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through 03/10/1968, pages 1 - 4.**

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Wednesday, March 6, 1968 WND

Page 1

I went down in the morning for an eye check-up with Dr. Berkeley, and then back upstairs to work at my desk with Ashton, and had lunch on a tray. Worked on party lists, and dictated Library letters.

The first event of the day was the swearing in of C. R. Smith, in the East Room at one o'clock. The changing of the guard is rather frequent these days, coming in and going out. This one had a nice feeling, a very different feeling, low key, casual, good humored. Congress was fully represented, and for the moment, cordial. And business was there in full force - and there was some Smith family, not a great deal. A young man whom I took to be C. R.'s son, whom I had never met before - and his sister. It was from her that I found that Flore Smith, whom I had known back in University days, another sister of C.R., was dead.

We stood in line in the Blue Room, ~~There were~~ Officials from the Commerce Department, from Capitol Hill, and from the Business world filed by, to wish C.R. good luck. It gives me a quiet satisfaction, to have him join us.

Lyndon has so many good men, and they give so much, and it is not enough. It seems that the whole world around us is in a state of turmoil. Teachers are walking out on a strike, here in Washington, in many places. Students nearly everywhere are raising voices of anger.

Upstairs, I found that Andre Meyer, who had come down for the swearing in, was staying for lunch with Lyndon. I was pleased. That was one of those ^{spur} ~~space~~ of the moment things I was sure that ~~was~~ Lyndon had

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Wednesday, March 6, 1968

Page 2

done. He's so good at that. He was tied up for a moment, and so I sat in the Yellow Room and talked to Andre. I find him enormously interesting, and I'm very flattered that he seems to like me.

And then I went in for my final sitting with Madam Shoumatoff. After about 30 minutes, she said "You know, I wish that we could show it to some one. I need some help. Mrs. Johnson, there comes a time when you need to get someone's opinion on it." I said, "My husband is having lunch right down the hall, and a gentleman with him, who knows a good deal about art." She said, "Let's ask them to come." So I went to the dining room, and to my delight they were still there, and I said, "Will you do something for me, that will take five minutes²." "Yes." "Then come down in a few minutes, to the Lincoln Sitting Room,"

So, presently, they walked in. I felt like I would burst, for about 30 seconds, and then both of them, simultaneously said, "I like it. I like it very much."

Lyndon went on to say that he liked the hair and the eyes, but that something needed to be done about the neck. Madam Shoumatoff said, "You have a good eye. It is not finished. I am going to take the portrait with me and work on it for a week or two. What you see just represents the beginning, just a sketch, that is below the face."

Andre was most lavish in his approval and I don't know who was the more relieved, Madam Shoumatoff or me.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Wednesday, March 6, 1968

Page 3

When they left, we heaved a great sigh of relief, and I ordered some tea, and we sat and congratulated each other on our good fortune. Madam Shoumatoff will take it with her. By Easter time it will be ready, all finished, varnished, and can be shown to the members of the White House Historical Association, who have ordered it for the White House, and who will say whether it suits them or not.

Just as he left the room, Lyndon had looked back over his shoulder, and said, "Tell her she can sign up to start painting me, right away." Neither she or I carried it any further than that, but this is what I had been hoping for, and after Easter, when we see the final results, then, perhaps, we can raise the subject of his portrait.

She told me something so delightful. She's going to do a small, colored sketch of my favorite Thomas Jefferson portrait, the Rembrandt-People in the Blue Room, and it will be my very own. I am absolutely delighted. I called to get a photo of it and by four o'clock we were all through and I was back at my desk, working and recording.

And then into the apple green crepe, to go downstairs for the reception for Democratic State Chairmen. Lyndon was a little late, so I went into the Blue Room and went from group to group, John Criswell taking me around.

I knew very few of them - Will Davis from Texas, of course; and Joe Carr from Tennessee; and tall, attractive Bill Kerr, I always like to be

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Wednesday, March 6, 1968

Page 4

reminded of Senator Kerr.

When Lyndon came, I whispered to him, that I was going to have to leave before 6:30, and he was very nice about it.

We all filed into the State Dining Room. I did not sit in the front row, and a little before 6:30, by arrangement, Jerry came in and leaned over and spoke to me, and that was my signal to walk out.

And then, into my pink lace dress, feeling terribly self-indulgent, and out to the David Lloyd ^{Kreegers} ~~Greegers~~. I told them I could not stay for dinner, but it was a treat, a gift, to spend an hour seeing their house which Philip Johnson had done, and their wonderful art collection displayed on its walls.

