

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, July 16, 1968

Page 1

Tuesday, July 16th, was one of those busy days when I really pay for my leisurely weekend hours on the boat or days of riding at the Ranch.

I was up early, before 7:00. Had a session with Bess Abell in the early morning -- an hour and half or so -- on appointments, parties, mail.

Then at 11:30 to the Jacqueline Kennedy Garden where the grapes are hanging in fat green clusters under the arbor. They should be purple in a couple of weeks. And we did the recording for the opening of the trip to the Hudson Valley. It was sound on film, and we really worked for an hour and half on what will be only a few moments on the screen. I interrupted it once to go into the doctor's office with Lynda to get acquainted with Dr. Lonergan whom I found a very pleasant, matter of fact man, brazy, middle aged, likeable. Best of all there seems to be a good accord between him and Lynda.

At 1:00, famished, I had lunch with Lynda in her room, and she said, almost casually, "Guess who I heard from? Chuck Robb."

Somewhere deep within me I let out a sigh of relief that had been penned up for three weeks. I thought first of Lyndon. I hoped she told him. Yes, she had. She knows how part of his mind is always on Chuck and Patrick.

About 1:30, Mary Lasker came, and she and Marvin Watson and Nash Castro and I met in the Yellow Oval Room to talk about stamps. Mary's lists of enthusiasms, her avenues of how Government can help do good things is endless. I had provided her with a plate of sandwiches and all of us with some iced tea. She had been up on the Hill for a hearing and had^{not} had a moment for lunch, and I had been too starved to wait.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, July 16, 1968

Page 2

Her ammunition was a stamp album -- her own -- which shows beautiful stamps of other countries. Some quite small and unimportant countries in Africa or Islands in the Pacific but make a sizeable part of their Government income from stamps, beautifully done and sold to experts that collect stamps. Quite a business it seems.

And the additional ammunition was a group of lovely photographs and drawings of a beautifully designed and planted highway -- lukins and poppys along a California road and blue bonnets on a stretch of farm-to-market road -- a picture that I had sent Mary.

She hoped three things. First, that we could make some of our stamps larger. Second, that we might try having some of them photographic rather than engraved. Third, that we could emphasize beautification environment conservation in one or two more stamps before this Administration says goodbye.

In Washington it seems you are always trying to convince somebody of something or trying to sell an idea. We had the amazing and novel experience of finding that the man we wanted to sell was not an opponent but an ally -- the Postmaster General met us more than half way. Yes, he had been looking at the stamps. He hoped they could be larger, and presented some of the reasons why it was difficult. For instance, stamp packaging and dispensing machines were built for a certain size. He also thought we might explore making some photographic ones. Best of all, he had already planned and I think nailed down doing a series of stamps on conservation. So there could be

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, July 16, 1968

page 3

one on urban conservation, some beautification project in a big city -- his Committee had already mentioned Pala Plaza. And ^{these} ~~a~~ could be one, yes, on highway beautification. And he looked with interest on the two pictures we showed him.

Mary accepted his request that she be a member of the Stamp Advisory Committee. And we wound up the meeting by planning another on next Wednesday. Nash phoned John Walker, another Committee member, who agreed to attend. And Marvin would bring Mrs. ^{Brisenbein} ~~Brisenbein~~ who is a lady we really must sell because she goes on from administration to administration and under many Postmaster Generals.

This is a small thing, but as I look at all of the difficulties Lyndon has and I look back on the four and a half years, I think it probably would have been better if he had put more of his own men in strategic positions -- Cabinet positions -- not too ~~long~~ long after he assumed office and certainly a great many more after he was inaugurated in January of '65. He had kept many Kennedy men. In fact in some Departments practically the whole flank I suppose. I could not name all the reasons why. I think partly out of respect for President Kennedy and how he would have wanted someone to treat him under certain circumstances. And partly out of respect for the ability and liking of the men that Kennedy had appointed. In many cases, it had worked fine. But there ^{is} ~~was~~ a certain quality of direct relationship between you and the people you personally have chosen and put into that job that results in a sort of teamwork that does not come from someone who inherited the

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, July 16, 1968

Page 4

job from another President. And so in retrospect, the considered course of action might have been changed. And it is only at the very end of this Administration that we arrive with our own appointees in certain strategic spots.

Next I worked with Ashton -- cleared the desk pretty nearly.

And then went into the Lincoln Room for another session on our filming project. This time to go over the April script. Liz and Simone and Tommy Atkins and George Brenholtz who had written it, and Joe Frantz and Ervin Duggan.

