

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, April 2, 1968

Page 1

Lyndon was up very early for the Congressional Leadership Breakfast. It's almost as though his decision had not lightened his days, but accelerated them. He went into the family dining room about 8:30 - ^{to join} the Vice President, and Senator Long, and Mike Mansfield, and Robert Byrd, and Speaker McCormack; the Postmaster General and Barefoot; and ¹Mike; and Hale Boggs; and Carl Albert.

~~And~~ I worked at my desk with Marilyn Walz.

And then, about 9:30, went down into the East Hall, to meet the Ladies Committee of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. I had had a letter from Mrs. Smith, their President. They had already arranged for an early morning tour of the White House, and she told me how much they had enjoyed seeing me, several of them, on the Today Show, and they hoped that "If you're in residence at that time, you may be willing to say just a brief hello." It was an example of a persuasive letter, and there's nothing I enjoy doing more than showing people the Art in the White House. And so, I had asked them for coffee and sweet rolls at 9:30. It was a very pleasant hour. I showed them the Lincoln Room, and the Queen's Room, and the Treaty Room, quite taking it away from the guides.

~~And~~ ^{We} talked about the acquisitions in the last four years, and those that hoped I very much/might come in the remaining nine months.

They were an elegant, refined group of ladies, and I enjoyed them, and I think they enjoyed the intimacy of our visit. One of them, when I mentioned wanting a ~~copy~~ Copley, or was it a West, said she had one at home - but it

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, April 2, 1968

Page 2

was a portrait of one of her ancestors!

Then I went back to my desk and had a goodbye visit with Jeannette Simmons. It is much wiser for her to return to her home in Longview since we've made this decision.

~~And then~~ ^{next} I had a two hour session on our Woman Do-ers Luncheon, going over my speech, underlining, making a few changes, reading it at least three times, and always, always, that frantic feeling that I've "bitten off more than I can chew" - as Aunt Effie would say. - ~~That~~ I haven't given myself time enough to practice, study, steep myself, do my very best in whatever it is.

~~And then~~ I went over the seating, ^{sent} ~~send~~ some word to Bess.

~~And then~~ ^{at} 12:30, put on my Mollie Parness suit, the white wool with brown trim, and went down to the Red Room, for a photo with members of the National Association for Retarded Children. The poster child was ^{sp?} Joey Belgie, a very lively, bouncy boy, and his parents. ~~the~~ usual members of the retarded children's association; the Congressman from whose District he comes, James Hanley. A few pictures there and out on the balcony. And then, finally, one of just me and Muriel, which was hardly the place for any real talk, just "I guess we'll miss those good bowling games." and a laugh and a squeeze.

~~And then~~ it was time to go in for the Woman Do-ers Luncheon. This one was designed to accent what this administration has done for child health.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, April 2, 1968

Page 3

From government, there was Mrs. Wilbur Cohen, whose husband was Secretary of HEW; and Jane Wirtz, wife of the Secretary of Labor, who has herself done so much work for the physically handicapped, in equipping them for jobs. And the wives of two Congressmen, ^{Mrs.} George Bush ^{of} Texas, and Mrs. Jeffery Cohelan from California, who were both nurses. Actually, there are 20 wives of Congressmen who are nurses!

And Mrs. Winthrop Rockefeller, wife of the Governor of Arkansas, who's worked for years on mental health, effectively and energetically.

And most of the guests were divided between heads of organizations related to Health, professionals, and volunteers. The organizations ranging from March of Dimes, the Association on Mental Health, the Association for Retarded Children, and the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, to the Urban League's Division of Health and Welfare, and the American Dietetic Association. Probably the largest group were the professional, ^{with} ~~which~~ such stars as Dr. Helen Tausig, of "blue baby" fame.

And professionals from the field of nutrition, nursing, science, and every branch of medicine. But my favorite group of the guests were, I think, the volunteers because they can reach so many more of us. They are potentially a bigger labor force and they are the ones that, in a way, this luncheon was designed to reach, to attract for more service. That, plus spreading the word of what this administration has done.

There were lots of volunteers for work on retarded children. ^m Most.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, April 2, 1968

page 4

perhaps, in Head Start, and some in lesser known work like Cystic Fibrosis.

I had asked a few special friends to act as hostesses and mix and mingle, and get everybody to know each other. One at least, for each table. My always reliable Libby Cater; and Mathilde Krim, who had helped on every aspect of this, working with us on the guest list, primed to start the questions afterwards. She already knew many of the professionals and would see that they met the government people.

~~And~~ There were writers on the subject of Health - Dr. Phyllis Wright, of the Ladies Home Journal.

