

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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Was only a week ago today, and yet it seems like a year, or a lifetime, so much has happened.

It began early because Lynda was coming in on the red eye special from California, about seven o'clock, after having kissed Chuck goodbye the night before.

I want<sup>ed</sup> to be right there at the door with open arms to meet her, but I begged Lyndon not to get up. "No, I want to," he said. So the operator called us in what seemed the grey early morning and both of us were downstairs, at the entrance to the Diplomatic Reception, at seven o'clock, when she stepped out of the car. She looked like a ghost - pale, and tall, and drooping. We both hugged her, and went upstairs. And then I took her into her room, and helped get her clothes off, and she went to bed. Actually, she'd had a sedative on the plane, slept a little, not much - and it was, I think, part emotion and part the sedative that made her look detached, like a wraith from another world.

She said, "Mother, they were awful - they kept on pushing and shoving to get to us, and they almost ran over a child, and there were lots of other wives there, saying goodbye to their husbands." She meant the press.

*Jesus*  
[When I went back into Lyndon's room, he was crying. It's the first time since Mrs. Johnson died, that I have seen him cry. But he didn't have time to cry.] <sup>π</sup> Today was a crescendo of a day.

At nine o'clock in the evening, he was to make his talk on <sup>the</sup> war. The

*Lyndon*

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speech was not yet firm. There were revisions, + people to see, so he began to put on his clothes (still crying, and stopped, <sup>then</sup>) and went to church with Luci and Pat, something he does more and more.

I'd often thought the Catholic church might be the final haven for Lyndon,

And I, exhausted, went back to bed, where I half slept for a couple of hours.

On the way back from church, Lyndon had stopped to see the Vice President, at his apartment. Hubert and Muriel are leaving for Mexico, for a ceremony, sometime during the day.

There was a beautiful big picture of a Magnolia Soulangeana on the front page, and the Woman's Page of the Post was a solid spread of the dresses I would wear on my trip to "See America".

And Arthur and Mathilde were with us, also a comfort and a leavening to any mood.

It was a day of a lot of coming and going - and it's hard to remember when what happened. Sometime during the morning, Buzz came in, took up his place in the Treaty Room, and began to work on the speech. I had spent a good part of Saturday, and some on Friday, working on it myself. I had felt quite positive about my few changes. <sup>9</sup> Read it over again, for what was the umpteenth time, and then, I believe it was in Lyndon's bedroom, when he said to Arthur and Mathilde and me, "What do you think about this?" This is what I'm going to put at the end of the speech." And he read a very

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beautifully written statement which ended, "Accordingly, I shall not seek and I will not accept, the nomination of my party, for another term as your President."

The four of us had talked about this over and over, and hour after hour, but somehow we all acted and felt stunned. Maybe it was more of a calm finality in Lyndon's voice, and maybe we believed him for the first time.

Arthur said something like, "You can't mean this." And Mathilde in an excited way, "Oh no, no." And then we all began to talk the reasons why, and why not, over and over again.

Buzz came in now and again with another page for the main part of the speech.

Finally, a little after two, Lyndon and I, and Luci and Pat, and Mathilde and Arthur, went to the table for lunch. And it was Lyndon who thought to call Buzz in from the Treaty Room, to have something to eat.

Mathilde's eyes were full of tears, and Luci had obviously been crying forthrightly. Lyndon seemed to be sort of congealing into a calm, quiet state of mind, out of the reach of us.

And I, what did I feel - so uncertain of the future, that I would not dare to try to persuade him one way or the other. There was much in me that cried out to go on, to get every friend of ours, to give and work, and spend, and fight, right up to the last, and if we lost, well and good - we were free.

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But we could be free without all this draining of our friends.

I think what was going over and over, in Lyndon's mind, was something that I've heard him say increasingly the last months. "I do not believe I can unite this country."

Buzz made a very persuasive, almost poetic little explanation of how and why he had written the statement, saying Lyndon would not run. Lyndon, indeed, was the architect, the planner, but I think it was he who had cloaked it in its final word. Buzz was thinking of the future, and he sounded persuasive.

Sometime, the time is very hazy on this day, I think it was around three o'clock, Lyndon went over to his office, and I talked to Lynda and to Luci. Both of them were emotional, Luci crying, Lynda distraught. What does this do to the boys? They will think - what have I been out here for? - was it all wrong? - can I believe in what I've been fighting for? Lynda and Luci seem to feel that Lyndon had been something of the champion of ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> soldiers, that his getting out would be a blow to them.

