

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Friday, February 8, 1968

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I worked at my desk, and with Ashton, and the first event of the day was to go to the Congressional Club where the Texas delegation was having its monthly meeting, this one was a Memorial service for Merle Patman who died last summer. They are putting her name on a plaque, in the she Congressional Club, to which/was such a loyal member.

This meeting of the Texas ladies used to be the big social event of the month for me, from the 12 years when Lyndon was in the House, and still, though decreasingly, for the 12 years when he was in the Senate. At that time, the Senate Dining Room became my beat, to take constituents for lunch.

We were a close knit group, the Senate ladies. We relished our companionship. If there were any little feuds, I didn't know it, and it was always a very pleasantly anticipated thing by both hostess and guests, to take Texas constituents to the monthly luncheon at the Shoreham, or the Kennedy Warren, or sometimes at the Congressional Club.

I meant today, to stay only for the sherry hour and the program. Opal ~~Waxman~~ Yarborough, who is wife of the Senior Senator, is sort of the presiding officer, met me at the door, and took me in. The familiar faces, as Lynda would say, 'the Honchos', were there.

Ruth Burleson, J. D. Dowdy, Berle Pickle - about nine members wives I counted, and a goodly number of former members, because they don't go home again, to Pocatello, at least many settle in Washington. And I - I shall

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return to Texas, Lyndon and all of us, but I'll always come back, on a cane, as an old, old lady, because I love it here, too.

And there were as always, guests. I was introduced around the room, had a glass of tomato juice, and then, to my surprise, there was Wright, I did not know that he was going to attend.

We went into the room where there are small statuetes of the First Ladies wearing their inaugural gowns, down to and including me. And then Ruth Burleson, delivered the loveliest memorial to Merle Patman. And Wright responded. Suddenly in the middle of it, he quite broke up, tears came to his eyes, and his voice cracked and he continued talking, quite simply and movingly, with the tears rolling down his cheeks. There wasn't a woman, I believe, who didn't feel closer to him for it, and I'm very glad that someone arranged the tribute.

I said goodby all around and was back in the car at ten past one, quickly to the White House, where I had lunch on a tray. I'm always ravenous by lunch time these days, with nothing but coffee and juice for breakfast.

Then saw Liz and heard the last round, I hope, of what without a doubt, is the most ridiculous international bit I have been concerned with. They had deliberately tried to get for the entertainment, something pleasant, and reliable, and low key. With the grave situation in the world today, this is not a time for dancing, and in away, not even for the glitter and display of musical comedy or ballet. So we decided on our dear, reliable, and so

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obliging Robert Merrill of the Metropolitan Opera. Well, he had chosen his own songs, and they were - On the Road to Mandalay; and from Porgy and Bess, I Got Plenty of Nuttin'.

But Bess had howled, even Mort Rostow had winced, I'm told. Should we change the program! It was all so ridiculous. The Prime Minister read the program in the paper and sent word they were his favorites, and he hoped we would keep them. And so at rest.

I talked to Margie McNamara about the guest list for the party we hope to give for them in late February. She's still in the hospital. She'd looked so painfully thin and drawn, when I'd seen her. Bob Says, "Margie gets my ulcers."

When I look at them, I feel it is the right decision all around, that he will be getting out the first of March. Margie says she will be getting out of the hospital tomorrow.

In the afternoon, I went to Dr. Turchin's and then back at the White House, I tried to take a nap, ~~putting~~ but instead took to bed, the stack of read and file, things to decide on and a list of telephone calls. Among them a long and interesting one to Luci. I asked her to reminisce about the 16 days from the time Lyndon was sworn in, until we moved into the White House. How did it look through the eyes of a 16 year old.

She should be a writer. She speaks so graphically. I am trying to brief myself, to get ready, to steep my mind and my feelings, in the two periods that Howard K. Smith wants to discuss with me for his book, the

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weeks right after Lyndon became President. Late July of 65, about the time that the decision was made to go into Viet-Nam with more ground troops.

I called our house guests and welcomed them. The Joe Kilgores, and the Sherman Birdwells; and later the John Lyles.

Chief King gave me a brief rub, and then it was time to dress for the evening, in the champagne satin that Adele Simpson had made, to go under the beautiful gold coat, that was a gift from the Chief of State.

Jean Louis piled my hair on top of my head and I was ready by 7:30 so that I could have a few pictures made. I'm hoping that if I do this just before every State dinner, in an evening dress, some one will come out good, that I can use as a standard picture to give away. And I tried once more to get a good picture in front of the painting that C. R. Smith had given to the White House, the one of the great Tetons.

I like for the donors to keep on knowing by some reference, some gesture of appreciation, that their gift of four, three, two years ago, is still giving pleasure and appreciated.

We got the word that Lyndon would be late. I always have a case of 'hostess tenseness' a few minutes before a party.

Dean and Virginia, and the first arrivals, went into the Yellow Oval Room. I began to have a drink with them, and then was summoned to go down with Lyndon, about 20 past 8 to meet the Prime Minister and Mrs.