It was very pleasant to have old friends, like Dr. Bernice Moore from the Hogg Foundation at the University of Texas, whom I've known for 20 years or more. And Gertie Moss, whom I'd met about this time last year, on our wonderful trip into the hills of North Carolina. Who should know more than she about the health of ~~the~~ underprivileged children². And nobody enjoyed the luncheon more, I believe.

And Jean Robitscher, who used to write a column with Liz, 25 years ago here in Washington. ~~Who~~ now, because of a child who is nearly blind, ^{she} is doing volunteer work for children with poor vision.

There were many well known names in this circle - Dr. Leona Baumgartner, Harvard, a sort of Dean in health for children. Dr. Mary Carter Roney, who was formerly a director of Planned Parenthood.

And this was just the right time to ask Mrs. Milton Gordon, on the Childrens Committee of New York City, whose organization had given me a very generous award for my work in Head Start.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, April 2, 1968

Page 5

~~And~~ another guest was Dr. Belinda Strait, psychiatrist, whose mother *Mrs. Sobel* is the very bulwark of the Senate Ladies Red Cross, a woman for whom I have a very special regard.

And as always, the wife of the White House Fellow assigned to this Department, Mrs. Timothy Worth. I want these young White House Fellows and their wives to go home attuned to what this administration is trying to do, so at every event, particularly a sort of working event like this one, we try to include the appropriate one.

~~So~~ the receiving line finished in the Red Room, Muriel had stood with me. *then* We went into the State Dining Room for sherry or orange juice, and then into the Blue Room, which is just right for 50 at round tables.

Somewhere on the way, perhaps it was to the receiving line, I ran into Bess, who had on a pink eyepatch. I couldn't stop the inevitable question, "What happened?" She laughed, how like her, "I had rather fight than switch."

It was a pleasant, interesting luncheon. I had Mrs. Winthrop Rockefeller on my right, and Dr. Esther Clark, the chief speaker, about whose wonderful achievement in Palo Alto, California, *in a clinic for children,* I had read in the Saturday Evening Post, *on my left.* And also at the table, Mrs. Spencer Tracy, who herself had founded a clinic; and because I really wanted her to share the day, Gertie Moss; and another friend from Austin, Mrs. Burt Kreuger Smith, whose work is with retarded children. Actually, retarded

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, April 2, 1968

Page 6

children ^{and} ~~is~~ Head Start have ^{more} ~~the~~ muscle power behind them of anything in the field of child health today, it seemed.

As soon as we had our coffee, I rose to make my little speech, and hit it head on with ---"Since last Sunday night, some of you may have been wondering whether we would be holding this luncheon. Let me say it clear and strong - we are going to be working until the day we leave this house, on the programs we believe in. Actually, in the words of the young, I'm hooked for the rest of my life."

Somewhat to my amazement, there was a resounding round of applause. I seldom get it when I talk. I don't know how, in the language, to "milk it."

~~And then~~ I went on to describe what this administration has done in the field of health. Probably the brightest mark - Medicare for older people - then Medicaid for poor citizens - and perhaps closest to my husband's heart, the Child Health Act of '67. His philosophy has always been that man can, man can ^{attach} ~~take~~ and mold, and change the ills that beset his society. And especially the problem of children, whose lives are malleable, and have so much promise for the future.

~~And~~ ^{in South Africa} Speaking of the value of research, I used a little story about Dr. Christian Barnard coming to the ranch, and saying to Lyndon, that he had received his training from one of our government grants at the University of Minnesota.

~~And then~~ I introduced Dr. Esther Clark, who gave us a brief but dramatic picture of the changes in childhood diseases over one generation. Even the

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, April 2, 1968

Page 7

names of those that used to kill so many, ~~has~~^{have} almost dropped from our vocabulary, and now we don't dread them anymore, because of vaccines or drugs. ~~But~~^T today, we have it in our power to produce superior human beings, but this will require a well-endowed environment - and that led on to the need for clean air, clean water, and adequate nutrition, and broader medical services.

Next, I introduced Mrs. Charles Welch, who ~~sent~~[~] of heads up the volunteers for the Jaycees Auxiliary. ~~Runs~~[~] her organization from her kitchen and has put thousands of women into volunteer health services, many of them connected with mental retardation and mental health.

~~And then~~^T the last speaker, really the star, and I was so proud of her, was Muriel, and I hope I introduced her with all the warmth and admiration I feel. From a quiet, almost pedantic beginning, the impact of what she said, ~~mounted~~[/] and you felt a great empathy and understanding, ~~with~~[/] her, with the whole problem of how you handle suddenly finding in your family, close and crushing, the problem of a retarded child.

We finished, I thought, on a high note, and then we had questions, which I passed on to our three speakers. It was a gratifyingly ^{lively} little session. I noticed Luci's hand up and a couple times, turned to someone else, and she would gravely, hopefully hold it up again. So then, ~~I~~[/] pointed at her, and she rose, and came to the rostrum.

