

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Wednesday, November 8, 1967

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I promised myself I would do almost nothing after the October 24th date at Southwestern University except get ready for and enjoy Lynda Bird's wedding plans. And then along comes a day like November 8th. It was already full enough when my dear husband suddenly added a female extravaganza -- a bill signing at 11:00.

The day began early for me. I worked at the desk with Ashton and on the agenda for the meeting of the Committee for the Preservation of the White House and went downstairs with Mary Kaltman. I tried to memorize all the china which I need to talk about.

And then at 11:00 this most extraordinary bill signing took place. Its purpose was to end the inequities between men and women in the armed services. There are some 35,000 women in the WACS, WAVS, WAFS, and women Marines. A thousand of them are actually on duty in Viet-Nam now. Very few ever had the chance to rise above the rank and pay of Major and no chance at all of being promoted beyond Colonel. This bill doesn't create any female Generals or Admirals, but it does open the door.

It was quite a show.

We had walked into the East Room between a cordon of 50 women from all branches of the Armed Services. In the place traditionally reserved for the Marine band -- sometime I think they ought to have

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palates and sandwiches, they stay there so much of the time -- there was an all-women band from the WAC's center at Fort McClellan, Alabama.

Inside the East Room there was an unusually large battery of cameramen facing the podium. And behind it an honor guard -- all women -- one from each service, standing beside the flags. This had been Captain Robb's chore -- to set up the honor guard. He had found to his dismay that the flags were simply too heavy for the ladies and this was the bright way he worked it out.

Oveta Culp Hobby was beside me on the front row looking very smashing in an elegant dark suit and a big mink hat. Senator Smith behind us with a flower in her lapel. And most of the women members of Congress. And a majority of the 50 civilian members of the "Daughters". Behind me grouped together were 50 of the women who had served in Viet-Nam.

It was an impressive morning, and it enlarged my understanding of what women are doing in this country.

When Lyndon finished speaking, he gave the first pen to Oveta and then passed them out to a lot of the women. And then to my amazement he gave one -- most undeserved -- to me.

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The really most touching part of the day was when he presented the Bronze Star Medal to Major Marie Rodgers of the U. S. Army Nurse Corps for distinguished service in Viet-Nam.

She was a fine looking Negro woman, and somehow that struck just the right note.

And then the Legion of Merit to Colonel Ethel Heffley for her work in hospitals in Japan and Okinawa.

And then we all filed into the Blue Room for a receiving line. And then into the State Dining Room where this time a male chorus sang such songs as "There is Nothing Like a Dame".

Lyndon made a brief passage through the room and was gone, and I found myself surrounded by these young girls who had lined the hallway. They alas -- they alone -- had not come through the receiving line. They said, "Is your husband still here?" "Do you think he will come back?" So I did my best to be a substitute, welcoming everyone of them I could find and signing autographs. But I had to slip away early for the second important event of the day -- the meeting of the Committee for the Preservation of the White House.

Upstairs in the Yellow Room they were having sherry waiting for me -- Jim Fosburg, Mrs. Marshall Field, Alice Brown (she had spent the night with me), and Senator Bill Benton, just back from Paris,

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George Hartzog and Johnnie Walker, Bill Walton of the Fine Arts Commission, the irreplaceable Mr. West, Nash and Liz and Jane Engelhard.

I began with some sad news. Mr. DuPont had expected to be with us. Just this morning we had received a call from his secretary that Mrs. DuPont who had for a long time been ill had died the night before.

I look upon him with a curious mixture of awe and gratitude and affection -- which because of his age and eminence I'll forever be unable to really express to him.

Bruce ^{Catton}~~Katan~~ is still ill and could not be with us but had answered that he hopes to come to the next meeting.

Jim Ketchum -- much missed -- is off making a speech, and Dillon Ripley is in Europe. Otherwise everybody was very articulately present.

I welcomed Jane Engelhard to the meeting and explained her presence -- I hope delicately -- to the other members by quoting from the Presidential Order which set up this committee that it is authorized to invite individuals who are distinguished or interested in the fine arts to attend its meetings or otherwise to assist in carrying out its functions.