First we went into the Library, and there were Joe and Susan Mary Alsop; Philip Johnson, to give us a guided tour of the house; and John Walker, to discuss the collection. We all had a drink and then carrying it, began to wander through the halls and the living room, and the vast dining room and out onto the most beautiful porch, with a superb view of the city spread out below, and you're absolutely surrounded by trees. It must be heavenly in spring, in summer, and fall! It was an impressive and dramatic scene, on this biting winter night.

The house is made of ^{there are} travertine, and ~~the~~ arches and great openness, ~~of~~ and expanses of glass, and a little interior court yard, full of lush, tropical plants. I do not find it at all cozy, but it's a beautiful setting for the paintings,

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Wednesday, March 6, 1968

Page 5

and the Bonnard that I had fallen in love with, ^{is} is right at the front door.

They have two other Bonnards; a Monet of the same place that the one at the White House is, only done in a different light, morning, he said. And another enormous Monet of water lilies. And Van Gogh's, Gauguins, Rodins, a Matisse - many that I didn't know - several Degas, and quite a few pieces of sculpture, among them some Moores and a Yachametti, and a Lipchitz - and in the corner, a pre-Columbian piece.

~~And~~ Then there was a whole room of bright, meaningless, abstracts, that somehow irritate me.

And then we went downstairs to a whole room full of Picassos, several of them paintings of the women he had lived with. These too, irritate me. I do not like women with four eyes, or two mouths, or no mouth. I must say though, I could see the feeling coming through. One of the women, ^{was} was totally serene and acceptant, in spite of her mixed up features.

And another totally sharp and bitchy, ~~much~~ too quick, it was nearly eight o'clock, and I knew they'd be sitting down to dinner, so I said many thanks and goodbye.

~~And then~~ ^{we} drove to the Gonella residence, having checked on the telephone and found that Lynda and Chuck were out there. I've never seen Ashton's house. Her adorable little boy was seated solemnly at the head of the stairs, surveying everybody who came. He's one of the cutest youngsters I ever saw. Everybody there was an old friend - a dozen or so Congressmen,

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Wednesday, March 6, 1968

Page 6

mostly from Texas, or Louisiana - the Deasons, the Millers, Mary Rather; Tom Corcoran, who said he wanted to talk to me sometime about Margaret Josephine. I purposely did not talk to Lynda and Chuck until time to leave, and then I gathered them up and we headed back to the White House, thinking that we would have dinner with daddy, just the four of us.

And then I got a call from him - he was on the way, would I turn around and meet him at the Gonellas?[?] With a sigh, I left the children out and they went on to say goodbye to Doug Davidson, and I calculated the minutes, took a chance, and went on to the White House, and slipped into the backseat of his car, just as Lyndon emerged from his office. So we rode back to Ashton's and I reentered, saying that I had such a good time, I decided to come back!

Lyndon likes to express his closeness to the people who work with us, and I think he thought it would mean something to Ashton. He was bone weary and we left soon, and to my pleasure, Lynda and Chuck were waiting for us at the White House, and the four of us did sit down to dinner, and we talked about their plans. They're going to his parents tomorrow, and to Texas probably the next day, and on to Mexico Saturday.

Lyndon, in his patriarchal way, wanted to help them at every turn. Dale Meeks will fly them to Mexico, and go back after them. He hurts with the approaching departure of Chuck and Patrick, and he's so proud of them both. They have really become a part of our family. He wants to

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Wednesday, March 6, 1968

Page 7

spend time with them, and is a little hurt if they have plans to go out and spend it with friends their own age. But with a curious insensitiveness, he didn't know that there are times when you just want to be with your very own family, and so he picked up the phone and asked Mathilde, who was our house guest (I had just sent her a dinner tray up) to come down and eat with us. She demurred. He said, "Oh no, just have your tray brought on down here." Lynda and I cast each other a glance. If there is anybody we would be willing to share the hour with, it is the sweetest of friends, and you just might as well take him as he is.

Lyndon, looking dead tired, leaned back in the executive chair that he uses for a dining room chair, and closed his eyes, and reached over and took Lynda's hand and said, "I wish I could ^{bear}~~bare~~ your burdens." Lynda leaned over and kissed him. I knew that right below the surface there were tears.

It was after 11 when we left the dining room table, and I had a quick rub and to sleep.

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