

MEMORANDUM

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Thursday, November 21, 1968

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It was one of the warmest, happiest days I remember in the White House. And yet, such a breathless crescendo of events it was that I didn't even have time to savor with fullness one of the best parties we've ever had here. And to thank the staff and Bess for it.

It began early -- all of Lyndon's days do. But I disappeared from his room rather soon to meet Jim Webb in the West Hall with Liz and talked about our visit to Cape Kennedy, only two days away. And I am staggered at my lack of preparation. But an hour and a half with Jim was the best indoctrination I could have had.

And then at 11:00 I went to the Yellow Oval Room for coffee with some of our guests of the evening because I knew I wouldn't have time to really visit enough with them then. The Alexander Girards whom I wanted to thank for their wonderful contribution for HemisFair, their collection of folk art which had given me two enchanting hours. And Dr. John Crosby who is the Director of the Santa Fe Opera Company. We talked of my hopes to come out next summer. And of that charming cosmopolitan town, different from any in this country I think. And I had asked the Paul Bakers. He's the head of the Drama Department at Trinity University, and I have heard a great deal of his productions there. And also at the

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theatre in Dallas. Unfortunately, I seemed unable to really engage him in any conversation. And there were the Tom McKrummins from Austin. And in the middle of our visit Henry and <sup>Jessica</sup> ~~Juska~~ Catto came in. He's actually been in town most of this Fall working for Nixon which does not diminish my liking for them.

It was a pleasant half hour or so, but lacked the excitement somehow, like some of these mornings. What is that element that goes into making contact with bright people -- shoot bright sparks -- and lead to gay, witty and interesting conversation? It is something that a good hostess has, but it is also the product of chance and you can't turn it on like a water faucet.

And then I invited them to go on a tour of the Lincoln Room and the Queens' Room. And I went to my room for about three hours of unremitting work -- very late in the day begun -- going over my speeches, striking out lines, reading them over, lunch on a tray, and Mrs. Provenson and Liz came at 1:30. And then I did it out loud.

Only about six or seven speeches -- two majors ones. The first, for the Naturalization Ceremony Friday morning. And the last for the Red Woods Dedication Monday. Inevitably all the news ladies had early called to this my last hurrah. And that made it all the

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more necessary and scarey -- that it should be well done.

So I worked as intensely as I could with a spectator leaning over my shoulder of all the hours of the past days I should have been working on it. But nevertheless so much at home with everything that I was saying that I was relatively comfortable.

And then to Mr. Per for a shampoo and set. And back at home with just an hour to go over the guest list for the biggest, the best, the favorite party for the National Council on the Arts. It would begin at 6:00. And Lynda brought Lucinda in to my lovely canopied bed and layed her down and told me how she was having some pictures made and a little bit of movies to take to Chuck if they were going to be ready for her departure early in December. This was her last chance and this was his Christmas present.. She is a delicate, adorable little girl with little hands like starfish, a perfect shaped head. She is nearly a month old and growing in weight and height. And she is very strong. She practically lifts up her head. But she doesn't sleep much. And after that blessed cabbage<sup>?</sup> of Patrick we are so used to a 12-hour sleeping baby.

Lynda adores to dress her. Friends have sent her, and she has bought, some of the amusing clothes. Marietta Brooks sent her a white knit Deor suit that looks like a ski outfit. And Lynda

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even puts her in some of the little dresses that I was given for Lynda more than 24 years ago.

I put on my sparkly pink lace dress and went down a little past 6:00 for a party that I have looked forward to more than nearly any. It was a sort of gathering of our favorite people in the world of arts and entertainment. And the next day somebody in the paper described it as a "Who's who of Broadway, the Metropolitan Opera and the entertainment world."

Lyndon was on time. We went into the East Room where all the chairs the room would hold were lined up in front of Rebekah Hartnesses' lovely stage.

Roger Stevens went to the podium and praised Lyndon as having done more for the arts than any other President of the United States. Rare words for us to hear, and well savored ones by me especially because I have loved our participation in helping through the Arts Council and enjoying all the facets of art across this country. Drama most of all. Ballet with increasing exploratory pleasure. Symphony with less understanding. And Opera because I was indoctrinated early with those red-seal records of my mother's. Curuso, Tetrozini, Scotty Severeni, Madame Malbra and Geraldine Feraur.

And then Lyndon responded with praise of Roger Stevens -- the perfect public servant, he called him. And indeed in a very soft spoken

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understated way he has gotten a lot done with the Congress and with the Country to foster the arts.

And then they passed out the certificates to the new members of the Arts Council -- a good many of whom I had had a bit of a hand in suggesting to Lyndon.

And then we saw the program -- one of those to which the National Council on the Arts had given a grant -- the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre. And if before I thought I had seen the whole gamut of entertainment in the White House from Grand Opera to Broadway musicals to Indian dancers, I had not. This was a marvelous combination of Negro spirituals and ballet. The numbers entitled, "Pilgrimage of Sorrow", "Take me to the Water", and "Move Members Move". It was absolutely stunning entertainment -- exciting, moving, beautiful. I think it is not too much to say it had a spiritual quality. It was integrated to the extent that there was about one white member and 20 or more Negro members. But they were all great dancers and good actors as well. Several of them true beauties.