Lynda said, with an edge of bitterness, "Chuck will hear this on his way to Viet-Nam."

It was hard for me to hear, and hard to me to think of the young, advance men out in Wisconsin, where the primaries were two days away, To think of the Womens Speech Bureau, of all the plans Liz had made, of all the people to whom we were something of a champion.

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Sometime during the afternoon, I talked to Lyndon about what the girls had said. He said, "I asked Westmoreland about that, about how it would affect the morale of the men. He thinks it will not matter appreciably."

I felt that Lynda and Luci were looking at it from closer range of the wives of two young soldiers, and pointed that out.

He looked at me rather distantly and said, "I think Westmoreland knows more about it than they do."

He was still in the office and it was close to six o'clock when Walt Rostow, looking grey and weary, arrived on the second floor, with Averill Harriman, who did not look at all weary, and Ambassador Dobrynin.

Lyndon had told me that morning that they were coming to talk about the speech. I took them into the Yellow Room, the butler came in, and I asked them what they would like to drink. Everyone, I noticed, cautiously took a Coke, in spite of what I've heard about the Russians drinking vodka and trying to toast their opposite <sup>men</sup> members under the table. Dobrynin was affable and talkative - I equally so - our subject, <sup>safely,</sup> the possibility that the Bolshoi might come to San Antonio.

Then, a little late, Lyndon came in with that jaunty step, that I've seen him rev up under the most intense tension, and I went to my room.

It was a strange afternoon and evening. <sup>we</sup> They would meet in the West Hall by twos or threes, or all of us - Mathilde, Arthur, Buzz, Lynda, Luci, Pat and I, and look at each other, helplessly, silent, or exploding with talk.

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I, at least, felt like I ought to do something, I must do something, but what, and how did I dare do anything, with the decision so momentous, and one I could by no means implement, or take the responsibility of making it turn out right.

I remember I kept on looking at the hands of the clock, and counting how long it was until nine.

At nearly seven, I went over to Lyndon's office with him. He was looking at the ticker. I told the kitchen we would have some light sandwiches, or snacks, and drinks from eight o'clock on, but that we wouldn't really want to eat until after the speech was over - nine-thirty or ten.

And then the Martinis <sup>(the barman)</sup> came and worked on Lyndon. Marvin came in close to eight. Lyndon always speaks of him affectionately as "that tough Marine", and he is. We've shared so much, we've been so close - that I can say about many people here, and that's been the great reward, second only to the sense of achievement.

Clark and Marny came a little past eight. Lyndon had asked me to call them. And Walt and Elspeth.

And then about a quarter of nine, Lyndon and Marvin, and Walt, and Jim Jones went to Lyndon's office - and very shortly afterwards Luci and Pat. Luci clings to her father these days. It's wonderful to see. She's going to give him every comfort she can. And Patrick has a very special relationship with him. We are lucky for so much. Luci has a very strong spirit and a

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very slight body.

I went over with Clark, and Buzz, just a little before nine and Lynda joined us. And there we were in the familiar oval office of the President, the floor a jungle of cables, the brilliant glare of TV. What a stage setting!

And there was Lyndon, very quiet, at his desk. The lines in his face very deep, but a marvelous sort of repose over-all. And the seconds ticked away.

I went to him and said quietly, "Remember - pacing and drama." It was a great speech and I wanted him to get the greatest out of it - and I did not know what the end would be.

It was magnificently delivered. He's best I think, calm, strong - those that love him, must have loved him more - and those that hate him, must at least have thought - "Here is a man".

And then came the end.

"What we won when all our people united, must not now be lost in suspicion, distrust, and selfishness, or politics among any of our people. Believing this as I do, I have concluded that I should not permit the Presidency to become involved in the partisan divisions that are developing in this political year - and so on".

"I do not believe that I should devote an hour, or a day of my time, to any personal partisan causes, or to any duties other than the awesome duties of this office, the Presidency of your country. Accordingly, I shall not seek,

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and I will not accept the nomination of my party for another term as your President."

It had been said. Just a moment after he finished the "goodnight and God bless all of you," I rose from my seat and went to him, and threw my arms around him, and kissed him.

