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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Wednesday, March 20, 1968

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Apparently, I had reached the end of my physical tolerance for loss of sleep. I woke in Lyndon's room at 7:15, tumbled into mine, and into bed, and did not open my eyes again until 10:20. Oh blissful gifts from the Gods! If only I could give it to Lyndon.

So I was ready for a busy day, on this first day of spring. Put on my yellow ^{Geppie Beane} ~~Jeffery Beane~~ suit that Lyndon had given me for Christmas, and close to 11:30 went out on the grounds with Lyndon, to greet the President of Paraguay, General Stroessner. I remembered that Lyndon had liked him particularly, ~~whom~~ among all the Chiefs of State he had met at Puento ^{del Este} ~~del Este~~. He emerged from the big black car, tall, ^a solid looking, assured, affable man, sandy-haired and very freckled, regrettably no English. There was one charming difference, in this now familiar, but always dramatic arrival ceremonies. When the band struck up the National Anthem of Paraguay, there was first, a soaring call-to-arms sort of phase, and then it went into a sad mood, and about that time I realized that all around me, particularly on my right, where the Nationals of Paraguay were lined up, there was a humming that rose to a singing, spontaneous, natural - I wish that in all the four corners of the globe, we reacted to the Star Spangled Banner that way.

And then, it went into a gay phase, with a louder, more buoyant singing.

Back in the Diplomatic Reception Room, we had the little receiving line, and then we looked up, and there was Luci, and Patrick, and baby, who came over and were introduced to General Stroessner.

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Lyndon took the Chief of State away to his office for talks, and I went back upstairs to my desk, where the ugly headlines of the day still awaited me, unchanged by the pleasant beginning.

Howard Closes Down in Protest - Britains Face New Tax-Bite Wage Control. Conscience of a deserter. Whoever thought I would live to see the day when a deserter became a sort of a folk hero?

One happy note, a big picture of President Truman - Truman Supports Johnson. And his answers were straight forward, salty, sharp and very positive.

I recorded and worked on the mail with Marilyn, signing an innumerable stack of pictures which I call my "idiot work", and Marilyn looked^s at me with just a shade of disapproval "But it makes a lot of people happy".

Talked to Jake about a problem letter from our district, a proposed dump by St. Luke's on the Lake.

With John Walker about the wonderful loan of Daniel Boone escorting Pioneers Into the Western Country, a Bingham, but it's only a loan, and I shall write the most grateful acceptance.

Luci brought Lynn in and he made his contribution^{to} of the humor of the day by dropping a full roll of toilet paper into the 'Jonnie' which he has just discovered as a very delightful place to play.

I had lunch on a tray and sometime during the afternoon, called our houseguests - the Zac Lentzes, and the Sam Lows, and the Ed Rays to welcome them and get them settled. Actually, Marilyn always does it once, and very

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well.

Spent the rest of the afternoon working at my desk. Met with Jim Ketchum and Carter Brown about a frame for "Arturito", now that my dearly beloved Mary Cassatt, no longer above the mantel, but ~~was~~ returned to the Smithsonian to the Fine Arts which will open in May.

The place is empty and "Arturito" should really be reframed, even if he only lives with me in this room for another eight months or so, because he now belongs to us.

Carter was very helpful, he decided on something that I think will be fine. When I think of the lovely Mary Cassatt, nothing will ever replace it really.

I hope I'm not one of those people who, because someone has given me something for three or four years, is hurt when they withdraw it. I must always remember the time I had it and what a joy it was.

Jean Louis arrived and I had my formal hair do. Put on my Yellow chiffon, that floats over an eastern fabric, and had some pictures made. Since time is fleeting and so is my residence here, ^{with} ~~and~~ these very talented photographers, I want to accumulate five or six good pictures of me in evening dresses, and so before each State Dinner I shall try. I've been remiss; I'm still giving out pictures made in 64 and 65.

Lyndon wore his Paraguayan shirt, we were on the North Portico in the brilliant light of the cameras, a little past eight to meet President Stroessner, who arrived with his two sons, Estavo and Alfredo, and we went up the Yellow Room with their minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Pastor,

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and about three other members of his party.

Hubert and Muriel, ebullient as always, were there; and Virginia, without the Secretary. That dauntless soldier had gone home with a headache, and I was glad for once that he had succumbed to something physical that hurt him, and didn't just tough it out.

Stroessner's two sons, ^{and} Luci and Pat made it a warmer occasion, and among our gifts to him ^{was} a cowboy suit, identical to Lyn's, for his grandson, almost the same age. And a chess set like John Quincy Adams' which is in the Smithsonian, and the Accutron desk clock that we use so much. And for Mrs. Stroessner, who was not with him, West Virginia crystal like we use in the White House.

