

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Thursday, February 15, 1968

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I was up at the unwelcome hour of a little past seven, to watch my appearance in the Today Show. It went along fairly well. It was a discussion of the art objects and paintings that had come to the White House since we ourselves arrived, and it began in the Green Room, with me sitting on the Daniel Webster sofa, telling about the silver coffee urn that had belonged to John and Abigail Adams, and it was rather stiff downstairs.

And the second half, when we moved upstairs and were talking about the paintings, was warmer, I thought, and my love for them came through. I had done it under bad circumstances. I had meant to immerse myself in the facts and the feelings of each gift, on the weekend before I did the show, on a Monday morning. I like to read and study, and be full of anecdotes, and ready phrase. Instead, it had been a very bad weekend, it was bogged down in gloom and inertia, and in wanting, as the very least I could do, to sit and listen, and talk to Lyndon, and so I did not apply myself to the program. Though actually, I was rather pleased that upstairs, it went along well. Fairly articulate and some of the warmth and love I feel for the paintings, came through, as I looked at the Winslow Homer, and Sully, and the Mary Cassatt.

And then, oh horrors, as I began to talk about the Robert Henri, and turned to it, the camera went back instead, to the Sully, once more. I guess the Henri wound up on the cutting room floor. I was furious - we either must

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follow these things through to the very end, we must have the right, or we mustn't sign up for them. It was loose and slack, and inefficient, and I was angry at myself and disappointed in my staff. <sup>P</sup> But no time to mourn - I dressed quickly and said goodbye to Lyndon, and caught the shuttle to New York, Bess with me, we went to the Hotel Pierre, with that sense of excitement I unfailingly feel when I go to New York.

Miss Treyz was there, with clothes from Marquise, and I decided on a summer suit in yellow cotton, and yearned for two more, but they're so expensive and I get scared when I count up the prices.

I had a steak for lunch, Mr. Stavropolous came over, and I tried on evening dresses and selected two, a pink embroidered with flowers, that looks like a Botticelli girl dancing in a dell; and a cerise chiffon.

And then, with Bess, I drove to the Decorative Arts Building and looked for dining room chairs. At Kittinger, and Wood and Hogan, and Bakers. A few people stared at me and whispered to their companion, but mostly Bess and I were left entirely alone and conducted our business quite happily and fairly quickly.

I was back at the hotel by four, had a good long rest, read a magazine, and then Mr. Jack and Eddie Senz arrived, and I went through the ritual of getting my hair done up on top of my head, and my face made up with false eyelashes, and put on the beautiful gold lame coat and dress. The fabric had been given to me by a visiting chief of State. It's the sort, that when

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you get tired of wearing it, you can burn the fabric and there will be a residue of gold in the pot, they told me.

I studied the guest list and then, with Lynda, who looked regal in a white dress, with heavily beaded sleeves, like a coat of mail, and her hair piled high on her head; and Chuck, and Bess, the four of us went to Mary's house. There were photographers waiting for us at the steps, we paused for pictures, and then inside, to the welcoming elegance, the beautiful paintings, Matisse, Monet, Utrillo, van Gogh; and impression of brilliant splashing color against a white background, and flowers everywhere.

This is a sort of sabbatical for me, only it's not that rare really. I go up about twice a year, to something gay and lovely at Mary's. There were about 30 guests for dinner, many of them planned for Lynda - the John Flemings; the young Carter Burdens, in her ~~younger~~ early 20's, she's the youngest woman to have ever made the best dressed list. And I, like every other woman in the room, took in carefully, the covered ~~wh~~ up white elegance and the simplicity of her dress.

There was Actress Kitty Carlisle (Mrs. Moss Hart); Warrie Lynn, Dick Adler. Lovely Jean Murray Vanderbilt - and I could thank her for the dear letter she had written Lyndon. Chris Brody, Mary's step grand-son, who had worked one summer at the White House. David Merrick, and John Loeb, Jr., Lynda's old beau; and Giancarlo Luisielli, Ann Ford's husband, who told us that she was off skiing with Charlotte.

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I sat on Paul Hoffman's right, with John Fleming next, and close to Mrs. Richard Rodgers, who, in a delicate feminine print, looked like she ought to be sipping lemonade in a summer house, and talking about the culture of roses. A very perfect lady, and a charming woman.

