

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Sunday, November 12, 1967

Page 1

It began in Bassett House, Williamsburg, which belonged to the John D. Rockefellers III. This is the fourth Rockefeller home I've visited in -- the sea-side house in Caneel Bay Plantation in the Virgin Islands which is Laurence's and Mary's and I suppose used by all the Rockefellers, the ranch in the Grand Tetons, and Laurence and Mary's personal house in Woodstock, Vermont.

This house has great colonial charm. Spacious grounds surround the house and the approach is to an avenue of live oaks. The floors of wide boards laid down before the Revolutionary War gleam softly and are scattered with bright rugs, hooked, needlepoint. And on the walls there are samplers and morning pieces and quaint, stiff American primitive portraits.

The house covers a wide range of American living right on down to the Victorian. I found it utterly charming.

We had coffee in bed. And then we dressed and went to the old Bruton Parrish Episcopal Church -- Lyndon and I and Lynda Bird and Chuck and Beryl and Jake with us. It's a venerable old building, and I've spent hours with Mrs. Johnson in the graveyard and walking through the inside looking at all of the plaques where the names of so many signers of the Declaration of Independence and founding fathers adorn the walls.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Sunday, November 12, 1967

Page 2

We sat in George Washington's own pew on the front row. The choir was absolutely lovely. And then came the sermon. The Reverend Coachworth Pinkney Lewis gave short shrift to any Biblical text and then launched into a general discussion of the state of the Union and of the world -- touching on civil rights, disorder in the streets, and general upheaval in the Nation. And then I froze in my seat as I heard him say, "And then there is the question of Viet-Nam. Since there is a rather general consensus that something is wrong in Viet-Nam -- a conviction shared by leaders of nations traditionally our friends, leading military experts and the rank and file of American citizens. We wonder if some logical, straightforward explanation might be given..", and on and on. "We are appalled that apparently this is the only war in our history which has three times as many civilians as military casualties. It is particularly regrettable that to most nations of the world the struggle purpose appears as neo-colonialism." And then, veered 180 degrees -- "We are mystified," he said, "by news accounts suggesting that our brave fighting units are inhibited by directives and inadequate equipment from using their capacities to terminate the conflict successfully. While pledging our loyalty, we ask humbly, why?"

I turned ^{To} the stone on the ^{outside} ~~inside~~ and boiled on the inside. I thought of Lyndon's asking for equal time and rising to the pulpit to

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Sunday, November 12, 1967

Page 3

explain to him why. But no, if I thought he shouldn't use the pulpit for what he was doing, how much less would it become a visiting worshipper to rise and answer.

I thought of the headlines of all the papers I had seen -- some three or four while we had had our coffee. And they had answered his question. Lyndon had just spent two days and thousands of miles traveling across the country answering exactly his questions -- why are we there?

The really sickening part -- the frightening part -- was how completely he had swallowed the bill of goods he had been fed by what I feel are really dangerous forces.

Meanwhile, it was almost amusing to watch his expression -- so unctuous, so almost pleading it was.

All things end. And then finally the beautiful choir raised its great voice. And then we were walking stiffly out the door.

There of course was that wonderful malaise -- the flashing cameras, the crowds of casual tourists and visitors lining the streets, smiling, cheering, reaching their hands -- off in the distance to the left, a very small group of protestors with banners. I could only see the word "peace". And The Reverend Coatsworth Pinkney Lewis -- hand extended. He it said for my husband that he shook hands briefly with a smile while I said, "The choir was beautiful." And we stepped

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Sunday, November 12, 1967

Page 4

into the waiting car with a wave to the crowd.

Later, Lyndon looked at me with a rye smile and said, "Greater love hath no man than that he goes to the Episcopal Church with his wife."

I felt very sorry for him and very angry -- two days of hard work, a great evening at the Gridiron -- all of it ending on this deflating, painful note. I must say though it was a great coup for the other side. And the really sad part was I can't believe he knew whose bill of goods he had bought.

Somehow oddly, I felt even sorrier for Chuck than I did for Lyndon. He looked so peculiarly, vulnerable, hurt, questioning, uncertain what a young man who is about to go out and fight this war should think or do about that sort of performance by a minister at home.

