

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, February 27, 1968

Page 1

This was a good day. I woke rather late but full of energy and with that feeling that I wanted to tackle my work. That has been rather lacking in me these last two months. I do not have the zest for the day's work, the determination to get the most and give the most, for every 24 hours that I have. And our decision, our big decision, there are only days left, at the most a month, and I have the feeling the Pueblo incident has closed us in, has ruled out our chance.

I went to the swimming pool, had my 30 laps, and then to Mr. Per's for a full treatment. Had a cheeseburger brought from the White House, and was back on the second floor by about 1:30.

Today, we have another party for Servicemen; one of the two big reasons I wanted to be back. Lynda meets them and takes them on a tour, and I'm to join at three o'clock at the theatre.

So I spent an hour and a half at my desk, working with Ashton and Marilyn, and then at three was down in the hall to shake hands with everybody, as they filed past. The rank is lost on me and I call them all Mr. They filed by in casts, crutches, canes - most of them are very quiet, it is hard to get response.

Inside, Tony Matarrese was making loud, convivial music. Once more I moved from table to table, finding myself a little better at it than I was at first. A good way to move on is to go and get a refill for everybody, on cokes and soft drinks, and then as I put ~~theirs~~ theirs down, say goodbye.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, February 27, 1968

Page 2

The one young man who turned out to be from close by in Maryland, I said, "That's nice, I guess your family can come and see you. I suppose the Army must make an effort to put people in hospitals close to home."

He looked at me quite seriously and said, "Yes, the Army goes all the way for you."

At another table we were talking about the home state of one of the boys. I think it was Georgia. I said "Oh yes, when my husband was in the House of Representatives, and then the Senate, I used to drive back and forth between Texas and Washington, twice a year, and I'd always go through Georgia." And he said, "You mentioned your husband was in the Senate. What's your name." I told him I was Lynd Bird's mother, Lady Bird Johnson - she'd been the hostess who'd met them first today. And then because I thought I sensed his fellow soldiers getting primed to tease him, I quickly added "There I stood in line the whole time, and met everybody and didn't tell you what my name was." You feel like you'd do most anything to produce some real laughter, some sense that they were having a good time, and you feel, at least I do, so ignorant about how to do it.

I remember the letter from one of the officers that came after the first party, telling us that the men had really enjoyed it, that they'd said things like, "The President's daughter. You know I thought she'd be stuck up. She's not". And "Who ever thought I'd see the first lady table-hopping and bringing me a coke." Well we'll keep on trying.

This time, I made nearly all the tables, by the time four o'clock arrived. Lynda had made her goodbye a little earlier, and a little past four I went down

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, February 27, 1968

Page 3

to the Diplomatic Reception room, to join John Gardner, for the most important event of the day, the dedication of the Clinical Research Center at Children's Hospital.

To be with him, was very special for me. It was what I had flown back from Texas for. As soon as I was settled in the limousine, before we were out of the White House grounds, I looked at him very straight and said, "I want you to know I'm grateful for every day you work for the government, and I'm sorry you're going, but I feel you're going to something where your heart is really in it, and you'll keep right on working in the same sort of thing."

He thanked me and said, "I want to help the President, and I think I can."

And then in describing the Urban Coalition, he said something approximately like this. "It's made^{up} of a very diverse constituency, in fact I was the only person they could all agree on." I gathered it was a big, amorphous, potentially powerful group, that really never got going.

We were met at the hospital by Dr. Parrott, the director; and an elderly charming man, Dr. Montgomery Blair, after whom the Center is named. He had been director for many years and he's the last member of the Blair family to live in Blair House. What a legacy to leave to a city - your name on one of the handsomest old historic homes, the guest house for visiting Chiefs of State, and a research center and a children's hospital.

This was one speech I really felt good about making - I was in tune

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, February 27, 1968

Page 4

with it. Sharon had written a draft that I liked at once, made a few changes, added my personal experience with Luci there, some fifteen years ago, practiced half a dozen times, and felt at ease with.

Secretary Gardner was introduced with the inevitable word 'excellent'. I wonder if he feels about that word, like I do about beautification.