It was a very civilized, beautiful evening, delicious food, good conversation. Paul Hoffman talked of the world wide revolution, in nearly every aspect of living, social, cultural, economic. Perhaps it takes a blanket phrase like that to explain what's happening to us.

And I casually brought up to John Fleming, the subject about a document concerning the Louisiana Purchase. Had he heard of such on the market? Someone had told us about it and were even considering, very tentatively, purchasing it for the Library. It's in the hands of a gallery, something like Nerdler's, I believe, and to my surprise, and I almost think to his, he said "Shall I tell you something. That came from me. You're talking about the Engelhards." I was, in part, embarrassed. I would never have him think that we were trying to purchase it for less. And in part, amused because it fit so well into 'It's a small world' story.

With the champagne, Chuck rose and made a toast to Mary, adequate and not as good as I've heard him make, and there was a toast to the President, and then John Loeb rose and made a very nice toast to Chuck, identifying him self as one of the 'also-rans'.

And then as we rose from the dinner table, <sup>other</sup> ~~the~~ guests began to come.

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They were very casually introduced, and I am sure I did not see them all. Quite a contingent from the newspaper world - the Turner Catledges, and the Gardner Cowles, and Margaret and Clifton Daniel - I told her we had Mrs. Truman's portrait and we must plan a day when she will be sure to come, and get all of the Truman oldtimers, and have a party when we hung it.

And George Hunt, the editor of Life Magazine, with whom Liz seemed to spend the evening. And then Arthur and Matilde; and gnome-like little Leonard Limes, whose probably been to more parties than any human being in New York. And I recognized a familiar name, Robert Massey, as the author of the current best seller, Nicholas and Alexandra, and told him I had bought his book to send to a friend, Margie McNamara, and was looking forward to reading it sometime, myself. He flabbergasted me by saying, "Well, I sent you a copy, and I got back a very nice note from Bess Abell." I'll guarantee, if someone had sent me a book about the cultivation of copra and bongo bongo, between 1896 and 1916, it could have lain on my desk forever - but not a book I wanted to read.

And then he further amazed me by saying, "You remember, I met you at the ranch. I had come out to do a story about you, and I wound up helping you write a speech, to talk to the home economics people," I think he said in Detroit. Anyway, I got a D minus in memory.

From friends in the Designing world, cute Mrs. Richard Raines, Adele's daughter. Mollie Parnes and her son; and several who are helping us put on the style show, for the Governor's wives. Nancy White of Harpers, and

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I think, Eleanor Lambert. The Bobby Sarnoffs were there, and the Edward Warburghs; ~~he's~~ D. Steven Currier's mother; and Ed and Alice Weisl, Ed looking very weary and saying that he was getting discouraged about public service.

And Mrs. Enid Hawk, thank goodness I remember the fountains, and was quick to speak about them, and she equally quick to say how delighted she was to be privileged, as she expressed it, to put some fountains on the ellipse where they would frame the Jefferson Memorial and the White House.

There was Marietta Tree, we talked about the bust of Stevenson and the presentation to the White House.

And some of Mary's regular bachelors - Donasegi Obelinski; and Major Alexander Severski; and General Colter; and attractive, young Ed. Durrell Stone, Jr. - but by far the most interesting moment of the evening, for me, was when I settled down on the couch with John Loeb. Sometimes you can feel it's quiet, even if there are 100 people at the party. He said something that I shall remember with pleasure, "I never see a picture of you I like, and then when I see you, I wish there were a good picture. There's someone I want you to meet here." And he introduced him, Cecil <sup>Beaton</sup> ~~Wheaton~~, he'd done the sets and costumes for My Fair Lady, but I remember him as the photographer who does the Queen and all the royal family. And John Loeb said, "I'd like to arrange for him to come down to the White House and make a picture of you. Would you give him some time?" Whether it ever happens or not, I

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shall feel, about him wanting to, like a child would feel about getting a very big lolly pop.

He and Peter, and I talked about the time we had dinner in the Abe Fortas' back yard, with the McNamaras and Lyndon. And Lynda had come, bringing Chuck, first time I had ever been aware of his presence. And all of us were, I think, wondering a little about it.

There was music, but much more conversation than dancing. I saw that Mary had planned a midnight supper, with small tables, on the first floor living room, but a little past twelve, I said goodnight, and went home, leaving the Carpenters, and Bess, and Warrie Lynn, and Lynda and Chuck, for the late hours are for the young.

And back at the hotel, I read myself to sleep.

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