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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, April 30, 1968 WND

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April is always the busiest month of the year. And this year the most dramatic, the fullest, I have ever known. I find myself tired. It is hard to get up in the morning. It was ^{around} ~~around~~ 8:30 when I went into Lyndon's room. Erich Hoffer^a was seated with him, his bulk filling the old winged chair, wearing as always when I have seen him a sort of workman's jacket -- a man out of another age, cut to no pattern -- intelligent; fresh, unique. He and Lyndon enjoy ~~each~~ each other hugely and understand each other.

I read the newspaper headlines -- "Poor People's Campaign Beginning Peacefully" -- "Groups Calling on Cabinet Officers" -- "Still No Agreement on Site for Peace Talks" -- "Columbia University Being Torn Apart by the Student Revolt". But mostly I drank my coffee and listened. Hoffer^a said, "Why doesn't the middle stand up? We are so scared of the young." About the Negroes -- "...find your faces black, consider yourself lucky. More doors are open to you than ever were before. There are more opportunities for you."

Lyndon asked him about his job -- just what did he teach, how many hours, etc. He said, "I call myself a conversationalist in residence. Every Thursday afternoon" -- I believe that was the time -- "I talk and people come in -- they may be freshmen or Ph. D. 's or a cab driver or a waitress in a beer joint."

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Some time in the morning I had a talk with John Macy. I find him one of the most able members of this Administration -- one of those I will regret most saying goodbye to. But for me, the big event of the day was a Senate Ladies Luncheon honoring me at the Capitol at 1:00.

It was held in the familiar old Senate Caucus Room -- high ceilinged^{ed} handsome -- the scene of explosive gatherings, including the McCarthy years. But this one was a very happy gathering, nearly 100 of the Senate wives including many wives of the former members. Mary Elizabeth Kim, Katie, Malone, Elizabeth Hennings, Mrs. Millard Tydings -- who now has a new name -- and the most faithful member, Mrs. Henry Wallace, who hasn't missed a time that I can remember and is as gentle and as quiet as her husband was controversial.

It was a hugging and kissing receiving line. Everybody I think -- me most of all -- was conscious that this would be my last time there as First Lady -- my fifth. I took my seat by Muriel who looked terribly weary. And on the other side Betty Talmadge who they said had drawn a lucky number placing her there. And the two luncheon chairmen, Mrs. William Spong of Virginia and Mrs. Aiken, the new wife of the venerable Senator Aiken of Vermont. And Vicky Hruska and Maggie Inouye.

The whole theme was ^{Hawaiian.} ~~Polynesian~~. The tables were centered with orchids that had been flown over. The menu which was written in Hawaiian offered us pineapple shells full of chicken and sea food and water chestnuts.

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And then for desert^s there came in little volcanos of coconut ice cream erupting clouds of smoke from the dry ice on which they were placed. I know that must have been a tense moment for the two committee chairmen until the desert^s performed according to plan.

Inevitably I got a lei -- fortunately it went well with the turquoise silk I had chosen to wear.

And the entertainment was Hawaiian string music -- some of the people in Senator Fong's office -- with a lovely "aloah" for me.

But the whole substance of the meal for me was the people, people, people. I looked around and saw Henrietta Hill who had been desperately ill. I ~~was~~^{did} not expect her to be there. In fact, I ~~had~~^{had} wondered if I would ever see ~~her~~^{her} again. And she looked quite well! Later I heard the marvelous^{story} of why.

Mary Lasker had heard of a new drug that helped people with Parkinson's disease. She had kept beating on the doctor's doors -- Henrietta's doctors -- until they had used it. And for today, for some unforeseeable time, she was herself again. And not even noticeably trembling.)

Mrs. Tobey who is our leader, no matter what Administration is in power, and has the manner of a Duchess with a sense of humor. I respect and like her ~~immensely~~^{immensely}.