April is the busiest month of the year. This year beginning after the paralyzing blow of March 31st was a powerful, dramatic, full to bursting month.

Mr. Brenholtz^{who} had strove ably and even poetically I thought trying to condense it into 30 minutes, had given up and stretched to 40, and still I held out I'm sure to his disgust sometimes for some of those things that mean so much to me. Just a moment for my last Senate ladies luncheon on Capitol Hill. And the reception for the 4-H boys and girls if possible. And the sweet, nostalgic party of the putting up of Mrs. Truman's portrait.

And then the beautification luncheon, preceded by the bus ride around Washington. I did hope I could have a moment or two of it. The social side, the people side, of life in the White House is not earth-shaking, has drama and pageantry and warmth and meaning. And it's part of the drift that comes to this great mill just as Cabinet meetings and Bill signings. I firmly believe we are improving the quality of the film which is taking the blood out of us.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, July 16, 1968

Page 5

We adjourned exhausted, but I believe with some sense of accomplishment. And I left for my last and most important meeting of the day with Dr. Grover and Dr. Aldersen and Dr. Rhodes in the Yellow Oval Room.

Dr. Aldersen is the ^{Archivist} ~~Archivist~~ from Tennessee and Dr. Grover earnestly recommends as head of the Johnson Library. This will be a momentous step. It may set the tone of the Library -- its growth, its prestige. I am scared. I do not know how to pick such a man. And Lyndon only has moments to devote to it.

As I look back on it, the funny thing is that he may have been scared too. Dr. Aldersen seemed very nice, pleasing personality, likeable. I wish we had for this job a man who was a gung-ho sort of follow-me leader type, with one foot in academia and one in public relations. Dr. Aldersen did not seem as aggressive, as assured, as I could wish. But I liked him and I am ready to go on the recommendation of Dr. Grover and Dr. Rhodes.

After brief, fishing expedition sort of questions, Ashton brought in word from Lyndon that he would like us to come over -- to run over to his office. It was a brief meeting, and we emerged with the understanding that Dr. Aldersen would go with the job. I still felt scared.

We went back up to the Truman Balcony and had a drink. The intense heat of the day, the heavy slumberous heat, that sometimes grips Washington for several days was lifting and the Truman Balcony was a deliciously pleasant place to be.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, July 16, 1968

Page 6

After they left, I recorded for about an hour and half during which Lyndon called me with a suggestion I welcomed so happily. The McNamara's had just gotten back to town. Would I call them to come over to dinner with Cy Vance -- our house guest. I couldn't wait to. Margy was still in Europe. We were wrong about her returning. But Bob had gotten back and yes, he'd love to come.

So a little before 8:00 I changed into a pretty summer dress because I felt it was a festive evening. I returned to the Truman Balcony. Cy came down and in just a moment, Bob came over. We met and hugged. He looked wonderful and very happy.

It was a full 30 minutes before Lyndon arrived, and I greedily used the time to ask the questions I wanted to because I knew I would have to yield to a more important questioner -- a more specific today's business/ during the rest of the evening.

Margy had had a wonderful time in Egypt. Yes, they had seen the temples Abu Simbel and it was fascinating to look down from a plane on the land of Egypt -- so unbelievably arid until you came to the valley of the Nile which was beautifully green and marveously fertile. He described going to dinner at the home of one of Nassar's ministers -- I believe he might be similar to a Minister of Finance -- and from the terrace of his house you looked right out straight onto one of the major pyramids, beautifully lighted. As Bob and Margaret held their breath at this fantastic view one of the guests laughingly asked, "How do you like the way a socialist Minister lives?"

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, July 16, 1968

Page 7

They had found Nasser interesting and personally attractive. Bob had been to the Aswan Dam. He said the whole course of current history might have been changed if we had gone on with that loan to build the Aswan Dam. And then he cited the figure that the Russians had put into it and it was a very small figure. Meanwhile the Suez Canal is closed -- the result of the Israeli-Arab War and that part of the world heats up like a ^{Tinder} tender box.

Lyndon came, we lit the candles on the table. We had a delicious dinner. Lynda Bird came out and sat with us. The talk ranged around the world. It was a sort of evening for which I will always have gratitude that I have lived in Washington, that I have shared this life, that I have known people like this. They are so intelligent, these two -- Cy and Bob. And so very good -- just plain good. And I am intensely glad that the Government has the services of men like these.

The setting -- and as I looked at the Washington Monument and the Jefferson Memorial I could appreciate the Socialist Minister's view -- the companions, the very significance of the things we talked about made it a starred evening for me. And there had been many such, and I know it and I am thankful.