

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Saturday, November 9, 1968

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It was a day of contrast in the White House -- a morning of intense work that pushed ahead I think one of the projects nearest to my heart and a mighty time-consuming one.

And the afternoon, one quite different -- leisure and a favorite self-indulgence and nostalgia.

At 10:00 I had the meeting of the Audio-Visual Committee of the LBJ Library in the Treaty Room. Dr. Grover and Arthur Drexler and Leonard Marks and Frank Stanton and Juanita and Dorothy. And this time Simone. And very importantly, members of what will be actually staff at the Library -- Dr. Newland, the new Director, Gary Yarrington, exhibit man, and Bill Duncan who has just been hired for the audio-visual work. And late in the meeting Bess slipped into place. Nobody can be more expressive than she can on the exhibit of life in the White House.

The meeting lasted more than 3-1/2 hours. First, I introduced Dr. Newland and Gary and Bill Duncan. And then we saw the Esrestola slides again and in added dimension the room setup where they would be on exhibit, backlighted, and in front of them some artifacts from the White House. We talked about what they should be. Perhaps State gifts, or perhaps ours to the other heads of State. Should we acquire a model of the stage. We decided it would be great if we could. And Bess would go ahead on getting programs autographed and acquiring

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such artifacts as Dolly's feathered hat, sheet music from Van Cliburn, Maria Tallchief's ballet slippers.

And then the major accomplishment of the meeting it seemed to me was to bring to a head our talk of documentary.

I am not sure whether it was Leonard Marks or Frank Stanton who brought it up. Leonard is frequently bringing us back to the point, keeping us from chasing rabbits, as Lyndon would express it. Should we offer one of the networks the opportunity to come into the White House in the remaining 2-1/3 months -- film rooms, talk to the President, make use in any way of places and records no longer available to us after January 20th. And then when they had shown it on TV it will become a part -- all of it or excerpts -- as a documentary for the Library, the basic thing to show.

The pluses: We have the setting -- the ever irreplaceable setting -- the White House -- the President's office. And the President himself, while in office.

And the minuses: The short time in which to operate, and whether we could get the President's permission. That is what it finally boils down to. And so we said we might as well try now. He was still in his bedroom working. I asked him if he could spare some time for Leonard Marks to explain it to him sometime soon. He said, "Why not right now?". And so he joined us in the Treaty Room.

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It must have been over an hour that he stayed. And when Lyndon enters a room, business picks up -- the tempo changes -- things happen. He boiled it down to this: First, we have to decide about the ethics, the taste, the rightness of a President using his office for this kind of a thing. He told Leonard to talk to Ramsey Clark about it -- was there any legal reason why not? Second, would doing this interfere in any way with the film to be produced and sold through Arthur Krim in time to come because books, magazine articles, film will all be a sort of a part of our future -- the intention being to help support the School of Public Service. Third, he asked Leonard and Frank Stanton to report to him on these points and then he would decide.

We brought up the subject of scripts for the documentary itself and for the short movies -- space, the educational bills, the bills in health -- and he said Larry Levinson knew as much about what went on in his office -- the progress of the legislation -- as anybody and he sent over and Larry came in and stayed with us for the rest of the meeting. And it was a very yeasty, vital time I thought.

Early in the morning I had had a big pot of coffee and sweet rolls from which each of us helped ourselves from time to time. And then about 12:30, they came in with huge platters of sandwiches and milk and cokes. And off and on during the meeting, there was Bob

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Knudson and Tommy Atkins recording us in stills and movies -- the first and only time.

At one point I noticed a sort of undercurrent and did not grasp the full meaning of it. The subject had come up of the movement of all the exhibit material to Austin so that it could all be spread out on view, working toward the selection of certain items and it was Drexler who had brought it up because ~~it~~ apparently he expects to design fixed cabinetry. And I think there was a rather heated discussion with Dr. Grover participating and maybe Dorothy and Juanita, saying that we never had really decided on fixed cabinetry.

Before we all dispersed into small groups, I told everybody the happy news that Bunshaft and Max Brooks, acting on a rather urgent request from Lyndon, had designed his office on the top floor to be a replica of the President's office here -- the Oval Room -- only on 7/8 scale.

For months -- it seems years -- I have tried for the reproduction of some portion of the White House -- the Yellow Oval Room, a bit of the East Room -- and run up against immovable barriers, architecturally impossible. And here Lyndon finally got in the act, and it happens. I am delighted beyond words.

I took them down to the theatre at 1:30 to see the December monthly movie. And then I thanked everybody and excused myself and

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left with Lynda. And this was the break in the day -- the second part -- that was pure self-indulgence and joy. And we went to the National and saw "Promises, Promises" -- one of Lynda's first times out, certainly in public. She is my favorite companion at a play. And this was just to my liking -- all the problems were normal ones, not hopeless, ugly, murky ones, in a setting of sick-minded people. And we laughed and laughed. And between acts we went upstairs -- forgetting that Lynda Bird was not supposed to climb steps -- and had orange juice and people came up to us and asked for autographs and congratulated Lynda on the new baby and beamed and showered us with good will. And I saw Marie Sheppel whose husband used to serve in the Senate with us.

When we went back to our seats, a lady leaned over behind me and said, "I want you to tell the President how much we appreciate him. I don't think we tell him often enough."

And as we left, lots of people clapped and cheered.

So we got home in a warm aura, and I went over to the bowling alley, calling Mary, had three good games, and was back on the second floor before 6:30.

I called Lyndon to see if he would like to invite anyone to dinner. The first person he mentioned was Bill Deason. And when I called Bill, he said, "We're having some old friends to dinner out here -- folks that

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would love to see you all. Why don't you come on out and bring Mary?"

And so we did. And there in Bill and Jeanie's home were John and Jane Young and Kika de la Garza and his pretty little wife, and former Congressman Slick Rutherford and Sarah, and the young Wayne Gibbons.

We had a couple of hours of good companionship and a tasty dinner cooked by our hostess herself. And we were back at the White House and in bed by 10:30 -- a rare and unusual treat.

Lynda Bird came in in a glittering gold gown, still a little pale and far too thin to my thinking, on her way to the Marine Ball with Doug Davidson. The baby is only two weeks old, and I am proud and grateful that she feels well enough and that she reaches out to life.