He was very appreciative throughout, in fact, I don't remember a Chief of State who seemed more pleased, more impressed to be here. I was aware that we had invited him ~~to get~~ against the whispering and snide remarks from the super-intellectuals, who call him a dictator, and so I saw with a cheer, the Evening Star editorial, which refers to his staunch friendship with the United States, ^{concerning} and Cuba, and the Dominican Republic - in fact, wherever needed. This considerably flavored the conversation that passed between him and Lyndon.

He had brought us some beautiful linens, for me and the girls, hand work of his country, and some leather stools, elaborately tooled. I think one of them can serve as a stool, and as a library step, in our new sitting room at the ranch.

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We lined up as a threesome, to go down behind the color guards, and I think I felt the military man's un^{but}moving ~~and~~ impressed reaction, to the really stirring ceremony, following those fine young soldiers down the great corridor, ^{to} the tune of Hail to the Chief.

This was, of course, a one room dinner, about 140. The Brennans represented the Supreme Court; and from the Cabinet, the Cliffords and C. R. Smith.

The Senators were Burt Hickenlooper, and Bartlett of Alaska, and Howard Cannon of Nevada; and we are getting so many regrets from Governors these days ^{that} and I think I shall discuss with Price [?] ~~not~~ inviting any more.

That, with the revved up heat of the campaign year and the excruciating ordeal of the war, the number of declines on the list, ^{have} been getting more and more obvious.

The Covey Olivers were a help throughout, excellent Spanish, long knowledge of the whole continent, and gay, happy personalities.

There were two astronauts - Armstrong and Gordon. From the entertainment world, Howard Mitchell, and I made a point of telling him how proud I was that one of his protege's had composed a beautiful piece of music under a grant from the National Counsel of the Arts.

And Martha Raye, who has entertained the troops so many times.

And there were two other members from our guest of honor's family, ~~that~~.

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who are citizens of our country; a cousin from Colorado, Mr. Robert Stroessner; and a nephew, which to me added to the grace of the evening.

Among those from the government were the Harold Linders from the Export-Import Bank; and the young, attractive Bill Sherrills, head of the Reserve System, whom I had singled out, *as comers in the town,* and people I would like to know better.

And, of course, *from the Peace Corp,* the Jack Vaughns; Bob Dowling was there, with his new wife. He's been so personally generous to us, as well as to all the other Presidential families; with the suite first at the Carlyle; it used to be for the Trumans, and the Kennedys - I do not know about the Eisenhowers, and then us; and then at the Pierre.

Besides our houseguests, there were a few other Texans.

Because tonight is the night for Latinos, the Roberto Ornelas, he's the national President for LULAC, beamed when I told him how familiar that name was to me. And Dr. and Mrs. Candelario Saenz, former President of the Mexican Chamber of Commerce; and the Ed Singers of Corpus Christi, who's working on an art gallery for Corpus, to be built by Philip Johnson.

And from the press, the Price Days of the Baltimore Sun; and the Hugh Pattersons of Little Rock, and the Bill Smalls of CBS; and a gentleman I was especially glad to greet, Dr. Roger Rusk, Dean's brother.

When the 140 had filed by, we went into the State Dining Room and I

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quietly told the President, a bit about the other guests at the table, whom actually he had just met, but how can a stranger remember?

Marnie Clifford on his right; Mayor Cervantes of St. Louis next, a handsome, youngish man with a very Latino name, whom I had invited because of his very active interest in beautification. He and I have talked on the phone about the conference he had called for beautification in St. Louis. And I was aghast when he told me ^{that} the message I had so laboriously done twice, on a tape, had not reached him. Inefficiency, loss of effort, makes me mad. I shall find out why.

And there was a very attractive Congressional wife, Mrs. Monagan, I believe of Connecticut; and next Tom Gettys of Georgia. It turned out, he had ridden the whistle stop with me, from one end of Georgia to the other. Barefoot's suggestions are always very well thought out and documented.

Next I had Mrs. Herbert Frensey of Houston, whom we have known, though not well, for so many years. They brought us word of George and Alice. Then there was Mike Douglas, who tried so hard to get me to go on his program. I said no because I'm scared. I think I should have said yes. Betty Hughes has just finished being his co-host for a week. We sang a duet ⁱⁿ her praise.

Next, I did need some one who spoke good Spanish, so I asked Mrs. Herrera of the Inter-American Development Bank, who turned out to be pretty, lively and charming, and who took care of the President's aide, Mr. Roque Avila whose importance, the State Department says, exceeds his title, who, with

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no English, I had difficulty talking to.

The President and I talked of fishing; the rivers of Paraguay offer wonderful sport, he told me. Of grandchildren, his enthusiasm equals ours; and that ubiquitous subject, the possibility of a visit to his country.

I shall leave this place, dissatisfied, with my ability to draw forth from many Chiefs of State, the interesting stories they must have to tell. I have my little series of gambits. "Mr. President, have you always been in political life?", is often good for an interesting response, but I don't tap the gold that must be there.