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Wilson at the North Portico. There too, was Lady Dean, and I made my apologies to her, because I don't know what happened at lunch at the British Embassy today. No doubt they were giving something for the Prime Minister and Lyndon, who had had a talk with him that was supposed to last from 11:30 to one, had simply abducted him and brought him and the total party, about 14, over to lunch on our second floor. I have no idea how many minutes notice he had given Zephyr. Lyndon had simply knocked on my door a few minutes past one, and said "Come out and meet one of your favorite Prime Ministers." And there they all were, talking and working until past three thirty.

Lynda and Chuck joined us in the Yellow Room, and because we were already late, there was a brief drink and an exchange of gifts. A vermeil tobacco box, the Prime Minister's pipe is ever present; and a lovely vermeil tea caddy for Mrs. Wilson, to go with the tea set we'd given her last June. Another family picture, but now it's grown to seven.

And they gave us two prints, one of Hogarth that Lynda Bird loved, and two beautiful books, one on English gardens, and another on great English interiors.

I had opened my beautiful Liber Amicitiae, to the page on Great Britain and had asked Bees to be sure that he signed it, my very first signature in this wonderful personal possession that I shall take away with me, from the White House.

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And then we went down stairs and in line, to meet the guests that had grown to 150. For the last three or four days, Bess and I had practically been praying for a snow storm or a flu epidemic. The usual percentage of regrets had not come in. The law of averages says the number we'd invited would be brought down to below 140, it didn't happen. There we were, straight up with 150, and only two staff members invited, that we could afford to ask to eat in the mess, as we have done, in a pinch, before.

John saved the day by figuring out a way to squeeze in one extra table although it was a little too crowded to be gracious. And when Lyndon asked me at six o'clock, having just been told that Winston Churchill was in town, if we couldn't possibly make a place to invite him, and I had to say no.

And it was about an hour later, when a couple called saying they were down with the flu, and Bess, miraculously got hold of him, and he came, very pink faced, and young, but with that magical name, a celebrity of the evening.

From the Cabinet, the Fowlers were there; and Bob, without Margie, still in the hospital; and from the Senate, the Henry Jacksons, and Wallace Bennets, Mike and Maureen; and both, yes actually both - of the Javits. And the Bill Fulbrights, Bill, polite and urbane, and Betty with her hair drawn back very tight and high, and looking quite distinguished.

There was one Governor, Godwin of Virginia - quite a number of Congressmen, Barefoot takes care of his own; and the Bill McChesney Martins, because money is very much a subject of the day.

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From business there was the Bob Benjamins, cherubic and smiling as always; Mike Hidows, he's chairman of Standard Oil and has quite some considerable interest in England, we're told. The Stuart Saunders of the Pennsylvania Railroad; and the Tex Thorntons of Litton Industries. The redoubtable veterans in public service, the John McCloy's, the George Balls. The former senator Paul Douglas and Mrs. Douglas, both of whom I like so much.

We'd invited the Tom Fletchers, number two man in District of Columbia government; the flamboyant character like the mayor to whom publicity comes so naturally; there's the makings of a rift there and I do not want to see it happen.

From labor, the Joseph Burns, and others I didn't know well. The John Loeb's whom I would like to classify under the title of old friends; and Norman Winston.

From the Press, Kay Graham - and imagine my amazement when she went down the line, among the last, and the Prime Minister turned to me the next moment and said "We are suing her newspaper for \$40,000. for libel.

And the Carl Rowens; to my surprise Herb Block, and to my pleasure, pixie-looking Bill Mauldin and his wife. We talked of his mother-in-law, and Santa Fe, and how much I'd hated to miss the party that she and Tony had given together, a barbeque. And of how I had simply adored to get off to Cuernavaca to the house they were renting for this month, and just as

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they went on down the line, they said, "We're going.", leaving me wondering whether to Santa Fe, or Cuernavaca.

And our old friend Max Friedman, who disappeared from the Washington scene for several years. He said, "You know I've been sick." And indeed he looked it. He added that for some months, he'd been putting together a book on the correspondence between Justice Frankfurter and FDR. I had read it, in part, and it was a real service. He is now starting, he told me, an autobiography of Justice Frankfurter.

Beside our three house guests, there were a few other Texans - the Cecil Haydens from Houston; Judge Alfred Hernandez, former President of the Lulac's; the Bob Strauss' from Dallas.

From the entertainment world, Jim Backus, and two of the couples, who, it ~~had~~ seemed to me were adding most to the party, an animated conversation, creating an aura of interest. Dr. and Mrs. Whitney Young, and our own Lynda and Chuck.

To be a good guest is an art. First you act like you are having a good time and then you try to spread it around.

We squeezed our way in to the crowded State Dining Room. The Prime Minister was on my right with Trudy next, and then Dean, and then attractive Mrs. Stuart Saunders, whom I like so much. And William Jennings Bryan Dorn; and Mrs. Fletcher, and Scoop Jackson; Mrs. Bob Strauss and Sir Patrick.

