

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

WHD

Tuesday, October 29, 1968

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It was another strange day in this long period of unremitting tension and strain. It had begun -- or at least I had tuned in on it -- when Lyndon returned from Texas on Monday the 14th, and has followed since then a graph of soaring hopes and frustrating declines. Oddly, it did not surface in the papers for two or three days -- I believe Thursday. And since then the papers have speculated, probed, made it just as difficult as possible.

Last night when we went to bed, Lyndon left a call for 2:00 -- even for him that is bizarre behavior. I said, "What is it honey?" He said, "General Walt is coming in."

At 2:00 the phone shrilled out and Lyndon jumped up quick as a fireman and was in his clothes and downstairs to meet General Abrams. Apparently there was a whole full-fledged meeting in the Cabinet Room which went on for several hours.

In the very early morning, Lyndon and Harry McPherson and Jim Jones and General Abrams came over to the second floor, and George Christian and Tom Johnson. I had given instructions the night before to put the General in 327. I still do not know if he had any rest. But for him of course it will only be 6:00 in the afternoon. At any rate he had something to eat I think.

Lyndon went back to his office and stayed a while -- came back over about 8:00, got into his pajamas and went to bed just as I got

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up. I asked few questions. It is better not to know.

I met with Simone and Harry Middleton and Don Peterson on the July script for about an hour and half. And then Joe Frantz came over. And at long last we had a look at the oral history project. He showed me a long list compiled from many sources of the people that they hoped to interview. They have done about 65 interviews he said. I am concerned that no one interviewed yet have requested their tapes be closed for a period of years. I want them to be candid and thorough, whatever they say. We cannot plow this field twice for lack of money, for lack of time, for lack of willingness of the person to be interviewed again. If they are going to add to historical knowledge, they must be good.

Dr. Frantz agreed that he thought it would be a good idea to have an arm's length group of historians -- very likely the review committee which consists of Allen Nevins and James McGregor Burns, Lewis Star, Richard Shallanor, John Hope Franklin, Frank Vanderver and Harry Ransom -- read several of these tapes within the next few weeks and see if we were doing a good job with them.

Luci called. Something exciting is happening to her. I had arranged for Madame Shoumatoff to come down and do a water color of Luci for Lyndon's Christmas present. She would do it in the Blue Room, we had decided, on a dark blue evening dress with the puffed

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sleeves and white lace front that Lynda says makes her look like a sexy puritan. She called that Madame Shoumatoff would like to use 327 because of the light. Agast, I said "no", we had a guest in there, or might have a guest in there. He must not be disturbed. His presence is a tight-held secret in a house that is full of secrets these days.

Over Lyndon's bed at 12:00 midnight to 6:00 a.m. there is a constant traffic of manila folders with a red tag and papers inside that say "Eyes Only", "Top Secret".

At noon I went to Mr. Per for a hair-do with a sack full of work, failing for once to have my swim before hand.

And then down to the Blue Room to greet an artist named Victor Lamkey who about two years ago had wanted to give a bust to the President -- one that he had done of the President from pictures. Lyndon had written that he would be glad to accept it, and I had asked him to come to tea and bring the bust. He brought along two friends, Mr. and Mrs. Kay and their small son about five. And there they were in the Blue Room, looking a little ill at ease, and the bust which was heroic size sitting on the table. I had Bob Knudsen and we did lots of pictures. And Mrs. Kay had brought her own camera. And the little boy raced round and round the room.

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I did my best to put us all at ease -- took them in the Green Room and we had tea and cookies and milk for their little boy and I sent for a copy of the "Living White House" and a book on the President for the child. And we made conversation for about 15 minutes. And I explained the Library where the bust would go, along with other works of art.

And then said goodbye to them and turned them over to a guide who was to show them the White House.

And then briefly back upstairs for my second tea of the afternoon. It was one of those days with four appointments in a row and coffee or tea offered with each. I can make a no better attribute for a First Lady than to be an absolutely disciplined eater, which means to say "no thank you" often.

My next appointment was none other than Mrs. Mrs. John Will Pattillo -- Miss Clara -- now for some years a widow, and for 15 years married to my Uncle John Will in Billingsley, Alabama who had managed my Alabama property -- my mother's first cousin he was. And a friend of hers who had brought her -- Mrs. McCoach. And we spent nearly an hour of talking about Alabama kinfolks -- Lucille and Nettie Mason and Elaine and Aunt Ellen, and very especially of course of Uncle John and days of good while gone.

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Back upstairs I went to bed for though I had not shared the work of the night I had indeed shared the sleeplessness.

Lyndon's bed was loaded with the red tag folders that were top secret, and mine was loaded with pictures and books to be autographed for Christmas -- the height of an unfair division of labor I worked for a while on them -- no chance of real sleep. And then close to 5:30, I went over to Ernie Goldstein's office to attend the end of a meeting on exhibits for the LBJ Library. Secretary Cohen was there, an exhibits man from Space, several people from the Smithsonian, someone I think from USIA.

I gathered this group was meeting for the third time, that they hoped to plan and maybe put together one or more exhibits for the Library on health or education bills, on space. I am drowning in a sense of time running out, of trying to grasp every moment and overtake so many elusive and fleeting goals.

I had a feeling this was a good idea they were working on and great brains working on it. But that they simply could not get it done in the remaining 2-1/2 months. At any rate, at long last, we have finally got Lyndon interested and moving on the Library.

He sent for me. I went to join him in the Cabinet Room, and there were all the White House Fellows assembled -- cameras and press, and Walter Hueman, the President of the White House Fellows Association was reading a report to the President that they had all

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put together -- their suggestions of things that ought to be done. And then Lyndon answered it. And both of them could have been 100 percent better if they had not read a thing but had just gotten up and talked. That's the sort of meeting I want to have with the White House Fellows. We have done it before. And I want so much to do it once more before we leave here. Just the 15 of them and their wives and us, and maybe three or four staff.

And then came a terrificly nice part of the program. They presented me with a vermeil bamboo bowl -- charmingly inscribed from the White House Fellows. I was absolutely delighted. This I have meant to buy for myself as my going away present from the White House. And I made a response to the group that was not read and that I think encompassed them all in my delight. It was nice to get even a glimpse of John Gardner and John Macy.

And then still not knowing the burden of the day's decisions, in a sort of suspended in time and uncertainty feeling I got in the limousine and drove back to the hospital for a visit with Lynda, arriving about 6:30 to find her in high good spirits, on a sort of a wave of euphoria that was a delight to watch.

Her room is full of roses -- pink, red, white, yellow. She has had some darling letters and telegrams -- about 350 yesterday.

There was one that made tears come to her eyes -- a sweet one from

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Ethel Kennedy. Her kindness stabs you anew with a sense of her own situation. But there were dear, cute, sweet things. And most especially from the public, people she doesn't know at all -- lots of service wives.

I stayed about two hours, and then drove home. Fall is really coming. It is really chilly, and the leaves are falling.

Lyndon came over for dinner about 9:30 with Mary Rather. He is taking a bad cold. At least up to now, the press does not seem to know of General Abram's presence. He has already left to return.