

1967

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 23

I awoke very late, after ten, and discovered that it had snowed last night, a light thin snow, but this is the final perfect touch to our first Christmas in the White House. And it already feels like Christmas. It's Saturday and everybody is ready to quit work and start celebrating. I worked on Lyndon's Christmas album and at my desk, signed the last Christmas pictures, dictated with Marilyn. At 11:45 Lyndon called. He was in Rome. He would be home in the early morning of Christmas Eve.

After a week of parties, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, today is my day--an open house at 5:00 this afternoon for eggnog and Auld Lang Syne and to see the Christmas decorations. In the afternoon I went shopping with Lynda, said hello to C. P. Little and his family in the Diplomatic Reception Room. They had come over to see the house all dressed up for Christmas. And then at five, the fire was burning in the Yellow Room, our own Christmas tree was lovely with icicles and cookies like the big tree downstairs, cute little stuffed animals made by Mrs. McAllister whose husband had performed the wedding ceremony and at the top a big star that had been used by FDR from the White House Christmas tree in the East Room and later on by the Trumans and then somehow relegated to the attic. I think the carpenter had been real pleased when he explained to me the history. We started some traditions of our own--bright red balls were used as decorations at Lynda's wedding and

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saved them for other Christmases, here, at the ranch--wherever we are.

This party was very special to me. I had invited old friends and their families. Tom Corcoran and all of his children and he brought four, Margaret Josephine, Timmie, Howie, and one other. Jim and Libby Rowe and their cute redhaired daughter Clarissa and her husband and young Jim. Elspeth Rostow and her 85-year-old mother. In fact, the guests ranged from 85 to six months. Patrick brought in little Lyn and he passed from hand to hand. He regarded us rather soberly like a judge and Luci came in late. Then there were Abe and Carol Fortas and Carol's mother--frail but lively--and their cook Mary Anne carrying a Christmas gift of her delicious macaroons and Kay Graham and one son. She explained on the phone that he had long hair--really long hair--as though I would mind. My feeling for her is a mixture of admiration and sympathy. She has grown in poise and the exercise of power and her freedom with dealing with people. She is a more interesting woman than she was. She is also a rather sad woman I think because she must be pulled at in so many ways.

Diane and Donna were very helpful and little Lisa looking quite grown up and pretty. And Alex actually taking over one of the musical instruments and playing with the little group of Marine Band that I had in the hall doing Christmas carols, and Bill and Jeanie Deason, and the very grown up and attractive Diane. There are lots of children at this

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party. I am getting to see everybody's children, and young Patrick Lyndon who I introduced to the other Patrick Lyndon. The Jack Hights came with their twins, Ann and Jane. And Mary V Busby (Horace has gone with Lyndon) and their three handsome children. And Juanita Roberts with her mother. The guests more appreciative and having a better time. And some Clark Cliffords--their children and grandchildren had come earlier in the week. Katie and Walter Lochheim brought both children and grandchildren. The Paul Sittons and two good looking young teenagers. Dudre and Cotton Coulson. The Leonard Marks--there with their two tall sons and Leonard and I talked about an agenda for a January meeting of the Audio-Visual Committee for the Library. Willie Day Taylor came. I had tried to remember our very special friends who no longer had family around. Mildred, however, had left for Texas just a few hours before. Bob Kintner had arrived wearing dark heavy glasses. June, vibrant and slim and two cute sons, Michael and Jeff. Liz and Les brought their new daughter-in-law and Scott, and Christie, who is obviously very much in love with College. And Mary Bundy, whose husband is also with Lyndon, came with their two children. Lynda and Chuck were in and out. We had traditional eggnog and fruitcake and the best hors d' oeuvres the White House could afford.

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The Marine Band played all the Christmas Carols over and over. Out the window we saw the Nation's Christmas tree and in the distance the Jefferson Memorial, Washington Monument and inside all was bright and gay, the most Christmasy party you would ever want, except for Lyndon's not being there. It was a special bond between me and those women whose husbands had gone on this tour de force with Lyndon--Mary Bundy, Elspeth Rostow, Mary V Busby. At one point Mrs. Rostow spoke of her husband and his regard for Lyndon in a manner unusual for one with her reserve and dignity with something like this. "Walt thinks so much of your husband. I don't quite know whether he considers him his father or his son." I was too touched to answer.

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People drifted off downstairs carrying their eggnog and to look at the creche of the White House's own Christmas tree in the Blue Room. And Jim Rowe and Tom Corcoran were especially pleased when I told them that the star at the top of the tree had been used by FDR, but it was a time when everybody has their own plans so by 7:00 people were going. Very shortly thereafter I discovered that Ashton and Marilyn were still working. I herded them away. Luci had asked the Leroy Bates to stay for dinner and the seven of us--Lynda and Chuck--had a pleasant dinner in the family dining room. Leroy is learning to fly one of those fast planes, something like 1200 miles an hour, and Melinda is in her last year of nursing school which requires that she live away from

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him. This is only their second year of marriage. Tough, but it will be a life insurance for always getting a job and they seem very purposeful young people. I told Melinda and Luci privately that Daddy would be arriving around 4:30 and they might want to get up and meet him. Then, I read myself to sleep fairly early, very contented. It had been an extraordinary week, except for Lyndon's absence on this killing, grueling trip, it had been what I wanted--Christmas in the White House, all the trimmings, shared with as many people as the house would hold.

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