

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Wednesday, September 11, 1968

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I slept late. In the morning I worked with Ashton, called Dr. Jim Cain to talk about Zephyr. He thinks we should not ask her to go to Texas with us. High blood pressure and overweight are too serious a problem. After 26 years what a wound that will be.

And at 11:30 I was in Lyndon's office for the arrival of Prime Minister and Mrs. Barrow of Barbados, wearing my white Mollie Parnis outfit. And as we marched out on the lawn to the lightly cheering crowds I had that pang I am experiencing over and over -- why hadn't I invited X and Y and Z to come to this ceremony. It is a thrilling, exciting one. And for me, even if repeated for the 105th time, the same high drama and stiffening of the pulse when those trumpets begin to blow from the Balcony.

My eyes skimmed the crowd for the two young ^{Park?} ~~pi-yis~~ -- the children of Merle Oberon -- they had lunched with us yesterday and I had asked that the children come back to the arrival ceremony if they would like to.

Our guests from Barbados were quite British, quite black, and quite easy and sophisticated. As I turned to talk to Mrs. Barrows when Lyndon was escorting the Prime Minister around the lawn, I noticed, and once more with a pang, that the tall military man who has stood over and over in the place in front of the President's box was no longer there. Someone else had taken his place.

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Lyndon's welcoming speech had a unique variation this time. It appears that George Washington on his only excursion outside of the United States had been a tourist in Barbados. Later in the visit the Prime Minister recalled that too and gave us a special invitation to follow in George's footsteps.

Back upstairs I recorded and worked with Ashton, talked to Lynda, lunched on a sandwich in my dressing room. And then worked with Simone completing the recording of the birthplace script. The older one is quite worn out and technically poor. And then I spent a couple of hours on what I will no doubt spend a chunk of my lifetime later this Fall on going through the ~~third~~ floor storeroom with Helen. The hot and dusty accumulation of years -- boxes from 30th Place and the Elms, still unpacked. Plaques and presents from trips and rows of pointed-toe, spiked heel shoes.

And then more desk work and called a few friends for lunch on what I hope is some quiet day in a week or so -- Robin Duke and Katie Louchheim and Nancy Dickerson.

Then to Mr. Jean Louis to give me a ~~hair-do~~ hair-do.

And all afternoon, the glances out the window to see how our dinner in the Rose Garden under the tent would fare. It is as pretty as can be -- the tent white and festive with loops of elegant fringe and lined with pink and great big paper flowers in every shade of pink and red, the poles decorated with smilax. It will be lovely for some future White House bride.

About 4:00 a swift, driving rain had come up. But it had gone swiftly.

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And then little Carol Carlisle had come in with a disconsolate look. The tent is leaking. So Bess, who was with me, went forth to fight that crisis, put up alternative seating in the State Dining Room. By 7:30, all was well. The sky had cleared. And Lyndon and I had pictures made in the Yellow Room. I wore my pink Mollie Parnis with the beaded jacket in honor of the tent.

A little past 8:00 we went down to the North Portico to greet the Barrows, pausing a little longer than usual because Simone had reminded us that they were doing some TV. And then upstairs to the Yellow Room with their party of 4 gentlemen and Dean and Virginia and our Ambassador to them and Angie and Robin.

Lyndon sent up to get General and Mrs. Robbins who were our house guests. And Lynda Bird came in and met everybody.

The Barrows gave me an absolutely darling present -- a little gold seashell -- a real one I think -- dipped in gold with a pearl in it.

And among our presents to them was a movie projector for him -- one of his enthusiasms I am told.

Robin Duke in a dress beaded from head to toe, covered with a long coat made of pink ostrich feathers, was the most delectable sight all evening.

It was not one of our most brilliant parties. But I never tried harder. There is that sense of an approaching end over everything. A sort of climate. A little letdown in service, in staff, in the whole spirit of high resolve and great that has marched with us these five years. And I shall try to combat it until the day I walk out of here.

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From the Senate there was Wayne Morse alone and the John Sparkmans and Mike Mansfields and Jennings Randolph.

A small contingent from the House.