I should never be surprised at Luci! She launched into a small, modest speech. She had had a somewhat disadvantaged childhood, and it was

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, April 2, 1968

Page 8

miraculous that he had escaped the flower children and hippie stage. She'd had a visual problem, ^{which} ~~was~~ not detected until she was in high school, and it was rather frustrating. "People would tell me I was a bright child, and I worked hard, but I never knew what success was. For years and years, I lived in a family just filled with success, and I never tasted it." And then she went on - her eye problem had been found and corrected, by a wonderful man, Dr. Kras^hgin, and her grades had jumped in one year, from a D to a B minus, then as a freshman at Georgetown School of Nursing, she got a B plus ^{first} "for the first time in my life, I knew what it was like to achieve." ~~And~~ She went on, "Who knows, if this had not been corrected, I might have been a psychological drop out, ^{as well,} with a lot of the problems that go with that."

^g ~~And~~ heaved a sigh of relief when she sat down, but everybody seemed to love it, and the words of one newspaper woman - "Luci, a guest, took the ball and ran with it."

And it was certainly the liveliest Woman Do-ers Luncheon we've had, except for Eartha Kitt.

Dr. Clark, herself, turned to me and said, quite generously, "Your daughter was the star." [Actually, I felt a little annoyed about her, as well as proud, because it was for the real achievers - Dr. Clark, Muriel, and our volunteer, Mrs. Welch.] Ask her?

I stood at the door and said goodbye and then by 3:30 ^g it was back up on the second floor, with a lightened heart, and something of a sense of achieve-

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, April 2, 1968

Page 9

ment and release, gathered up my belongings and went to the airport, boarded the Merriweather, Liz was with me. ^{we} Found the George Hartzogs already there, and Robin - Angie was coming later - and Mr. and Mrs. Dudley, ^{he's} Mrs. Post's suave, and apparently quite influential with her, ^{her} lawyer.

The trip was lightened by an amusing passing out of gifts, including an Easter rabbit about three feet high, that I was to take home to Patrick. The plane was elegantly appointed, and elegantly served, full of flowers and food brought from Hillwood; and on the outside, the flags of all the countries that it had visited, ^{were} were painted, some 30 I believe. And the motors, ^{were} Rolls Royce, which set the whole tone.

Somewhere along the way, we heard the radio report that the Senate had O.K.'d the 10% Income Tax rise, and I felt a corresponding lift of heart. Maybe Lyndon's announcement of Sunday night, will jar loose the Congress, and some peace talks.

We arrived at Palm Beach a little past seven, and as we descended, there was a camera man. Lightheartedly, I didn't mind. I got into Mrs. Post's lovely, big car, and we drove to Mar-A-Lago, which means between lake and sea. As we approached the gate, to my amazement, there was a loud honk. ^{Surprising} Surprising in this elegant setting, but apparently it either caused the gate to open for Mrs. Post to emerge.

There was indirect lighting, and I could see the palms soaring skyward and there was Mrs. Post at the door, calm and regal, the last of the queens,

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, April 2, 1968

Page 10

in a setting that probably will not continue, or be duplicated in this country, in the lifetime of my children.

She was gracious and charming, but had completely the air of one used to command. She took me directly to my room. She told me I was to have her daughter Dina's - Dina Merrill, now Mrs. Cliff Robertson - room, and that she considered it one of the prettiest of the guest suites.

~~And~~ when I stood at the door, I thought, I am once more in the bower of the fairy princess, but this one is a very young princess! The room was pink and blue, delicate and fragile, great sprays of flowers in bag relief across the walls. I think they were dogwood. The bed was canopied in blue taffeta, rising to a little crown at the top. And the light fixtures themselves, were tiny crowns around the edge of which hung corkscrew curls.

The most delightful thing of all was that Mrs. Post said, she first brought her small daughter, she was six or seven I gathered at that time, into the room she had created for her, that Dina looked up at her and said, "Oh, mother, I'm such a lucky little girl," which after 30 years or more still pleased her, just as it did me.

~~And~~ She took me in my bathroom and there, all around the walls were tile - gay, amusing representations of Jack be Nimble - and Humpty Dumpty, and all the familiar characters from Mother Goose! And Mrs. Post said - "In those days you could buy these in New York." I gathered she meant they

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, April 2, 1968

Page 11

weren't custom made, "but they don't do such things any more."

She left me and a maid came in. I dressed quickly, because I'd gotten the impression that one was on time for dinner in this house. ~~And~~ I emerged almost on the dot of eight thirty, in my flowered Adele Simpson, with the green Alaskine coat, finding my way through terraces and halls, to a great, breath-taking room that I can only compare, in my experience, to San Simeon.