The minister had plenty of mimeographed copies which he distributed to the press afterward we heard, along with a rather amazing statement -- "Criticism", he said, "was the farthestest thing from my mind. I intended none, and I gather that the President took no offense, but understood it in the spirit of honest, reasonable, exploration of an idea. One isn't privileged to tell the President of the United States what he thinks very often."

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Sunday, November 12, 1967

Page 5

Back at Bassett House Lyndon changed into leisure clothes and took Chuck and Jake and went out to play golf at the Golden Horse-shoe Golf Club with a pro.

It was a beautiful golden Indian summer day, and I could not bear to waste my one day in Williamsburg. So I called up the Humelseines. They generously said it wouldn't disturb their lunch hour although I knew it did. And we spent the next two hours in a delightful drive around the streets of Williamsburg seeing the new restorations that are underway -- that are planned. And driving out to Carter's Grove. Here we stopped going in through the entrance of what has been called the most beautiful house in America -- built in installments as so many great houses have been, beginning in about 1740 with a daughter of one of the first American tycoons -- a tide water plantation owner. It had been privately owned until not so long ago when it had found its way -- very fortunately I think -- into the Williamsburg Corporation, owned by the Rockefellers. And it will now be opened to the public and safeguarded.

It faced on the James River -- a magnificent view -- with the great tulip poplars.

Lynda Bird came and met us, bringing a gingerbread man. By this time I was ravenous. And Mr. Humelseine took us through, telling us about the furniture, the molding, the hand carving on the banisters. the room where George Washington supposedly was turned down by some

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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Sunday, November 12, 1967

Page 6

lady whose hand he sought.

And then we drove back to Williamsburg and went to a tavern which is in the process of being restored. And Mr. Humelseine told a lot about the process -- how they carefully rub and rub and rub -- that through 7 coats of paint -- to let the house tell its story and see what was there in the beginning.

We went to the archaeological lab, and there was a long counter with broken bits of glass and china and hardware. And even some textiles on it. All the things that had been dug up and they were unearthing for a new restoration. The richest treasure troves are found in abandoned wells or ditches. Some are sifted from the first 18 inches of the soil. And they tell a lot about how the early settlers of this country lived, what they ate off of and drank out of, and built their houses from.

Finally about 3:30 -- absolutely famished -- we arrived back at Bassett House. I thanked the Humelseines. And they must have left with a sigh of relief. Mr. Humelseine had begun his greeting with me by saying I am just as mad as I can be; "I think what the minister did was in exquisite bad taste."

It was after 3:00 when we had our lunch -- Lyndon in from a good game of golf -- and me ravenous. And we had ham. My visit to Williamsburg would not have been complete without some of that spicey Virginia ham.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Sunday, November 12, 1967

Page 7

We sat around the Rockefeller's long dining table -- the Johnsons and Pickles and Chuck and Lynda and Marie and Juanita and the Christians. And then we both tried to take naps, but mostly I just read the Sunday papers in that peculiar dragging mood which the morning had brought on.

When Lyndon woke up, he went for a walk around the ground with Yuki. He put on quite a show, chasing every squirrel that darted across the grass.

There remained the whole time of our stay there a sizeable crowd around the gates of the Rockefeller house, waiting to see Lyndon. And every time we went in or out they would cheer and smile and wave. It was the oddest mixture of real affectionate welcome and an unexpected slap in the face.

Lyndon and Yuki went up and down the fence visiting with the folks. That little dog is the most extraordinary source ~~and~~ of comfort and amusement to him. Later he said to me, "What do you think of Yuki?" He's been from the red clay hills of Fort Benning to the white capped waves of the Enterprise.

Lynda and Chuck and I had a bridge game, alternating with the Pickles. Then we all read the papers around the fire. And finally about 8:30 we had a light dinner, and then left the Bassett House aboard the chopper to fly back to Washington -- the same route that so many

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Sunday, November 12, 1967

Page 8

foreign visitors make from our historic beginning to our capital city.

For me at least it was a day of low ebb -- of being unable to shake loose from the paralyzing effects of the morning in spite of the wonderful opportunities of the picturesque historic setting and what ought to have been a relaxing time with close friends.

We settled onto the White House grounds just before 11:00. And Lyndon went up to attack his night reading and I to bed.