

MEMORANDUM

WHD
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Monday, November 11, 1968

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It was a once and only day in the White House for us -- the time when we were host to the family who would succeed us here, and talked of the ongoing business of the Government and of the house itself.

I was up early and spent the morning at my desk calling George Christian about the coverage for the lunch, Jim Ketchum to be on hand in case Mrs. Nixon would like to meet him. I had already arranged for Mr. West to be there. Trudye Fowler, to thank her with all my heart for her sweet invitation to lunch right after the Inauguration. It was to be for us and the Cabinet only. And then recorded and had a comb-out.

For two reasons, this is a day I want to look my best. And the first reason was that Lyndon and I were having a formal picture. I put on my new yellow satin with the brilliants. And he his tux. And we went in the Yellow Oval Room in mid-morning and spent about 30 or 40 minutes trying to get a smashing, forever after formal picture of us in this setting.

I go through the days making little lists and then scratching them off as I get them done. And I have in fact gotten rather a lot scratched off since April 1st.

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And then into street clothes -- my pretty peach wool -- for a last posed picture in the family sitting room -- the West Hall.

And then the rest of the morning working at my desk with Bess and Liz on lists, trip, this week's beautification events. And then the really big business of the day. Down to the Diplomatic Reception Room and to a huge assemblage of press -- pencil, pad and camera -- we met the President-elect and Pat. Somehow, I could never call him "Dick", but it is easy to call her "Pat" because she was President of the Senate Ladies during eight years of my time there.

We posed and posed and posed -- all four of us -- the two men together -- smiling, talking, looking left and right and straight ahead.

And finally we went upstairs. And there in the family sitting room was Marvin Watson. Lyndon introduced him to the Nixon's as sherry was passed. And I took some because after all it certainly was an occasion.

Mr. Nixon said, "Are you as good a man as Billy Graham says you are?" And Marvin made a modest, discrete reply.

Lyndon told Mr. Nixon to look to Marvin for any liaison work that he wanted to.

We talked briefly (Marvin had gone), and then soon we went into lunch. It was a long visit -- lasting in all nearly four hours --

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proper, circumspect, cordial, throughout. Lyndon, I thought in fact, was generous and rather fatherly -- more open than I felt I was. And I felt aglow toward him. I thought it was not Nixon the man he was talking to, but the next President of this country.

The men did most of the talking, and Pat and I were politely attentive, and I listened very hard.

Mr. Nixon talked of Helms and the CIA and of J. Edgar Hoover -- what was Lyndon's opinion of them. He said Lyndon would be remembered for two things: his stand on Viet-Nam, which was the only thing he could have done, and right, and what he did for the Negroes -- accurate so far as it went I thought. We talked of their close friend, Beba Rabosa, whom we know also through George Smathers. And here Lyndon was paternal and quite earnest -- "Don't ever take him to church with you or single him out or let everybody know that he is the closest one to you or else they will attack him." (He meant the press). "They'll try to cut him up, search out anything bad about him."

And then they talked of press relations in general, and I gathered they had a certain amount in common, even I thought with some amusement when I heard Mr. Nixon use the expression, "Georgetown dinner parties", in an inflection of voice reminiscent of Lyndon.

Lyndon talked of the School of Public Service and how he hoped to turn out 200 trained troops -- as he called them -- a year who were

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prepared to play a role in elective or appointive office. Mr. Nixon said, "Send all 200 of them up here and I'll put them to work."

He asked a lot of questions, and not just politely I thought. One is a question that must have been asked by a whole army of people these last four years: "Tell me, Mr. President, why was it that you made so few changes, kept so many of the appointees of your predecessor?"

Lyndon answered in a measured, quiet tone. "Well, there are about three reasons. First, respect for Kennedy. He had trusted me, and I tried to put myself in his shoes -- how would I have felt if as soon as he was gone I had gotten rid of all his people. I wanted to be loyal to him. Second, I didn't know for a good while whether I had a Rusk or an incompetent. And third, and herein I thought was the tough one, I didn't always have all the troops I needed." Coming from Johnson City, educated at Southwest Texas State Teachers College, never heading for the presidency, and therefore never laying by a little catalogue of names of able people from all over the United States tied to him by some debt or mutual interest. And then he reflected, "Maybe I made a mistake, maybe after January '65 I ought to have made some changes." And Mr. Nixon swiftly said, "Yes you won by -- what was it, 61, 62 percent -- the biggest anyone ever won by. That would have been the time for you to change house."

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Around 3:00 lunch was over. We had ended on a grand souffle. I gather Mr. Nixon seldom had any. But this we all indulged in.

And then the men went over to the Cabinet Room, and out in the West Hall there was John Ficklin. And of course he and Mrs. Nixon knew each other, but with a certain formality I introduced them. And then Mr. West came up and Bob Knudson took the picture of the three of us with the blueprints of the White House so that she can fit in into any of the family rooms her own furniture or things that she wants to bring. And I gave her an envelope of colored pictures of most of the second floor rooms. We haven't done them all yet.