They a very interesting twosome to sit between. Some snatches of conversation. The Prime Minister told me that he loved being on TV and

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conversly, did not like making a public speech. I gathered that means like on the courthouse square. This ~~year~~ here, in the State Dining Room, he called a private speech. Of his opponent, "If a man is not married by the time is 51, we asks questions, in our country." Of young Winston Churchill, "He was running for Parliament, you know, tho he lost, I would say that he has somewhat more (he meant in ability) than his father, and a great deal less than his grandfather." At one point, he looked across at his wife, and raised his glass, and a very nice look passed between them and he turned to me and said, "She was working for \$5 a week, a stenotypist, and I was doing (and I forgot what he said he was doing), and we never thought that we would be some day dining in the White House."

He was very interested in the House itself, and asked a lot of questions about the rooms. And then of the Singing Strings he said, "I would fly across the Atlantic just to hear them. Whenever plans are being made to come over, and the date is set, then I start looking forward to this part of the dinner."

He spoke of Lyndon, as Lyndon, and he called me Lady Bird, the only other chief of state that I know of, that had done it yet, was Prime Minister Holt. He warned me that his toast was going to be quite long, and quite serious, and that Bill Fulbright wouldn't like it.

And on the other side, the conversation was interesting. I was discussing the foot tracks of the Great Britain that I had seen in our travels. New Zealand, Australia, Malasia - many places. And Sir Patrick said, "On the

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whole, it would, perhaps have been better for the world, if we could have stayed around a little longer."

I spoke of some of the good things England had left behind - the starting of Civil Service, the common language. In his answer he said, "There's no gratitude in international affairs."

I find it impressive and admirable the way the Britishers I know, look with a cool clarity, lack of bitterness, a sort of detachment at the breakup of the British Empire.

Lyndon's toast was long too, too long I thought, but it was a beautiful toast. I liked the lines "The American and British peoples are not short distance crusaders. We are veteran campaigners not amateurs, and never quitters." He said, "We have enormous confidence in the character of the American people and their ability to understand and master trial."

There was just one light moment, in speaking of the entertainment, referring to the /ridiculous 'flap' over the choice of songs, he said, "We might have compromised and sung a duet. You sing God Save the Queen, and I'll sing God Bless America."

Harold Wilson's toast also was long and grave. He backed Lyndon's San Antonio formula. Spoke of how in Moscow last month, he'd explained to the Russian leaders, promised that once there's a move toward peace, the British will play their full part, both in negotiations and reconstruction in Viet-Nam. Told Lyndon that his restraint in handling the Pueblo incident, will earn tribute from reasoning men everywhere, and indeed, from history.

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He's an excellent public speaker, I think, although he insists on calling this a private speech.

It was a rather late hour when we left the dinner table, and went for liquers and coffee, into the Red Room, and there dear Dean, made his excuses and departed quietly. I understand this completely, with the long history of the Lyndon Johnsons doing the same, during the Eisenhower years.

aIn a snatch of conversation with Mrs. Wilson, she was speaking of campaigning ~~ex~~ in their country, and said, that one time they were in a car, that was being rocked by angry students, who were also beating on the windows and the side of the car with sticks, and that she was actually afraid.

Well, we've had most everything in this country, but not quite that yet.

Then, we went in the East Room and with a very few words, I introduced Bob Merrill, Veronica Tyler - I had a delightful moment when Bob Merrill had come down the receiving line, and we had laughed simultaneously. I had said, "You and I have a penchant for crises."

His great, thrilling voice, filled the room, with the Gershwin songs and the Road to Mandalay. EVerybody who'd ever heard of Kipling, remembered and loved. And then Veronica Tyler sang some songs from Puccini and Shubert and Monati. And then a duet, Rodgers and Hammerstein's You'll Never Walk Alone. I thought Bess had shown great, good taste in her selection of entertainment against the background of today's tensions and gravities. And Bob Merrill

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as always, was so obliging. The four of us went on the stage when it was over and there were pictures, and then Lyndon summoned up Hubert and Muriel, he always does this, and then we took the Prime Minister out in the hall, champagne was passed, a little brief conversation, and then I said goodnight at the door, as Lyndon took them out to the car.

He went up quickly, saying to the few around him, "I've got to get back to Khaisan."

And I followed about 12:15 - the Joe Kilgores joined me, Jane looking a little girl in a headband, so content and happy, living back in Austin, Joe having a wonderful law practice, and serving as a Regent on the University Board, and the children growing up in that dear town. No backward glances to Congress for them!

And the Johnnie Lyles, whom I discovered actually are neighbors not 12 miles away in the hill country, with a home over toward Blanco, where they spend some time each summer, and a good many weekends. John, too, cast not a single backward glance toward those years in Congress.

And Dell and Sherman Birdwell, who enjoyed the evening more, I think, than nearly anybody. We'd sent them all up guest lists and I'd done some rearranging of their seating, so that they would be by people I thought they would be impressed with, and find companionable.

We had a pleasant hour of talking Texas and old times, and inevitably John Connally - and Joe Kilgore put an end to it a little past one, when he rose and said goodnight.

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