

1968

SUNDAY, JANUARY 21 (Not complete)

Sunday, January 21 was as bleak a day as I can remember. I think we both felt too depleted to even want to go to Church and I believe Lyndon made some remark about Dr. Davis might have something to say about the Eartha Kitt incident. As it happened, he didn't but they did. We found later that seventeen demonstrators protesting the Vietnam war and defending Eartha Kitt's outburst had gone to the Church, some bearded with the long hair, rose in the middle of the sermon and began distributing leaflets denouncing Dr. Davis, calling the President an outrageous liar and thief. I am glad to say that Dr. Davis was not distracted from his sermon, so we were told, and the ushers escorted the demonstrators out, although one of them lay down in the aisle and had to be bodily taken out.

I lay in bed and read the papers but the hurt in my heart was not from what I saw in them, reaction from the Eartha Kitt incident. It had wide coverage on Friday and Saturday and still today. Dick Gregory berates the First Lady. Dr. Martin Luther King described Miss Kitt's White House speech as the very proper gesture describing the feelings of many persons. And out in front of the White House two dozen women and five men marched with signs to support Miss Kitt's statement. Here the letters and telegrams and phone calls were pouring in in more than a ten to one ratio applauding me, but it was none of this that made me feel so low. John Gardner had done what Eartha Kitt could not do. He had

Sunday, January 21 (Continued)

come in to see Lyndon Saturday afternoon and had told Lyndon he wanted to quit, apparently quite soon. Lyndon had felt that he was at a distance, that he wasn't reaching him. He spoke of a lack of communication.

Lyndon reminded him that when he had come on a two year's leave of absence from Carnegie and the two years had been up last August that

Gardner himself had come to him and said he wanted to stay on--where was the failure. I had noticed at the ranch he seemed withdrawn and

silent. The natural thing to think is that he is not getting enough for his particular causes for health, education, and welfare from the budget because Vietnam is getting a large chunk. What hurts me so is that with more--much more--going to health, education, and welfare than ever has gone in before he isn't willing to stay and fight on the Hill and fight in his job, use to the best everything he does get and make a good case to the

Country for getting more. This is not time to quit. He has been one of my favorite Cabinet Officers, handsome, intellectual. I knew what the press would do with that word. He had sort of a spiritual quality to me.

I felt more crushed than I can remember feeling in this Administration.

There was only one nice thing. Arthur and Matilda had spent the night before with us. They came down, we drank innumerable cups of coffee and tea and we went over and over the same old ground--whether to announce that we were not going to run and if so when and how. At

Lyndon's suggestion I got out the memo I had written in August of '64 that has laid in the right-hand desk drawer since then. The one I had

Sunday, January 21 (Continued)

written this time was some how lame and pale and I really do not know the rightness nor the wrongness of getting out or trying to stay in. Obviously Arthur and Matilda were taken aback for they respect Lyndon's reasons.

I told them that Liz had raised the question as to whether or not I ought to go to the opening of Ford's Theater--that it might be a repeat. They felt instinctively that I should not. I got Ashton on the phone and she made all the calls to shift our two sets of library meetings from Monday and Tuesday to Sunday and Monday, the 28th and 29th. Feeling leaden, we went in for lunch--Lyndon and I, Lynda and Chuck, and Matilda and Arthur, and Sam Houston--in the dining room. Always a help to have Lynda and Chuck around. Our children are more and more a joy and a sustaining force as the years pass and this job mounts. After lunch we drove out with Lynda and Chuck to see their house in Arlington. He has put up some of her pictures and some of her prized books. I read a little bit in Uncle Remus that Dick Russell had given her, practically a dead language now.

I liked the house except for the fact she has all the shades drawn. In the White House or at the ranch--wherever I am--I like to see the shades up and the sun streaming in. Being with them pierced the gloom a little. It is very amusing to hear Lynda Bird talk about housework.

1968

Sunday, January 21 (Continued)

Lynda gave a lively and humorous description trying to scramble two eggs in a gift skillet meant to handle two dozen and how the first evening when Chuck came home and walked into the kitchen, put his arms around her and kissed her. They suddenly heard claps and whistles. They looked out through the porch and there upon the lawn were the neighborhood children gathered to watch. They laughed too and pulled the shades down. Being with them lightened our mood a little bit. And there was a delightful picture of little Patrick Lyndon in the Star in his cowboy hat reaching out across the table to grab a shoe and a boot with Lyndon sitting proudly by. Close to five o'clock we went back to the White House. It is a comfort to have Arthur and Matilda with us. They are both soft and gentle with Lyndon, completely devoted, providing the companionship, the solace, the laughter he needs.

Lyndon went over to the office to work a while and I did that most sinful thing -- waste time. I went to bed and could not sleep. I tried to read my scrips for tomorrow morning, a tour of the White House with Barbara Walters, telling her about the acquisitions in the last four years. I was not creative nor could I concentrate.

About seven our dinner guests came-- Jim and Libby Rowe,

1968

Sunday, January 21 (Continued)

Muriel and Hubert, and as almost always happens, Lyndon's spirits rose in response to the good conversation-- the fun of being with people you know well and like. After dinner I got Muriel and Libby to go downstairs with me and we walked through the first floor looking at the portraits I wanted to describe, through the China room, the library, trying to immerse myself in the mood I must have tomorrow morning, the feel of it.-- I shall have to rely on my background of knowledge. This is not the time nor mood for concentrated study.

It was a civilized, pleasant enough evening and I do not think my guests knew how sore my heart was and not even I know the depths of Lyndon's because there is no field in which he has tried harder than health, education, and welfare or made more strides or felt that the Secretaryship was held by a man of more eminence and real devotion to what he was doing. And yet, this man looks at the performance of the President, evaluates his efforts, I suppose, and says "I am leaving."