Lyndon's toast played again with the greeting of the morning. "I am happy to welcome two visitors to Washington, President Stroessner and the first day of spring." And he added a warning about Washington climate. "The political winds have been blowing pretty strong here, I've observed in the last few days. It can turn very chilly, suddenly."

And then when the toast was over, to my surprise, and not to my pleasure, he rose again and introduced two of our guests, "Mr. and Mrs. Walter Hibbs", parents of a Lieutenant who had won the Medal of Honor posthumously, he was killed in Viet-Nam. One of the greatest honors is to wear one of the uniforms of this country, and the greatest honor of all is to wear on that uniform, the Medal of Honor, given only to the most gallant, and the most dedicated."

And then he pointed above him, to the great brooding portrait of Abraham

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Lincoln, ^{and} said "Lieutenant Hibbs gave his life that we might live, just as this man gave his life in order to preserve the Union." And he asked Mr. and Mrs. Hibbs to stand.

I knew ~~that~~ with what simple kindness Lyndon meant it, and I knew that there would be those who took it in a different way. >

Later, I found that Luci had sat by him ^{the father (?)} she knew all about him, Jim Cross had been telling about him, and she had, I think, made him have a comfortable, happy time at the dinner.

Our table had turned into a merry-go-round of passing menu cards for autographs, to which the President graciously obliged, and I must say his is the most unusual I have, a series of vertical lines and one long horizontal line, that bears to my eye ^I no relation to the words Stroessner, and yet he did it the same way over and over.

He seemed pleased that we had named the dessert after the capitol of his country, Savarin Asuncion, as we often do, a pleasant compliment to the guest of honor. In fact, I never remember a Chief of State who seemed more genuinely to enjoy being here.

After his toast, we went into the Red Room, for liquers and coffee, and into the East Room where the University of Maryland Madrigal Singers sang folk songs of our country, and of Paraguay. The familiar ones of his land, brought a smile to the President's face, and Michael, Row the Boat Ashore, is still going round and round in my head.

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Afterwards, I complimented Rosemarie Gr^entzer, on being able to learn two of their songs so well and quickly. And she said, "The real test was one time when we sang (and I believe she said it was for a United Nations Group) where we learned to sing in seventeen different languages for one program!"

We took the President out to the North Portico, for goodbys, and Lyndon went up a few minutes later, while I circled through the parlors and down the hall, speaking to guests.

And then, in a short while, went to the second floor myself, for what has come to be one of the most pleasant times here in the White House, a visit with our house guests.

Tonight, it was the ~~Jack~~ Zac Lentzs of Victoria, and the Sam D. W. Lows of Houston, who had been our friends since our very first political days, and that's as far back as '48 and I believe '41. How many District meetings he's sat in on in the front yard at the ranch, and before that, on Dillman Street! It was a particular pleasure to have him here, and I think he and Myrtle enjoyed it as much as any guests we've had. When he said, "You know, Bird, I'm 71," I was aware that was one of the things that was the matter with the Johnsons - we've kept all of our old friends, nearly all of them, thank heaven, but we have n/t sought out the young leaders in their 30's and 40's.

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~~And then,~~ ^{also} there were Ed and May D. Ray of Memphis, Tennessee, the newspaper man, beagle lover, also veterans of many Johnson campaigns. ^(maides?)

We had a drink and reminisced, and enjoyed it thoroughly. And then a butler leaned over me and said, "The President wants you to bring your guests in the bedroom." So probably to everybody's amazement, I invited them all in to Lyndon's bedroom, where he was propped up, in the middle of about a bushel basket of spread-out night reading, and there, sitting by him, with a big grin on his face, chewing on a paper marked 'Top Secret' was Patrick Lyndon. We were enchanted! We sat down and talked to Lyndon just a short while.

Then everybody said goodnight, and I picked up Patrick Lyndon, still in high good humor, and walked back into his mother's bedroom, which was dark, and they rose up in bed, startled, and said "What are you doing?" I found, to my amazement, they didn't know their little boy was gone from bed. Grandpa had simply gone into the adjoining room, and picked him up. He claimed that when he went in to kiss him goodnight, he found him standing up, hanging onto the edge of his crib, grinning.

I think the most interesting encounter of the evening for me, had been a conversation with a negro guest. I don't even know his name, who had something like, "It's always a pleasure to see a fellow Texan." And I said, "Sure ^{enough} ~~yes~~, where are you from?" He said, "Clarksville." And I said, "I'm from Harrison County." And he said, "Oh, yes, my grandfather

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and his father were slaves in Harrison County." I looked at him and his wife, as we stood in the sumptuous Red Room of the White House and said, "And here we all are!" And we all three laughed at once.

A rather pleasant addenda to the day's troubled scene.

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