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I told the members of the exquisite Christmas creche that we will all see next month that Jane has given. And then George Hartzog who is really the Committee Chairman described the new visitor services we plan -- an extension of the speaker system along the fence where the line waits -- a new exhibit, "Christmas at the White House" to be in the East colonnade. And we passed out lists of the important donations to the White House collections since our last meeting. And George described the new drapes in the State Dining Room and the main lobby, paid for by the White House Historical Association. Then about the proposed acquisition of letters from First Ladies and past Presidents. Two have already been given -- from Mrs. Lincoln and Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt. Then about a TV program for children. It's being done by the educational network. Two of the White House for children of school age.

He brought us up to date on the subject of the White House mantels. The four in the East Room that are the dark red marble that we paint to resemble a grayish white marble and that have to be painted over and over because of the thousands of tourists in the East Room.

And then John Walker told us about the portrait of Mrs. Truman by Greta Kempton which is finished. We will hang it in January with a party. He also reported that the White House Historical Association

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wants to give impetus toward the proposed portraits of Presidents Johnson and Kennedy and Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Kennedy.

And then some most important business of the day -- how do we stand financially. Mrs. Castro told us how the books were selling. Their sale has slowed down and the margin of profit has narrowed constantly since they first went on the market in the early days of the Kennedy Administration. It is now down to about 9 cents per book. We must face up to raising the cost of the books. We agreed to raise the cost of the paperback from one dollar to a dollar and half for a several-month period and see how the sales went. And most important to push the Christmas sale here in the White House and in any outlet we could with promotion, advertising and by word of mouth to our own friends.

The net of the report was that the White House Historical Association has given the White House about \$80,000 which we still have to spend -- that's the accumulation of the last two years after subtracting all that we've done.

For me the main business of the day was twofold -- acquisition of possible new paintings which we took up next, and new china for the White House. That waited until we got downstairs.

We passed out copies of the list of painters which Jim Fosburg had prepared -- those that we wanted most to acquire for the White House including John Singleton Copley, Benjamin West, John Trumbull, Charles

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Wilson Peale, John Vanderlyn, George Caleb Bingham, Eastman Johnson, George Ennis, Robert Henri.

I stopped to describe the lovely Henri "Gypsy Girl" that Senator Benton had given the White House and asked them all to take a look at it when as I hoped they came to the tea this afternoon. I told them about the crystal chandelier in the Queens' Room that Oveta had given. And the Bronze, "Meat for the Wild Men" which Dr. Armand Hammer had given the White House.

And then Jim Fosburg described the condition of today's market -- how overpriced everything was, how few American paintings came on and how quickly they were sold. He said if he could make an immediate decision, it would facilitate getting something.

Someone suggested having a small committee that could act promptly on something that did come up if they were ^{quite} ~~sure~~ sure it was good enough for the White House and if they could find a donor or if we had the money in the till they would get it promptly without having to wait for me and everybody.

I suggested the Committee be Jim Fosburg and Jane Engelhard who is so often in New York and John Walker who could run up easily he said. We agreed.

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And then it was time to go downstairs for lunch. This was a first in White House life I think -- lunch in the China Room.

We sat at a round table and used serving plates from 12 different Administrations. The imposing blue and gold of the Wilson; the handsome Theodore Roosevelt with the golden spikes and the eagle; the familiar FDR that we use every day; the purple-bordered Lincoln. And at Jane's plate, one of my dear favorites, the Harrison with the wheat and the corn in the border that spells "The plenty of this land".

She had given at least a dozen of them to the White House.

Around the room on easels we had the water color drawings of the china which Tiffany has designed for the Johnson Administration -- service plates, demitasse, bowls, the dessert plates with a flower representing each of the States.

I had had a little research done on the china, and I talked to them about it. First the fact that we needed some new china since there is not enough of any single Administration to serve a State Dinner of 140 much less 190, and it's been 16 years since any was ordered.