Old-timers such as Evie Symington and Mary Ellen Monroney. And a sprinkling of the young ones. Neither of the Mrs. Kennedys -- and no surprise there -- they were both out campaigning. And when it was time

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for the little speech, Muriel read a letter from Mrs. Francis Parkinson Kyes^e regretting that she couldn't be with us, ^{And then} -- gave me a diagram and a note that said the ladies of the Senate had planted a Chinese white dogwood in my honor on the Senate side of the Capitol grounds with a little plaque. I shall love that. It was distressing to watch Muriel speak. She was so weary, I almost feared she was going to faint. She stumbled over words and could hardly get through a sentence. But she had told me during the meal that she had made a flight -- I think it was out to Chicago -- to one of those ⁱⁿnumerable charity events that she so valiantly attends for the retarded children -- this one at the urging of the Kennedys. And that she had not gotten home until 4:30 this morning. And she was going into the hospital for the operation right straight after the luncheon. I held my breath for her. I could see it was an endurance contest. ~~And~~ Then it was my time to speak, and for once it was easy. During the luncheon they had passed out fortune cookies, and in mine there had been a slip that said, "Be most affectionate today." The right words came and the feeling was certainly there and I was rather proud of my brief reminiscences about attending this luncheon for 12 years as a Senator's wife and then being President of the group for the three years that Lyndon was Vice President and then this the fifth and last time as honored guest. And I assured them that I would be coming back on my cane as a former member like so many of the guests in front of me.

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It was a sweet and pleasant time, and I left hugging all around, thanking all around, clutching my maple sugar candy in the shape of a leaf from Mrs. Flanders, who has been ^{attending} ~~one~~ for every year for 20 years, briefly looking at the ~~maples~~ ^{maples} and the ~~affairs~~ ^{affairs} which they prepare for service families. And then back to the White House, weary, a short nap, recording, work at the desk. ~~And then~~ [#] about 7:30, the Joe Alsops arrived for dinner. There would be just the four of us. Lyndon was about an hour late. I enjoyed talking to them immensely. Joe is a rare man. And he too belongs to another age. Where in time to place him I do not quite know -- wide-ranging interests -- from archaeology, he has written a book on it, to antique furniture, to gardening, to gourmet cooking. He gets the same sort of a sensuous pleasure that I do out of a beautiful view. He stood in front of the window in the Yellow Room looking out on the Jefferson Memorial with the same sort of satisfaction a hungry man would have from biting ^(the memorial) into a good steak. He talked about FDR's planning it for exactly that spot. In fact I think he changed the location of it. He said it was like some palace -- perhaps ^{Versailles} ~~Vier Si~~ -- with a long ^{allee} ~~array~~ in the garden and at the end some lovely statuary.

Lyndon came -- there was a good dinner and wide-ranging talk of international affairs ~~and~~ and of this unbelievable Spring we are living through. It was easy to see that Lyndon was tired. Joe made a move to go at 10:30, and Lyndon didn't stop him.

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And then Chief Mills came, and I had a rub and was in bed by midnight.

And so it had been a month since Lyndon made his momentous decision. How do we feel? Nellie Connally had said something like this: "At first you will feel depressed, like the world had stopped. And then after awhile enormously relaxed, relieved, happy." Well certainly as yet there is no depression, no ^{valley} of the black pig, no ~~slow~~ ^{though} of despond. And first there were those four or five days of almost euphoric relief with thousands of letters pouring in from all over the Nation -- mostly admiring, grateful, understanding, and some urging us to ~~reconsider~~ reconsider -- good editorials from places you would never expect to get them -- a sort of a preview of ~~your~~ your obituary perhaps. And then the whole Nation had been jerked out of this mood by the hideous assassination of Martin Luther King and the ensuing riotings and killings in the cities. It is as though some beast abroad in the land has not been sated yet. His blood lust not satisfied. What a time to live through! If ~~we~~ ^{lance} had hoped to ~~latch~~ ^{unite} the boil, to ~~ignite~~ the country, we have just made an offering -- made a start and the future will have to tell how it works out. But as for us personally, our main feeling is of growing ~~relief~~ relief and satisfaction that Lyndon made his decision and when he did.

I think of what Trudie Fowler said when I went to a lunch given by Jane Wirtz for all of the Cabinet wives last Wednesday -- she looked

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at me solemnly and said, "I think it was providential."

Another feeling that I have is that the clock is ticking -- of urgency. There are so many things I want to do in the remaining 8-2/3 months -- so many people I want to have here to share this beautiful house, so many conservation measures -- to push them each forward or nail down -- highway beautification, our own Committee here in Washington, the Hirshhorn Museum. And then while I am here, there are so many things I can do for the Library with the staff and the expertise available here that cannot be done afterward from the outside.

The words of Mr. Neustadt ring in my ear. "It's a lot easier to get things done when you are President." And I want to use this time -- each day of it -- as fully, glowingly, happily, usefully as I can.

And what of Lyndon? An accelerated activity if anything. No backward look, but a determination -- to push with every power he has toward peace abroad and toward furthering his programs here at home. No glance backwards. The most philosophic and detached I've ever seen him.