Tonight there was only the household for dinner, those of us on the plane, besides Mrs. Post, Mrs. Voight, who I gathered, was her secretary-friend-housekeeper. ^{out a} ~~The~~ very elegant, exotic, blond woman, with the unlikely name of Gladys Johnston.

We had one drink, and I feel that that's rather what one does here - not a prolonged period; and like a crab, my eyes tried to look in all directions, at once. ~~To~~ the unbelievably magnificent ceiling, that looked like gold sunbursts, coats of arms of the doges of Venice, around the wall. I was told that the enormous rug was Spanish and had come from an old Monastery, ~~that~~ the hooded fireplace at one end of the room was big enough to accomodate logs ~~to~~ the length of a railroad tie.

There were flowers everywhere - orchids, ⁱⁿ luxurious arrangement, and on a large table behind the sofa, ^{pictures} an array of chiefs of State, who had been her friends, and one jarring note, was the family of the Lyndon Johnsons, framed in a simple brown wood, and I made a mental note to get the handsomest

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, April 2, 1968

Page 12

picture in evening dress that Lyndon and I had, framed in gold and matted in velvet, and send it on my return, hoping that she will send this family picture, if anywhere, to her lodge in the Adirondacks.

One especially fitting note I thought, *was* the painting on the wall of Lorenzo the magnificent, no less, in full splendor on his horse, and very much at home here. There was a huge tiger skin rug on the raised floor of a niche, and Mrs. Post herself, *quoted* a limerick, that went something like "Would you like to sin on a tiger skin, or would you rather err on another kind of fur?"

Quite promptly, *we* went out on the terrace, *and* were seated at round tables, in a setting whose elegance and grace, *and* opulence I shall probably never see repeated. We looked out through a series of arches, *onto* the great smooth lawns, that led to - I'm not sure if this was the side of the sea, or of the lake. The stone looked like four centuries instead of forty years, so mellowed it was. I was told that a Viennese sculptor, Frantz Barwick, his son, spent two years designing and carving the Doria stone from Genoa, into the infinite patterns of birds, grapes, and scrolls, and flowers. There was a different bird on every column, a pelican, a parrot,

The walls were covered with old Spanish tiles, *Chosen* from 36,000 that had been collected in Spain 75 years ago, but were, in fact, several centuries old, and against them there were pots of flowers, huge ferns, tropical *plants* and amazingly, *and* delightfully, a common old friend, the hollyhock, about eight feet tall, frilly pink blossoms by the dozens - the most dressed up hollyhocks I ever saw.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, April 2, 1968

Page 13

Later I heard that there was one gardner, whose sole job it is to take care of the house plants. In fact, he must be a very busy man!

The meal was delicious, and exquisitely served. The only thing I missed, was that I really couldn't talk to our hostess. She is so very deaf and you never know whether she hears what you say or not. And what interesting stories she must have to tell! I would have loved to really get to know her better.

Fred Korth ~~Bedford~~ was attentive and at hand, at every step. It is easy to understand the role that he fills in her life, which revolves so much around dinners and house parties.

I asked Fred Korth about his children, particularly Fitz Allen. That was a funny little moment in the evening. He said, "Well tonight, he's out in Wisconsin, where he's been working on the primary." I felt a warm thanks, and a pang for all those troupes that had so suddenly lost their ~~xxxx~~ cause.

And Fred and I reminisced about how long ago he had started campaigning for Lyndon, and about Azmon Carter, in Fort Worth.

After coffee, we walked out onto the terrace, which was patterned in pebbles, ranging from every shade of tawny beige, through creamy white, to black.

Mrs. Post was with me, and told me that she had picked up a pocketful of these pebbles, on the beach, I think she said, at Long Island, and that she and her husband, Ed Hutton, had told the architects how they wanted

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, April 2, 1968

Page 14

them laid out, to make the court or patio, and then they had been brought down by carloads. What a vast construction venture it must have been.

It took four years and was finished in January ¹⁹27, but there was work still going on when the crash came in ¹⁹28, and advisors told Mrs. Post that she ought to stop. She said, no indeed, Palm Beach needed it more now than ever, so she went right on, giving employment to many with work\$ on the surrounding grounds, and houses.

^{we}
~~She~~ got the message somehow - it was quite all right to be an early evening. So, it must have been about 10:30, certainly not later than 11, when I said goodnight and went into the bower of the fairy princess. I had asked if they had a copy of Nicholas and Alexandra - my own I could not find when I left. They did and I read myself to sleep, in what I thought a peculiarly ironic and appropriate ~~eye~~ ^{for} for this tragic and excellent book.

Ambience

#####