We do not order replacements. We simply use china from several different Administrations for a dinner.

I told them what I think is really remarkable tribute to the house-keeping staff here that of the 120 place settings ordered by the Trumans,

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there are still 110 in use today. And of the 120 service plates ordered by the Eisenhowers, there are 119 today.

What we propose is to order 216 which will give you a little leeway for the 190 guests which we often have at a State Dinner. The total cost will be about \$79,000. So what it really gets down to is this: in the pot we have about \$80,000. We could go ahead and order the china. But then we would have nothing at all for any works of art.

The discussion began and Senator Benton said, "How about giving one plate to any donor who would present the White House with the 216 plates or cups and saucers or dessert plates or whatever.

It was discussed, elaborated on, almost got out of hand one time when somebody misunderstood and thought that a whole place setting was meant.

Finally, the idea was approved and it was decided that we should go on and order the china. It would be delivered in May -- probably in time for my Senate Ladies luncheon. And we would all work at finding donors for china or a work of art.

Actually, Jim Fosburg says with the price of things that are on the market these days there is more hope in trying to find someone who will give from his own private collection -- a painting -- and take advantage of the tax enticement rather than try to buy something on the open market.

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I had one moment to take Jane aside and tell her that what I hoped she would do on this Committee would be a catalyst, an activist -- we had not done as much as I hoped we would -- and that she made things happen. I am the world's worst salesman. What I really wanted to get across to her was that I hadn't put her on there because I wanted her to make a further donation -- she has already done so much -- but she does know people who can and might add to the treasures of this great old house.

I was intensely grateful when John Walker said, "I don't believe I've ever seen lovelier china." I can't say I exactly heard a chorus of that around the table, and I am scared. I do want it to be liked. I think it's lovely -- the design, the sketches. And will the finished product live up to it? Well, at any rate, as long as I am here it is going to be an American.

I had an hour before the tea, so I rested, worked with Ashton, changed clothes, and went over the list. And at 4:00 I was downstairs in the Blue Room for the tea for the American Federation of the Arts, a group of about 100 collectors of fine arts who were attending a meeting here in Washington and had written me that they would like to come and see the White House collection, and I had invited them to come for tea.

There were familiar names like the Larry Aldriches -- he's a dress designer -- the David ^{Hoyd} ~~Lord~~ Keegers and Dr. Armand Hammer.

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This had seemed the ideal time and audience to put on view the last acquisition of the White House -- the Russell bronze -- "Meat for Wild Men" that Dr. Armand Hammer had given. And to announce the other latest gifts to the White House collection -- Oveta's chandelier in the Queens' Room and Senator Benton's Robert Henri "Gypsy Girl" with the flowers that is so lovely in our own Sitting Room.

So to the members of the American Federation of the Arts I had added as guests the members of our Committee for the Preservation of the White House, the donors during my time. Mrs. Mark Bortman whose family had given the silver coffee urn that had belonged to John and Abigail Adams. It made me feel so good because she obviously appreciated being included. I certainly hope I won't be forgotten. And I take great pleasure in remembering somebody who gave this house one of the first prestigious acquisitions since I came to it. And Mrs. Philip Barry who had done my portrait for the Democratic Women. The Richard Byrds of Berryville. It had been on an art pilgrimage to Texas where I had first really gotten acquainted with Helen. And Mr. Lawrence Governor Heuss. But alas he didn't come and I had lots of people including Marny Clifford "stashed out" to speak to him about the Madison portrait. Maybe that's what he feared. And Mary Lasker and Florence Mahoney. And Peggy Goldstein who is herself a sculptor. She was one of the five or six friends and Assistant's wives whom I had asked to help show people

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about on the second floor and the ground floor. And Kay Halley who is responsible for us having the bust of Winston Churchill by Epstein. And Louise Cox who had given us the lovely silver coffee service by an early American Smith. And my friend Charles Palmer of Atlanta. And Madame Shoumatoff -- who between them brought the Roosevelt portrait here. And C. R. Smith, donor of our painting of the "Grand Tetons". And another one that will come next year.

