

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Monday, January 29, 1968

Page 1

This may have been a sort of a bench mark day, in the history of the Lyndon Johnson Library.

But first, early in the morning, Liz came over and we talked about my attending Ford Theatre. I had decided against it over the weekend. I will be leaving for Austin at seven. I do not know whether it is the right decision. I would have adored being there at the opening, but it is quite a mix, Ford's Theatre and its history, and such volatile characters as Harry Belafonte, disciple of Stokely Carmichael, I'm told; and at least two or three other militant anti-war figures among the performers - I might just mess up the opening, so I am not going.

But the important meeting of the day, began at 10 o'clock in the morning. First, a session in the Lincoln Sitting Room, for Dr. Stanton and Dr. Grover, with Dorothy and Juanita sitting in.

I talked to Dr. Stanton about the acquisition of network programs at which the President appeared, documentaries, strategic to his administration, and his aims; and the big events of the times. Only he, Stanton, at CBS, keeps a film library, and regularly sends to us, a copy of the most germane things for our own LBJ Library. Now the question is, how to acquire them from the other two networks - they are expensive; it will mean digging back. We are much more likely to get them to make and give us copies of everything from now on, than to go to the expense and the research of working backward from January of '68, to November of '63.

Dr. Grover will prepare an inventory of those we have, and those we

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Monday, January 29, 1968

Page 2

want. He will send it to Dr. Stanton, and Dr. Stanton will explain to the other networks, what we want and get an answer from them. If the answer is no, somehow we must find the money.

And I hope we can even include some of the programs that I have appeared in. Occasionally, far from always, they send us a copy.

Then at 11, we moved into the Treaty Room, which I think of very personally, as my Board of Directors room, well seasoned with meetings of Head Start groups, Conservation Groups, and those of us/put together the exhibits at the little house at Johnson City. Now this biggest program of all, the Library.

Today's meeting was the audi visual committee, composed of Dr. Stanton and Leonard Marks, and Jack Valenti; and, of course, Dr. Grover, Juanita and Dorothy, and Busby.

The main business of the day was to have these specialists from audio-visual media - Stanton, Marks and Valenti, especially, see and evaluate the proposed exhibit planned. Arthur Drexler, whose brain child it was, chiefly. And Bunshaft and Max Brooks were on hand to present it to us.

We put the model on the big table and took off the lid, and Drexler explained the arrangement on the ground floor, and then on up into the great hall. And here is where we hit trouble. The two pylons, one on each side of the great stairway, on which there would be screens, roughly the size of the drapery right there in the Treaty Room where we were, something like 8 x 15 feet, were eyed askance by Dr. Stanton, and in turn, Marks and Valenti. They came into question as being functional.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Monday, January 29, 1968

Page 3

Drexler had spoken of a movie of from three to five minutes. I had said you couldn't tell any story in that length of time, it would have to be ten minutes or more. Could you ask one, and then another to effectively tell a story, there in the great open hall? Could you screen out the noises so that people looking at other exhibits in the great hall, wouldn't be disturbed, and vice versa.? Was the screen big enough to be functional - designwise they could see why they put it there? I have no interest in any design that isn't functional.

One by one they agreed the pylons would have to go. Then what of using the whole rear wall - where the great seal of the United States was, as a screen. But you couldn't stand in front of it because there was the vast, empty stairwell.

Somewhere about one o'clock, I ordered in sandwiches and coffee, and milk, and cookies and we ate while the discussion continued. And it grew pretty heated at times, actually, as doubtful as I had been of Arthur Drexler and his being understanding, and really in the current of what we wanted, in this museum library, I felt a sudden sympathy for him. Mr. Bunshaft is so determined, and overbearing. You get the feeling this is his building, not ours.

One point, we did all agree on and applaud; that is the vast display of the papers in their red bindings, with the white title, behind the glass wall. It can be magnificent - whether it's too big a price to pay for the concept of the great hall, remains to be seen. So much space is devoured by the

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Monday, January 29, 1968

Page 4

stairwell, yet it is required, I suppose, to give the impact of walking up and seeing all of these pages of history, three decades in the life of a nation, and a man, dramatically displayed.

Mr. Bunshaft had envisioned an enormous outside statue or bust of the President, at the top of the stairs. Yesterday, I had agreed that there had to be some focal point, but it could not be this, not, at least, until he was out of office, and maybe never, unless we can get a really great one.

