

MEMORANDUM

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Saturday, June 8, 1968

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Saturday, June 8th, was a day for me completely detached from the normal, a capsule of time suspended in unreality -- the burial of Senator Bobby Kennedy.

We were up early -- about 7:30 -- and read the papers which were drenched with every aspect of the story. 70,000 filed past Kennedy's bier.

The children were not going with us to New York. They have not received an invitation to St. Patricks, and I thought at the height of presumption to take them. And just as well because I did not want Lynda especially to be exposed to any more grief and pain than necessary.

So we left about 8:20 from the White House lawn in the chopper, and then from Andrews in a small jet. Lyndon and Marie -- always a comfort -- and Joe Califano and Jim Jones and I.

New York was a strange sight. The streets were lined with people who stood silent, motionless. For three days the television had been invoking the phrase "like a Greek tragedy". And indeed there was much of a ~~greek~~ Greek play about this.

These crowds -- the voiceless chorus.

We were escorted into St. Patricks -- that magnificent setting -- equal to any sorrow or any joy. And I knew that all around us, in the 2300, there was a great outpouring from the Government, from the entertainment world -- the famous and the simple -- Governor Rockefeller and Mayor Lindsey, most of the Cabinet, a quorum of the Senate probably, and many members of the House.

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But I did not look to right or left. Barely the only face I saw was Pierre Salinger who met us and led us down the aisle. He looked absolutely stricken.

As we approached the dark, shiny coffin covered with a flag with tall candles at each side, Lyndon paused briefly and so did I, and then turned to the left and took the seats that were shown to us in the front row.

Joe Califano sat beside me. He had been McNamara's right hand man ~~before~~ before Lyndon inherited him, and had handled the things the Presidency was able to do for the Kennedy family in this tragedy -- making planes available for doctors and family, helped with the White House switchboard.

I had noticed just as we moved into our seats that the congregation silently and without signal had risen. And then when we had been in for only a few seconds, it was Lyndon who looked over to the left and saw Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy in black and veiled, with her two children, entering. And he swiftly rose, and so did the rest of the congregation.

She passed in front of us and sat in a front row seat on the right hand side with all the numerous Kennedy family.

Somehow it seemed, Ethel and her children slipped in more quietly to the front seat on the right side.

We had asked that good Catholic, Joe Califano, how long the service would be. He had shaken his head and said, "About 2 hours, I expect." It was not really that long. But it was a ceremony of staggering drama and beauty.

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The whole altar area of the church filled with high officials of the Catholic church in their varying shades of red -- the deep purple red and the bright orange red. Cardinal Cushing on his throne -- the most commanding figure there I thought. And Terrence Cooke, the new Archbishop. Archbishop O'Boyle, who had helped to preside at Luci's wedding.

One of the most beautiful moments was when 8 children of the Kennedy family -- the girls dressed in either white or navy, their long blond hair caught back with ribbons and hanging down their backs -- and the little boys in dark suits -- went walking up in pairs, carrying to the altar an offertory. And at the same time, on the left, an orchestra of violins was playing a beautiful melody -- I do not know what. I could see only the back of the director, which was in itself a study -- an expression of the utmost of passion, of torment and talent -- a magnificent little piece in this whole mosaic. It dawned on me that this must be Leonard Bernstein. Later in the papers I saw that it was.

There was one lone mike standing in front of all the robed priests and archbishops, and to it went Senator Teddy Kennedy and delivered a most beautiful eulogy of his brother. He was strong and composed, though his eyes were red-rimmed. And part way through his voice began to quaver, but then came under control and ~~ended~~ ended calmly. He asked that his brother be remembered simply as a good and decent man, who saw wrong and tried to right it, saw suffering and tried to heal it, saw war and tried to stop it.

He quoted one line from his brother that was sheer poetry, "Some men see things as they are and say why. I dream things that never were and say why not."

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I suppose this is the strain that has caused some of the columnists to use the word "kelt" over and over.

I was aware of Secretary Rusk behind me, and the bleak faces of Dorothy and Arthur Goldberg. And during the communion with all of the Kennedy family going up first, and then later the public, I saw Senator McCarthy.

Always you were aware of the flag-draped coffin in the middle of the aisle with its incredible burden. This has been the most shocking, the most unbelievable, event ~~event~~ in the Nation's life as I have shared it. Heightened, made all the moreso, by President Kennedy's assassination nearly five years ago.

