight. Having explained it, he took it back. Then Lynda and I walked out, greeting the Ambassador from Peru on the way. We both understood so well. We are both in the eye of the hurricane, and in a way helpless. But I do not want to be ignorant. I want to know.

Back at the White House I worked at my desk with Marilyn, and later with Bess on Christmas lists and wedding plans. I went into see

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Lyndon for a while. We decided to have some old friends for dinner. I called the Brooks and the Mahons. And then I recorded.

Jim Cain arrived about 7:00 to be our house guest while he is here on one of his enumerable committees -- this one about the draft I believe -- assigning doctors to it.

We sat down in the West Hall and had a long talk about Lyndon. I told him my feelings that I did not want to go through the grueling six months of another campaign, and that even more, if we won I did not want to face another four years as devouring as these last four have been. I could stand defeat easy I believe. I could stand retiring. There are so many things I want to do. My list is a mile long. But for the first time in my life I believe that Lyndon too could be happy. ^{what} But/I do not know if I could stand or not with grace is to have Lyndon face the sort of thing that President Wilson faced -- that is, be in office, be incapacitated, or be reduced to half his mental and physical abilities and still be president. I think that would be the most unbearable tragedy that could happen to him. I asked Jim quite frankly as a medical man what could he say to me. He said, "Obviously he has aged. The last four years have taken a lot from him." But I cannot say as I think the doctors should have said to FDR when he ran for his fourth term, that you won't live out this next term, that you won't be able to serve. No

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man can say what will happen. And so we continue.

At 8:00, the Brooks and the Mahons came promptly. And later Lyndon and Marie and Joe Califano drifted in from the office. And we had a pleasant, easy family dinner -- George openly deploring the Congresses' inability to act, and Jack with his pungent cutting phrases scoring both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Lyndon often says that he would give a year of his life if Speaker Sam Rayburn could be back with the gavel and he was over in the Senate for just one week. And I liked what he said about President Eisenhower. "He has paid me back 100 percent for what I did for him when I was Majority Leader by just trying to be decent." There is no way to understand a former President like being one. It will be interesting to see whether that carries forward into the years when we are out of here.

And of course there was much talk of tomorrow -- the day of the big gathering of dissenters on Viet-Nam -- a great many of them from colleges coming in by bus and plane and car. There is a ripple of excitement in the air. There is almost a feeling of being under siege. I plan to stay home all day. Maybe for once I'll get a clear desk.