I was disturbed too, by Bunshaft's referring to the beautiful walls of carrara marble, on which nobody can come along and hang ~~fix~~ paintings. Quite likely this is the best in the great hall - it definitely is not in many portions of the Library. This will have to be resolved.

I was concerned at the lack of elasticity in the proposed display areas and cases. They did sound beautiful, bronze and glass, beautifully designed, against the carrara walls, but they did not sound elastic, changeable; this makes me uneasy. It is as though they were trying to make a shoe for a foot but they didn't know the size. And yet, we are fighting the necessity of telling the contractor where to put the electrical outlet within the next six or eight weeks.

Our big problem is that we are pioneering. There is no prototype of a Presidential Library; there are only three or four in existence, and none so well done that you would want to copy them. None tells the story of the decades, the changes, and the interaction between man and the government, and the whole people. And everything we all say about it is so nebulous and

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Monday, January 29, 1968

Page 5

yet we have to pin it down into a certain number of square feet, with an electrical outlet, and soon.

The words got a good deal heated, and I'd hate to hear the things Mr. Bunshaft has to say about me, and my determination to have some small portion of space, where we show social life in the White House. And that exhibit can be changed in the same square footage, from State Dinner, to Lynda's wedding, to Luci's wedding reception. Our chief tools are films, documentaries, and artefacts, things, like a wedding gown, and the bible he was sworn in on. What is the right mix? What tells the story?

I went briefly into the dining room to see Lyndon, and there, gathered around the table, was a sort of assemblage that makes you know that serious events are impending. McNamara and Katzenbach, and Clifford, General Taylor; and that wonderfully selfless man, Cy Vance; and old returnees, God Bless Them, George McBundy, and Lodge, and Ball, General Wheeler, Sam Burger, Dick Helms. I don't remember seeing Dean Rusk but he must have been there. And staff members Walt Rostow, and Tom Johnson, and George Christian. And at the head, Lyndon trying to pull from each, all the answers to today's tough problems that he could. I waved at them and retreated.

And in the Treaty Room, we continued our talking, with the final general decision that we would have to start all over, the design concept for the great hall. The pylons would go, the symmetrical roll of round glass cages at the end, would have to change to something far more elastic. Buz would

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Monday, January 29, 1968

Page 6

have to come up with a more concrete realistic script, fro Drexler to transform into an exhibit concept, and this within two weeks, because the laying of the conduit for the electric lines couldn't wait, and they would be bedded in marble.

It was nearly four when I left and I thanked Dr. Stanton, and Leonard, and Jack, as lovingly as I could, for giving me, literally, a day of their life, and Lord knows, we've only started, and we promised to meet again in something like two weeks.

And then I worked with Ashton and Bess - and then, we went down to the theatre to sit on stools and lean over the tiny box like screen and look at the raw film of Lynda and Chuck's wedding. It was beautiful - the photography was a dream and the script sounded good enough. I had read almost all of it, and I left the rest for Lynda, and Chuck, and Bess, to use their best taste and best judgement on, because I was catching the seven o'clock plane for Texas.

I went back upstairs at six and packed my straw bag, everything I thought I could work ^{on} at home. I had already kissed Lyndon goodbye in his bedroom, and left, close to 6:30 for Dulles airport, took the Braniff flight to Dallas. Lo and behold, ^{Martie} ~~Marty~~ and Philip Baldwin were aboard, and after I'd had dinner, I asked them to come up and join me, and we talked about the judgeship, and Senator Yarborough's intransigence, he absolutely will not confirm Phillip. He insists on a man who was his campaign manager, and so there's a stalemate, and the docket is piling up. We talked of the

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Monday, January 29, 1968

Page 7

possibility of another Judgeship here in Washington, and Philip is interested. We talked of the graveyard at Scottsville. They've done some planting for me there.

It was a pleasant flight and a relief after the hard day's thinking. We reached Dallas a little ~~xx~~ after nine that time. Dale was there in the King Air and we flew, uneventfully, to Austin, arriving at Luci's and Pats a little before eleven. We looked at ~~xxx~~ 'cherubs' asleep in his bed. Talked to Luci and Pat. And so to bed, wondering meanwhile - How was the opening going - the Ford Theatre in Washington?

And as unsure and worried as I have everⁱⁿ been about the course the Library is taking. I am trying to play a role in a field/which I have very little background and no authority. True, I have studied it for many trips and a good many hours, but its a whole profession. The simple fact is there isn't anybody but me, how could Lyndon, and so I have to.

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