Archbishop Terrence Cooke had made a strong, good speech I thought. He had quoted Lyndon's remark about 200 million people did not kill Senator Kennedy, and he went on to say that the act of one man must not demoralize and incapacitate 200 million others. For to permit this to happen would be to fail utterly to grasp the message of hope and optimism in Senator Kennedy's life.

And then at last it was over.

One of the Catholic dignitaries came and leaned over to tell Lyndon that he should leave first.

Senator Ted Kennedy came over and put out his hand, and they exchanged a few words. And I simply grasped his hand.

And then we walked to the right past the front row where all of the Kennedy family was seated and stopped to speak first to Ethel, whose face was beautiful,

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sad, composed. And she said very simply, "You have been so kind" to Lyndon. We spoke to several of the children and then to Mrs. Rose Kennedy.

And then I found myself in front of Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy. I called her name and put out my hand. I hardly know how to describe the next few moments of time. She looked at me as though from a great distance as though I were an aberration. I felt extreme hostility. Was it because I was alive? At last without a flicker of expression, she extended her hand very slightly. I took it with some murmured word of sorrow and walked on quickly. It was somehow shocking. Never in any contact with her before had I experienced this.

We got into the car silently, and made our way among the crowds that were still silent, but now occasionally a hand went up in greeting or there was a slight smile, and went back to the plane where Marie was waiting. She had not gone to the church. And we had lunch on the plane going back, and reached the White House a little before 1:00 -- which made for a long afternoon. The funeral was supposed to be somewhere in the neighborhood of 4:30.

I read the paper and then went to sleep, asking that I be waked at 4:00.

When I got up, I found that there would be a delay of hours. The train carrying Senator Kennedy's body and 600 or so of the mourners was at least 2 hours late.

Somehow I could not bring myself to work. There was so much to be done -- so much piled up on my desk and in my little sitting room office that requires concentration and the best thinking I can give it. And yet hung in this

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interval of time between the funeral ceremony and the burial with everyone in a sort of an emotional trance, I could not detach myself and work.

And so I gave up and just talked to Luci and Lynda and Helene Lindow and looked at TV endlessly -- the train plowing on and on. And there were awful things happening.

Two of the mourners standing by the track watching the train were suddenly plowed down and killed by another train. And one young man who was on some high vantage point had reached up and touched a hot wire and had been badly burned. And there were reruns over and over of Senator Kennedy's eulogy of his dead brother in the Cathedral. Reruns in fact of everything -- constant coverage by all three networks with the commentators having a hard time to talk as the hours wore on.

There was one break. I got the message that Angie Duke had called. He had Princess Grace and her brother. Could he bring them by for tea. I said yes. It turned out to be Robin.

And so the four of us sat in the Yellow Oval Room for nearly an hour after 5:30. And the break was very welcome. She's pretty, gentle, very much a lady -- Princess Grace. Her brother has apparently inherited his father's political interests ~~x~~ along with his business.

Luci came in and brightened up the conversation. And in all the shadows were a bit lifted.

When they left, we looked at TV, played a little bridge -- Luci, Lynda, Helene and I. And a little past 7:00, Lyndon came in with Billy Graham, who

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had been in the office. Billy Graham is our house guest with Grady Wilson, one of his assistants. Oddly, it was I who had been thinking I would call him and ask him to come and see us. He is good for Lyndon. They like each other, and it has been a long time since he's visited us.

We had dinner -- just the family -- Lynda, Luci, Dr. Graham, Grady Wilson, and Lyndon and I.

And finally at about 8:45 it was time to go to Union Station -- Lyndon and I and Jim Jones and Joe Califano -- to meet the Kennedy train arriving from New York, and to join the funeral cortege to Arlington Cemetery.

As I walked into the great vaulted concourse of Union Station, I thought of the last time I had been in there as part of a funeral. It was the State funeral of General MacArthur. And for a while I had stood by Bobby Kennedy.

The trains were not yet in. We saw Hubert and Muriel and asked them to come and sit in the car with us. Hubert, the ever ebullient, looked for once drained and empty. He said, "Eric Sevareid sure had it right for once." He said, "Whoever gets the Democratic nomination, it will be a tarnished shield."

And that is indeed the mood of these whole four days. For some reason, more emotional than rational. It seems to me this whole tragedy turns the Nation toward the Republican Party.