And then, he introduced me. "I have had the good fortune to serve under a President, who had done incomparably more for the health fields, than any other Chief Executive in history." And for that I loved him.

And then he went on to say some things about me, so generous and full of praise. I know full well it's just what I wanted to be, and not what I am, but of all the men I know, he's one of those I want most to believe it.

The audience was small, doctors and nurses, members of the hospital board, but warm, appreciative, and there was that sense of achievement in the air.

My speech recited briefly, the history of Children's Hospital from its beginning, nearly a hundred years ago. And in^{ac}claiming the successes of technology and research, especially in medicine, I drew the parallel. "I find myself hoping that we, we Americans, can address ourselves as effectively to the other ills that beset society; Hard core unemployment, educational inequalities, poor housing, clogged transportation - as we have in the past to the ills of the human body."

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, February 27, 1968

Page 5

When it was over, Dr. Montgomery Blair and Dr. Parrott, took me and John Gardner through the new wing. There was a sizeable press and a lot of pictures, in the laboratories, and as we visited some of the young patients. A little blue baby; and a little girl being treated for a most horrible rash.

And then, close to 5:30, it was over and we drove back to the White House. I thanked Mr. Gardner for his letter; he'd written me because he had not been able to accept the last three invitations to the White House. He had out of town speaking engagements, and he wanted me to know he was sorry. And I told him we missed him, but we looked forward to seeing him again, because he was going to keep on living here, wasn't he. Yes.

Our talk ranged over the whole field of today's ills. I cannot quote him exactly, but I think his feeling was something like this. "We need to change the whole climate of our thinking, the sense of miasma, fog, pessimism, everything's wrong, when really there is so much good that is going on. there's Sort of a/nothing to fear, but fear itself - state of mind, in which we seem to be trapped." Or am I mirroring only my own feelings.

At any rate, he's one of my favorite public servants, although I think the rough and tumble of real politics, is hard for him.

I had just an hour to wind up the day's work, and then to meet my guests. When I have a free evening, I like to make use of it to do something gay and fun, with the people that I mostly work with, and ask for extra hours and time away from their husbands and children, and on leisure. So I had invited

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, February 27, 1968

Page 6

Bess and Tyler, and Liz and Les, and Sharon Francis and her husband, and Simone, and Barbara Keehn, Dr. Hurst was a house guest and I asked Irv Duggan, and this made us eleven.

They began coming at 6:30. We met in the Yellow Room, had a drink, and then we chose up sides for bowling, which most of us did. But Bess, and Irv and one or two others went swimming. I did fairly well, though Dr. Hurst beat me.

Back on the second floor a little past eight, we had a good buffet supper, Zephyr's fried chicken which I almost never have, and roast beef, and waldorf salad.

Grouped casually in the West Hall with TV tables, it was a very interesting evening. Sharon's husband is an arctic explorer. He talked about his trips, the main thing that I remember is that DET had been found in the bodies of penguins, that far from the edge of the world.

I was asking him what was the use of exploring the arctic, and he was explaining to me that we could learn things about our environment, weather, the whole ecology. This is one of them.

About 9:30 we went down to the theatre and saw Live for Life with Yves Montand, which is pretty much a waste of time. With this crowd, I should have either had a superb movie, or just talk. These, the people I work with most, and whatever I produce, is the product of their mind, and my own together, and it's well for us to trade thinking and judgement, in just

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, February 27, 1968

Page 7

a happy, relaxed way.

Dr. Hurst was the hit of the evening. He's everybody's favorite.

We said goodnight about 11:30 and I read myself to sleep with Nicholas and Alexandra, being only dimly aware when Lyndon came in, after 2 o'clock in the morning.

It had been a full day for him, and when I read the paper, I found that Luci had accompanied him to Dallas. She'd said, "I was thrilled to death when daddy asked me. I hated to see him go alone." How like her to be aware that going back to Dallas would be hard for daddy. This is his first time there, since November 63.

He went to an REA meeting, it was a brief trip, for a good reason, and it was wise, I think, to break the barrier about Dallas, in just this way.

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