Lynda and I had been sitting in two chairs, behind us Luci and Pat standing. And then Luci threw her arms around him. She was obviously holding back the tears, just barely. And Lynda kissed him, and Pat shook hands.

Then there was a great blur of confusion, and we walked out of the President's office and went back over to the second floor, with Secretary Clifford, who stood outside the door a little behind us. I looked back at him, and there he was standing, holding his hands behind his back, his head tilted up, with the oddest, far-away expression on his face.

We gathered on the second floor - Marnie and Clark, and the George Christians; and the Simon McHughs (Lyndon must have told someone to call them); Leonard Marks came up, and so did Doug Cater, bless his heart; and Mike Manatos; and Secretary and Mrs. Cohen; and Juanita. And Oki was taking pictures. Marnie had tears in her eyes. Nearly everybody just looked staggered, and silent - and the phones began to ring.

I went immediately and called Liz, who was in a state of near shock, bless her. And I was going to call Bess, when I was called to the phone by Abigail McCarthy, who said "Bird, Bird, you know what I've always thought of you." And then she said, "When he made the announcement, I could



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only think of you standing in front of the Wilson portrait..." And she didn't have to go on. I know what I always say in front of the Wilson portrait. Its message to me is ; "The President should have his portrait painted reasonably early in the office."

And Dean Rusk called Lyndon, and I got to say a word.

And then I talked to Bess.

And then Bill Moyers called him; and once more Lyndon put me on the phone. And I talked to John and Ivo Sparkman; and to Alice and George Brown, who had Oveta with them, and they seemed stunned but happy.

And Mary Lasker called me and it sounded like she was crying, but she said, "I know it must be the right thing to do, since the President did it."

And Jim Cain who was with dear Willis Hurst. And then, I believe it was, that Liz called back, with some queries from her tribe. Something like - "Did you know he was going to do it - Did you help him write it?"

And then Lyndon talked to Frank Stanton, and later to Nelson Rockefeller.

Sometime in the course of the evening, I had the kitchen bring in some <sup>2</sup> lunch on trays, for Clark and Marnie, and Luci and Pat, for Elspeth and Walt. It seems so fitting to be with them and the grief and understanding on their faces, was a tribute I cherish.

It is a mixed up day and hard to recollect exact times or words, but I remember that both Lynda's and Luci's impression all afternoon, was that he should n't do it. Lynda said something like this, "We've been scared

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into believing that what we are doing is wrong, by <sup>the</sup> ~~the Kennedy, money, and~~ the blitz of public opinion this last month. She meant our stand in Viet-Nam. They look at things fiercely now, through the eyes of service wives.

I talked with Leonard a little bit, about the Library, and he and I came closest to laughing. And then Wilbur Cohen, about the Library, 'how much I hoped the records of HEW, whose work had contained so much of the things that Lyndon's heart had been deepest in, that the records were being kept up-to-date for the Library.

And how I hoped some of the success stories there, <sup>✓</sup> could be translated into stories of one human family, not just statistics.

About eleven, Tom Johnson came over, bringing 35 reporters, and Lyndon trooped into the Yellow Room with them, looking like there was a great load off his shoulders - and, I believe, made it quite clear to them that this was final, and that any talk of a draft was foolishness.

Liz's request to me had been, How would I sum it up - What kind of a statement - and I think I said something like this, "We have done a lot, there's a lot left to do in the remaining months, maybe this is the only way to get it done." I am not sure whether it was ever used.

Dear Warrie Lynn came in, and the Marvin Watsons; the Larry Temples; and Charles Maguire, and Bill Blackburn. And then gradually everyone faded away.

Arthur and Mathilde were sitting there the whole evening. How much they

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have shared with us. I feel increasingly close to them.

It must have been one o'clock or later, when the last guest left and Lyndon went to bed. And I, too, feeling immeasurably lighter. At last the decision had been reached, and stated, and <sup>as</sup> well as any human can, <sup>we</sup> and knew our future.

It had been, I believe, his best speech, nobly done, and almost, in its way, as dramatic as our entrance into this job, although, the actual exit is still nine months away, if the Lord lets us live. And <sup>to</sup> of these nine months, I'm going to bring the best I possibly can.

~~And~~ I went to sleep planning.

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