One good thing though did happen -- one thing on the side of law and order, and somehow made more dramatic because it happened at this time -- the accused slayer of Martin Luther King was seized at London Airport, James

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Earl Ray. And somehow the event seemed to say, "this government will not be mocked."

Muriel looked very pretty. She had found that her strength was returning slowly though when she had been active for two or three days. She felt suddenly depleted.

There was a flurry when someone came to Lyndon and said, "Cardinal Cushing had an attack on the train, and they needed to get him a doctor. Could they have a plane to fly him right straight back?" Lyndon said yes. Have the plane standing by, have a doctor with him -- his own doctor -- any good one -- give him every help possible.

We saw the Speaker in the crowd, and he came over and sat in the car with us and talked. Mrs. McCormack is not doing well he said.

And then we got the signal, and quickly we got out of the car. And as I made my way through the crowd to stand by Lyndon, suddenly there they were passing -- all the family in black, silent. All the little children and then the coffin. We followed several cars behind the coffin, and drove the appointed route past the Capitol and the Senate Office Building and the Department of Justice where there was a brief stop, I think to pick up Ramsey Clark. And past the Lincoln Memorial.

There were crowds everywhere, and a larger one here -- many from Resurrection City. And here we paused while a choir sang, as we were told. I could not hear.

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As in New York, the crowd was strangely silent and immobile. Some of them must have been standing there for hours because this had been expected to take place about 4:30. And now it was 9:00 and after.

One curiously touching thing that carried its own message, every now and then in the crowd you would see a small light. Sometimes it was just a lit match, a cigarette lighter, that the person was holding up. Sometimes a rolled up bit of newspaper that had been set afire. And then sometimes a candle.

After we crossed Memorial Bridge and began our ascent up the hill into Arlington Cemetery, the glow of the candles was more frequent. I think here inside the cemetery people came by invitation.

I had read that Mrs. Paul Mellon had selected the gravesite. It was a gently sloping mound with two lovely magnolia ~~Cal~~ angiana trees shading it right close to President Kennedy's tomb.

Lyndon and Joe and I walked up the hill, behind the family, who took their places along the side and at the foot of the casket in a group, and we were a little behind.

Earlier in the morning, Joe Califano had come to Lyndon and said, "When they take the flag from the casket, they want you to present it to Mrs. Kennedy. And Lyndon~~x~~ had said, "Do you know if the family wants me to do this? I'll be glad to do it, but I want you to make sure that this is what the family wants." Joe had said, "Yes, Sir, we have asked them three times."

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It was a brief ceremony, and then the pallbearers, led by John Glenn who was at one end, began rolling up the flag in that precise military manner. And then John Glenn gave it to Senator Teddy Kennedy who carried it to Ethel. And this was as it should be.

Ethel and the children went up and knelt and kissed the coffin, and so did his sisters. And then a stream of young Kennedys, quickly, no tears, no outcries. And then Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy, alone, followed by her two children, knelt and kissed it. The children put floral offerings, and then Ethel and the children began to kneel, and so did we.

When she rose, we said goodbye. There is nothing to say to her except how brave she is and how wonderful all the children looked. Several of them had participated as altar boys. Some of the little girls had carried up an offeratory. Several of the older boys had stood as honor guards beside the casket. Young Joe Kennedy, looking so much like his father. But it took your breath to suddenly see him.

And then we walked ahead down the slope. We had somehow gotten the message that the family wanted to linger alone.

There was a great white moon riding high in the sky -- a beautiful night. This is the only night funeral I ever remember. But then this is the only time in the life of our country -- an incredible, unbelievable, ^{cruel}~~cruel~~ and wrenching time.

As we drove back, I noticed we were not crossing Memorial ^{ial}~~ial~~ Bridge. I asked about it. The Secret Service said they thought they would just skip

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going by Resurrection City. Hadn't heard of any commotion, but seemed like a wise thing to do.

I stared a moment for sympathy for them. What a tense time it must have been with all the Government right there in St. Patricks, gathered together. And all of the candidates for the election -- nearly all. In New York, the police had been lining the field where our helicopter had set down, and lining the streets in great numbers. There had been a few arrests. One man had had a gun at the entrance of St. Patricks. It was unloaded. There were rumors about all of us.

But at last the day was at an end.

We were back at the White House by 11:00. Tomorrow would be a day of mourning, as Lyndon had proclaimed. And Monday we would all make a new start.