

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, August 27, 1968

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Lyndon's 60th birthday -- Tuesday, August 27th -- was probably as strange and dramatic and in a way sad birthday as any he will ever have. For me it was a sort of suspended in space time -- this whole week. The decision had been made irrevocably on March 31st. But somehow there was a special saying goodbye this week to our whole political life. The Convention would be choosing from among others, and for us it was over -- no matter that it was happily, cozily over by choice. There was still a special aura. There had been talk about going to the Convention to make a sort of valedictory speech, to receive good wishes on our birthday -- Lyndon's birthday I mean. No decision. And gradually as the days passed my betting was more and more that we would not go. And when the convention virtually erupted on Monday the chances of making our trip seemed to me to dwindle to almost nothing.

It had grown so exciting Monday night that I had stayed up until 3:00 -- I, who loved to go to bed early. But when some forces had had the presumption -- the contest of seating the Texas delegation -- I couldn't possibly have gone to bed until John had won that fight.

And so on Lyndon's 60th birthday I woke to a sense of void and yet excitement. I talked to Lynda at the White House, to my office. They read me a letter from Mrs. Dick Daley asking me to be her guest at a special luncheon any day during the convention. I called her to thank her and to say that we had no plans to be there.

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I walked down to the birthplace for exercise and to be alone. I came back to find that the press was intent on getting a birthday picture of Lyndon and that he thought to avoid having 30 or 40 of them out at the Ranch we would fly into Austin, go by Luci's house, and let them take pictures there of all the family present -- just the four of us -- cutting a cake. And what a whirl of activity that threw us into.

Luci who has a remarkable ability to arise to the occasion, said, "Yes, of course, we could drive in, get her house cooled off, arrange for enough cake and coffee and cold drinks for 50", or whatever there were. While she was getting ready and calling two or three friends to rush to her rescue I called the always resourceful Weeze Deathe to get several cases of soft drink, round up coconut and chocolate ^{and} rum cakes and come as soon as possible to Mackin place.

Lyndon had been in swimming with Jake Pickle, and we had Mary bring out to the pool a cold lunch for our small household. And then Luci and Lyn left. And with all vestige of any possible trip to Chicago ruled out I began to call our close friends -- all of whom were really standing by -- to come on over and celebrate our birthday with us tonight. The Moursunds and the Winters and the Wests who would fly up from Houston. And the Thornberrys and the John Hills. Jake Pickle's wife would come back with us from Austin. Jesse Kellum and Jessie Hunter. The Ernest Stubbs. And staff members -- Marie and Jim and Larry and Tom Johnson.

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Liz~~x~~ called from Chicago to report that there had been a wonderful women's luncheon and style show with Abigail, Muriel and Mrs. McGovern all seated at the head table, and Bess Abell -- darling as Dolly Madison. Even Liz sounded glad that we were not in Chicago however. From afar it seemed like a sieving caldron of emotions and striving peaks -- of every stripe of Democrat -- and hippies and yippies and police standing by. If I could have been there without being me I would have liked very much to see what is looming up -- one of the spectacles of our time.

We left about 5:00 by chopper -- Lyndon and Lyn and Jim and Marie and I. We landed at Camp Mayberry and drove in to Luci's house. Like magic, Luci's friends had converged and spread the table with a beautiful array of cakes and polished candle sticks and newly shined silver and wedding present china and a great variety of soft drinks which is quite natural in Luci's household. But perhaps not exactly what the press is used to.

We arrived in very full number considering that the big news was more than a thousand miles away. And Lyndon sat on the sofa and Luci brought in his cake with one candle on it. And he took Lyn on his lap and later the press recorded him very much to my pleasure. And looking tanned, lean and fit in a brown short sleeved shirt open at the neck and matching slacks. He cut his cake and gave Lyn a piece, and promptly began making a mess. But Yuki helped clean it up, usefully

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...eating all of the crumbs. We had brought in three of Lyndon's presents which he opened there and shared with the press. A small water color that Luci had had made of Lyn by the artist whom I have had to paint her when she was less than 2 years old. How she had found her -- Miss Reasoner she was then -- I do not know. And Lynda had arranged to get all the way from Peru I think it was a fur covered pillow -- perhaps it is llama. But at any rate, the softest, most luxurious fur I nearly ever felt. And I for once had a real present for Lyndon -- a lifetime present -- a water color of Lynda done in one of her elegant trousseau dresses of white satin encrusted with the wide collar of brilliance and which amazingly she could still wear when 7 months pregnant. It was the work of Madame Shoumatoff and worth a sizeable piece of an Alabama farm.

The press oddly rather subdued asked Lyndon a few questions. He talked at length and in mild good humor. It was all very low-key which somehow in a way added to the sad atmosphere.

We choppered back and were at the Ranch by 7:00. And with the long twilight, Lyndon set out at once for a ride. And I to change clothes and to get ready for the birthday party.

Lynda Bird came in at 8:00. I went out to the runway to meet her. And then the Convention news started and with all three TV sets going in the living room we stopped to greet all our good friends and then to turn our faces back to the TV to the wildness in Chicago. All of us -- more

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than 20 -- congregated in the living room and we simply couldn't break it up for dinner. Finally I had Mary put the dinner out on the big buffet in the dining room and as we wished to we filed in, filled up our plates, came back and took our seats and watched the spectacle.

It was indeed a three-ring circus. There was a stop-Humphrey movement, by McCarthy and McGovern. The draft-Teddy Kennedy movement, with the TV commentators running in a circle from one Kennedy supporter to another trying to stoke the fires under it. And you would think that there were not delegations to the Convention except New York and California and I believe Wisconsin. And then finally the forces of the South moved in and favorite son delegations began releasing their delegates to go for Humphrey. First Texas, then South Carolina and Tennessee. And the convention moved on toward the bitterest fight of all -- a crucial one -- the Viet-Nam plank in the platform. And so in spite of all the hell raised on the floor and in the city, the work of the Convention did go on, and a credit it was to those there.

Lynda and I were so amused at the reporting of Buckley and ^{Gore Vidal} ~~Gerby Dell~~ that we called Communications and asked them to record them for us so we could look at them later.

And we all sat and watched until very late. This was to be a series of nights of eating off our laps while we watched TV. And even after most of the guests left, some of us stayed and watched.

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And so this strange day came to an end. In fact a whole strange week it was, characterized by Luci as the "longest wake I ever attended". This August we have spent more time at the Ranch than any I can remember except perhaps around Christmas. Luci lets me read her letters from Patrick and listen to her tapes. He seems so young and vulnerable and good. And I am afraid for him. Oddly, more than I am for Chuck who is in more danger, but somehow I expected him to be able to handle it. Less often, Lynda lets us read her letters or listen to her tapes from Chuck. She holds her personal life close. She flinches when her daddy quotes him I think. But every quote is something you can be proud of.

And so we go on through this strange year. And personally it is a happy year, but in the close circle of our family, because I think we are proud of what each one of us is doing -- all of us together. How strange that might sound from somebody on the outside who is looking at us. Yet it is true -- the world is undergoing convulsions all around us -- our Party, our Country -- the whole world. And it seems to me Lyndon is plowing right along, working as hard as he can every day on those things he can control and assaulting those things most vigorously that he has even a little hope of controlling. I know that it is a racking year for Lyndon physically, and it must be mentally and spiritually. And sometimes I think the greatest courage in the world is to get up in the morning and go about the day's work. That is one of the things I like about him. He keeps on and on and on.