

1967

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20

This will, I think, be a strange week in my memory. It is to be our first Christmas in the White House. There is to be a party every day--Monday, the press party, the ladies; Tuesday, the under-privileged children, today about a thousand Government officials grade 16 to 18; Thursday, the party for the children of everybody that works at the White House; and Friday, the annual staff party. The old house is bursting at the seams with merriment planned weeks in advance and strange counterpoint, my husband is on the other side of the world on a trip that sprang into being only a few days ago as the result of the tragic death of Prime Minister Holt of Australia sometime Saturday. When he is gone, the whole tempo of the White House changes. It is though it were waiting--biding time-- for his return and I do all of those things I put aside.

He called me a little after twelve o'clock, from Air Force One, I believe, to ask how the rocking chair interview with the President had gone. I watched it, did not come up to the Press Conference on November 17 or to the labor speech in Florida. The script was excellent. It was a little slow, needed a little more humor, a little more passion. There was one exceptionally good moment when he turned to Frank Reynolds and said "what would you do Frank?" I am afraid my description to him was a little disheartening. His absence makes me slack. I did not dress until

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11:30 though I worked in my room, vignette for the day a ten thousand dollar check from Mrs. Merriweather Post for the Beautification Committee proudly brought in by Liz. Quick Christmas shopping with Lynda--Saks. I bought a pretty blue sweater for Pat. People recognized me, but it was not difficult. In fact, it was fun.

A steak sandwich in the solarium with Lynda and Chuck. How I do enjoy them. Working with Liz on captions for the Album to give to Lyndon for Christmas and then the main event of the day, reception for Government officials. Just before it began, I went downstairs to receive-- along with Bill Wirtz and Jane, from Secretary John Gardner a Christmas wreath present on behalf of twelve formerly unemployed men who are now being trained as nurserymen, the Skill Center in Detroit. I hung it on the front door of the White House while I listened to the Secretaries tell how this course was started, how all the sixty-five or so graduates had gotten their jobs as soon as they had completed the course. One of the cheery little success stories that make Lyndon's twelve o'clock nights worthwhile and all the other folks too. ⁹ With Lyndon gone the party had suddenly lost a good deal of its sparkle, so we had asked Hubert to stand in line with me and had invited all of the Cabinet to come and mix and mingle and help entertain. Hubert and I took up our positions in front of a beautiful Christmas tree, sparkling with icicles and gay with gingerbread

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thing, apparently. It was interesting to see the Cabinet members that had turned out. Along with John Gardner and the Wirtz's, faithful Jane and Orville Freeman were there and the incredible Dean Rusk. How can he have the time.

I ran into both Lee and Stu Udall in the East Room after the line was over. I think I glimpsed the Alan Boyds and the attractive young Fogartys. About twice I stopped the line so that Hubert and I could have a respite--a sip of a drink and a little visiting with each other. Greeting a thousand people is work, but I regard it as a very brief span in my life. Just possibly it means something to some of these thousands so I want to give them at least a pleasant personal greeting to take away as a memory.

I made the rounds of the room when the line was over and then a little past seven thirty I went upstairs to the West Hall, found Lynda and Chuck and Marilyn Walz still hard at work and almost in tears. The pictures planned for Lynda's album, she was helping her, had not been finished. I said, "let's all relax and have a drink." Marilyn takes her work very seriously and I like that. She is becoming more and more a part of our lives. I called a car to take her home. ^{It} This is the first time I have really been with Lynda and Chuck since they returned from their honeymoon and I was delighted and shall I say relieved to find Lynda so full of humor and ease reminiscing about the wedding, saying you might call this show the agony and the ecstasy. She was going on about somebody's failure to do their job efficiently to Chuck and he intervened, quite

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sagely I thought, saying I am not going to get you out of this one until I know the facts. I think he is getting off to a good start. Then we had dinner, Lynda and Chuck and I, and I recorded and at ten o'clock Pete Dawson came up. I settled into complete pleasure of getting a massage while I watched "A Christmas Memory" and "Gunsmoke" on video tape and to bed by 11:30. The papers had headlined LBJ in Australia, security tight. And in spite of all the busy day that feeling persisted of being suspended waiting for his return. ⁹ Oh yes, if I ever write that little bit about my adventures in a receiving line, here is another item. After the receiving line was over and I was in a group, I looked up and suddenly bearing down upon me was the jovial friend of Charley Thompsons. I could not escape. He cornered me and began to talk about Charley. Sure you remember Charley, that big Texan. Alas, I could not and I hate deflating people. I murmured lamely that my husband knew so many more people than I knew. I was sure Charley must be a friend of his.