From the Government, Charlie Murphy who amazingly has not attended a State Dinner in our time or in Angie's. And the Bert Hardings of OEO. From Labor, the George Meanys -- those veterans of many White House parties. And from business, the Windhams whom I was thanking for making lots of people happy at our Country Fair. And the Arthur Holtens, who is also a friend of Lyndas. I had seated Mr. Holten at her table with his daughter Holly and fiancée. And entertainment, Gordon MacRae, who had sung at Lynda's rehearsal dinner, I believe it was. And I put Diana Marsh at Lynda's table next to Carter Brown of the National Gallery of Art. This a little salute to Charles, long gone now. But I think it would have pleased him to have had her share this lovely house with Diana.

And there were Texans. The Glenn Bigs, Dr. Cardnes and Dr. William Gordon, Dean of Engineering at Rice. And Douglas Hubbard of the National Park Service who is so ~~help~~ competent and helpful to me in my Park projects. And the Milton Smiths, whom I had just found were ~~x~~ in town. The glamorous Merle Oberon who was just spending a night or two in Washington on her way around the country taking her children to see America.

Tall and attractive Bill Kerr, Senator Bob Kerr's son, who brought back a host of memories.

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When the line was finished, Lyndon took Mrs. Barrow's arm. She is a very attractive, easy, pleasant woman. And I escorted the Prime Minister. And we went expectantly into the tent which was as pretty as I had hoped. 14 tables for 10 and candles and flowers and a festive air.

I had chosen my table carefully. There were hosts from three of my wonderful trips. Governor Paiewonsky of the Virgin Islands, Mr. Ruskin, head of the conservation group in Arizona where I had visited, and Mrs. Henry Dudley who had accompanied me on the two glamorous days in Mrs. Posts' never-never land in Palm Beach.

And because I want to get to know the children of my friends, I had put cute young Mrs. Speller -- the Bill ^{Noel's} ~~Kennedy~~ daughter -- at my table.

It was a pleasant evening. I emerged with a little more information on Barbados sugar cane, rum, beaches. And before the evening was over with three invitations for next year to the Virgin Islands from Governor Paiewonsky, to Cornavaco, Mexico to stay in her house from Merle Oberon, and from our honored guests to see Barbados.

After coffee and liqueurs in the State rooms we took the Barrows out onto the porch off the Blue Room where there were a few chairs. Most of the guests sat or stood down below and we watched the evening parade by the Marines, ending with a soloist singing, "This is My Country", when alas the sound effects did not work and I flinched for them -- one and all.

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But I took pleasure in looking down there and seeing Mary Rather with her two pretty nieces, Betsy and Nancy. And Tom Corcoran and two of his sons, Howard and Christopher. And Diana Marsh, blond and stately, who was not accompanied out by her dinner companion Carter Brown. I am a half-hearted match maker. She seemed more attracted to one of the guests from Barbados -- a very British looking Negro with a pointed beard.

And there was a nice young marine Corporal, Richard Myer, son of one of our old friends from Marshall being escorted around by Juanita.

And throughout the evening lots of friends of Mrs. Barrows. It had been a sort of a receiving line where many of the guests had stopped to hug and kiss, which always for me adds to the pleasure of the evening. And it was not unusual because after all Mrs. Barrows was an American -- a native of New Jersey I believe.

The Barrows seemed to have a good time. They stayed for about 30 minutes after the entertainment. I drifted from group to group -- had an animated, warm conversation with ~~Whitney~~ Whitney Young who said nice things about Lyndon's work for Negroes and ended by kissing me on the cheek.

When our guests departed, Lyndon took Diana Marsh onto the floor for one dance, and then went upstairs. All days are hard for him now. The Fortas hearings, the determined effort of the press to create a rift between him and Hubert, the unending pain of Viet-Nam.

Yesterday he had made a strong speech in New Orleans before the American Legion. A vigorous warning against isolationism in America.

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and in Europe. And the words, "No man can predict when American troops can be brought home from Viet-Nam." And joyfully played up by the press as a slap at Hubert.

I stayed a little longer circling the floor, talking with guests. And I went up about 12:30 with a reasonably good feeling that it had been a creditable day.