And very late in the day I had asked Dr. and Mrs. F. E. Green from Lubbock. As head of the Art Department at Texas Tech, it was he who was responsible for us having on loan the charming ^{Henrietta} ~~Harriet~~ Wyeth "Arturito and the Doves".

So after the receiving line we all went to the East Room and saw the 30-minute movie, "Paintings of the White House". I had a sinking feeling about half way through that maybe about half of this audience had seen it before.

Then I expressed my thanks for Dr. Armand Hammer's gift, the Henri, the new portrait of Eisenhower from Senator Harry Darby, Oveta's chandelier. And all the things so generously brought here. I invited everyone to have tea and then to explore through the second floor and the ground floor.

I had my picture made with Dr. Hammer in front of the bronze; with Louise Cox and the silver service,

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Larry Aldrich talked with me about Lynda and her taste in clothes -- excellent he thought. The Kreegers invited me to come and see their completed house by Philip Johnson -- a wonderful setting for their art. And I dispatched Ashton to take the Greens up into my bedroom for a very private viewing of that charming "Arturito".

It was a pleasant enough party, but the house has been a three-ring circus today. And the story of the new acquisitions which I had really wanted to receive some applause, some prominence so that the people would know the program was still going on. Alas, they got lost in all the competition -- the new china, the Clark's party for Lynda, the bill signing in the East Room.

The guests were gone by 6:00, and I did a quick change into my white satin by Adele Simpson. And in a mood of release -- of carefree happy expectation -- I went to Tom and Mary White's party for Lynda and Chuck at the Sulgrave Club.

Betty Beale called it the largest and most powerfilled party yet honoring Lyndon Johnson and Captain Charles Robb and said, "Regular Club members watched with fascination from the rooms below to see if the highest names in the land arrived, and they were not disappointed. Vice President Humphrey, Chief Justice and Mrs. Warren. In fact the entire Supreme Court. And over half the Cabinet were there."

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Mary, bless her, had invited the entire Texas delegation and all the wedding party -- such well known hostesses as Gwen Cafritz, Perle Mesta and the John Logans.

Old-time Texas friends like Welly and Alice Hopkins and their daughter. The entire Pipkin family, and Ann and Gene Worley. And all of Chuck's family that lives here in Washington. In fact I spent a good part of the evening getting acquainted with them. Not to mention our favorite staff and Senators and closest friends, young and old.

It was a wonderful party.

Devon's Orchestra was there -- recalling so many good parties of the past.

Lynda Bird look absolutely stunning in a black velvet costume with a high heavy collar of rhinestones, her hair piled high.

Chuck stole a notch on everybody by going to the microphone just after Lyndon arrived to ask everyone to raise their glass to our host and hostess on their 43rd wedding anniversary. So today it was a double celebration -- for the Clark's and for Lynda.

Tom was absolutely charming in his reply. "You have to watch these Marines. They are the first to land every time." And then he recalled how he and Mary had driven around town with Lyndon (the Speaker was along too I think and Tony Buford) on a snowy Sunday

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in March while I was in the hospital waiting for Lynda Bird to be born. And every hour or so Lyndon would stop and put in a call. And then as soon as she was born, he took the whole crowd by the hospital to see the baby that he described very generously as a bright-eyed, rosey-cheeked little angel.

He and Mary gave Lynda a gold pin shaped like a ribbon bow, and made Chuck an honorary Texan with cuff links in the shape of Texas.

We stayed late and loved every minute of it, bringing the Barefoot Sanders and Jake and Beryl Pickle and the George Christians home with us to dinner.

The guests were gone by 11:00, and it was an early night for us -- a little before midnight.

Nowhere in a long life have we had more satisfactory friends to whom we can apply the one simple word "good" more truly than to Tom and Mary. For me, the mood makes the party. And my mood for this one was made up of a hard day's work, followed the expectation of seeing good friends in a relaxed and happy setting.