She said that Julie's wedding was going to be on December 22nd. I couldn't help but think what a lovely chance they were passing up. I have adored our two White House weddings in spite of the headaches. And then we went on our extensive tour. First, through my room and sitting room and bath, carefully looking at all of the closets and explaining what might be done with them. And then the President's room and rather more swiftly through the rest of the rooms on the second floor -- even including Lynda's. And she was ready to meet us and presented the baby and we all cooed in the manner of women -- and easy meeting ground. And I explained how these two rooms had been used by the Johnsons and the Kennedys. And in these two rooms -- Lynda's and Luci's -- I pointed out everything that belonged to us, which

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is nearly everything in them. And when they would be taken out there would be plenty, I told her, from the White House storehouse -- some antiques, a good deal of it B. Altman furniture that had come in with the Truman restoration, but quite adequate. She kept on repeating that she did not have much that she wanted to bring because they had moved so much, and at each move she had given away a lot, and they were presently living in a really quite small apartment and she would be happy to give to her daughter who was marrying whatever she wanted.

And then we went up to the third floor and carefully went through every room. I told her how useful I had found it to have an office on the third floor, and introduced her to Ashton and Marilyn. In the two major guest suites and the smaller rooms we gave especial attention to the closets which are little gems -- the gift of Hamocker Schlemmer to the President's house. And just now reaching their perfection making all of our house guests -- that is the female ones -- dissatisfied with whatever they've got when they get home. I expect I've caused a lot of complaining husbands.

She was especially interested in what quarters there were for servants. She was interested in bringing some staff with her -- a couple of Spanish extraction that she had had for quite a while. I assured her there would be no difficulty in bringing them. I described

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the servants' suite without going into it, and answered her questions about linens and silver. There is no need to bring any.

By 4:00 we settled down by the fire in the Yellow Room which she loved. Who wouldn't? And I called Mr. West to fill her in on any details she might want. I had suggested that perhaps she might like to meet Mary Kaltman, the housekeeper, or Jim Ketchum, the Curator. She said no, that could come later.

We were just about to complete all the details of housekeeping questions, and so I said, "Pat I always wished you would come back some Spring to the Senate Ladies luncheon -- the one at the Capitol or my luncheon here at the White House." She laughed in an odd sort of way and said, "I guess I am a sentimental person. You know I just didn't feel like coming back. You know, defeated and all."

I never had thought of it that way. There at the Senate Ladies, we simply pay no attention to it. And perhaps there may be people who think that we are leaving here in a sort of a state of defeat. I have no such feeling, and that would never cloud my return, and I felt sort of hurt for her and awkward that I had asked.

Finally, I suggested a cup of tea. She said yes, after having urged me several times -- and very gracious it was of her -- to go on and get back to any chores I needed to be doing. She knew it was a rather long meeting. And of course I said no. But just as our tea

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arrived, so did our husbands at nearly 5:00. No, they wouldn't join us for a cup. Mr. Nixon was very poised and very much in command the whole hour. He said that they must be going.

And so the four of us went downstairs, and we told them goodbye at the Diplomatic Entrance. Pat kissed me as she left, and I was touched. And then they were gone. And so that was a major encounter -- gracefully completed I thought. And I went back in for some more work with Liz and Mary Kaltman on a montage of photos that we will try to put together for a Christmas gift for the press ladies, maybe around a trash can or a smaller can to go on their desk with "Merry Christmas" and my signature.

I hope Mrs. Nixon decides to keep Mary and Jim Ketchum. They serve this house so well I think. And of course Mr. West is the rock. But he intends nevertheless to retire sometime a few months after they move in.

I had spent a good deal of my time trying to reassure her, lay the ground work, about the efficiency, devotion and impersonal professionalism of the staff here. That is true. I think they have liked us. But we come and go, we Presidents and First Ladies. And that is as it should be. And their first devotion must be to this house and its workings.

And then I went to the bowling lanes as I so often do after a

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vigorous day's work of any kind. I had three rather good games. And then returned to the second floor for an hour or so of recording.

And then at 9:00, down to the East Room for a most off-beat and delightful evening -- this too with Lynda, just as Saturday afternoon had been -- the cast of "You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown" had offered to come and perform for Lynda and a small group of friends on a very intimate, informal basis. And so there they were in the East Room -- some 50 odd guests -- Lynda's doctors and their wives, her Secret Service Agents and their wives -- the White House staff, the Abells and the Carpenters and the Ross's and the Mavicks ^{Maddox's?} and the Gonellas -- four old friends from NCS -- Jill and Jan and Jennifer. And members of the wedding -- Doug Davidson and Phyllis Bonano.

Lynda, my almost ^{40+ total?} ~~tete-a-tete~~ ^{god} daughter had ordered coffee and cake as refreshments as I walked through the crowd and shook hands with everybody. I thought some drinks at the intermission would be appropriate and welcome. So I ordered them up. And then I sat down in the front row to indulge myself in just as much of it as I could have before I got the summons that Lyndon was home. And I stayed for a full 30 minutes of the gentle, pixie, sophisticated, charming humor of Charlie Schultze. Lucy was my favorite.

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And then a little past 10:00, I got the message that Lyndon was on the second floor, and swiftly went upstairs to find him with George Christian and Tom Johnson and Mildred Stegall. And we sat down at once for dinner.

It had been a hard day, and he was very weary. And his cold stays and stays. He needs sunshine and rest.

They were gone a little past 11:00, and he to bed and night reading.