For me the best bit was called "Sinner Man". And this agonized soul ~~lived~~ and strutted and drooped and appealed for help from on high until he was sweat all over his brown body -- as magnificent display of acting as of dancing.

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And there were old familiar titles like "Daniel" and "Rock My Soul in the Bosom of Abraham". And the Howard University Choir, who had I understand learned 10 new songs in three days to prepare for this, was a stunning accompaniment.

I don't remember a more spellbound audience -- one more in tune with what we had to offer. I think it was Izaac Stern sitting next to me who kept on murmuring at a certain one of the dancers how beautiful she was -- how beautiful.

The costumes were varied, but there seemed to be a certain style in ballet today for the dull earth colors -- beige and gray and black. And some of them actually looked like croca-sacks of my youth.

When it was over there was a thunderous applause, and I could hear Lyndon leading it. He had enjoyed every moment. Alas, I cannot always say that of him. And he and I went up on the stage and congratulated the whole cast, being introduced by Mr. Aley -- the smooth and thoughtful Bess ushering us around quietly.

And then down the steps to congratulate all the members of the Howard University Choir and have our pictures made with them.

It must have been past 7:00 when we went to the Blue Room and stood in line to meet our guests. And what an assemblage.

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I had worked more on this guest list than on nearly any. And in many ways it expressed my own pleasures of the past five years in the field of arts and entertainments.

Most of the members of the Arts Council in whose honor it was given were there. Marian Anderson who occupies a rare pinnacle in song and in the hearts of the people I think. And Richard Diebenkorn the painter. And Duke Ellington, his long hair curling over his collar. Oneal Ford, one of the new members and very much at home in this group along with Larry Halprin. And Jimilu Mason who had done the bust of Lyndon. And Bob Merrill of the Metropolitan Opera whose performance this year are unforgettable -- another new member. And gentle, kindly, Rudolf Serkin.

We had invited a host of those who had performed for us in the White House or at Democratic Galas. The David Brubecks and Theresa Coleman. And I realize afresh what an important part ballet had played in our entertainments. As Martha Graham and Jose Lemon and Jeffrey Holder and Lucia Chase went down the line. And Stephen Cates brought back memories of that wonderful party for the Tchaikovsky winners. And Jean Dalrymple -- both a wave of pleasure for the gay musical she had brought us and a stab of pain for her own sadness now. Her husband had died not ten days before,

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and I had not thought she could come. And there was Howard Mitchell of the symphony here. And marvelous Leontyne Price. And Richard Tucker and Veronica Tyler. Five years of wonderful evenings unfolded before us. And for many of them I have a very personal feeling.

There were a number of art critics too. Richard Cole and John Chapman. And I had invited Betty Beale because I thought this was an evening in tune with her taste. And very importantly there were donors to this great house or to my Beautification program. The Joseph Hirshhorns. He hugged Lyndon and I hugged them both when they came down the line. And the David <sup>Lloyd</sup> Lord Krægers whom I saw later having more fun than nearly anyone. And Mrs. Jewett Shouse and Madame Shoumatoff, who has also a rare quality in expressing her pleasure at being at an event. And the Felix <sup>Dweldons</sup> Dweldons. He says he wants to give a bust of Sam Rayburn to the Lyndon Johnson Library. And there was Dr. John Hope Franklin, the Historian, who was on the Board of Review of our oral history program. And Dr. Joe Frantz who is doing the program.

And staff members -- the Ernie Goldsteins (she is an artist) and the Harry McPhersons who used to be the State Department's head of Cultural Affairs. And the Dillon Ripleys and my own advisor on all



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matters of art, John Walker and his wife. And Eddie Senz who has made up probably a couple of generations of stage people and was I think as pleased as anybody to be there. And a very few representatives from Government. Nick Johnson of the FCC and Fishbait Miller from the House of Representatives whose voice is apart of more dramatic nights than nearly any actor present -- the State of the Union as far back as I can remember. And the Joe Moodys of GSA.

There was at least one little girl whose relation to the whole party you might have wondered about. Judy Middendorf, President of the Student Council at Thomas Moore College in Covington, Kentucky. Very simple: Lyndon had been down there for a speech. She had introduced him I think so well and had impressed him so much that he had invited her up to the White House in his extraordinary warm fashion. And here she was. And she had spent several hours in his office -- a long time in conversation with him in the West Hall. And here at this party.

And there was David Merrick who has more hits on Broadway off and on than practically anybody. And Joe Meltziner who had designed our own lovely stage. And Lynda Bird Johnson Robb -- very much at home with all of them and a great asset for the evening.

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And there was at least one representative from the world of clothes which I have discovered these last five years. Perhaps actually I've been seduced into it. That was <sup>George Stroups</sup> ~~Joyce Stroups~~ who does the lovely chiffon evening dresses.

And two Johnson whom I have enjoyed in their different ways -- Ruth Carter Johnson of the Amen/Carter Museum in Ft. Worth, and Philip Johnson, the architect who wanted to plan a luncheon for me sometime this month. And I know it would be just a sort of bright, sophisticated people who would be stimulating.

Well, when the line was all over I could only think how good it is, how much fun. But I wished I had crowded in "so and so" and "so and so" and "so and so." Almost always for me it is the things that I don't do, the failure to reach out with that sudden generous gesture that is so much a part of my husband that I regret. There had been a sudden informal change of plans just before the receiving line. Lyndon had said, "I am going upstairs to watch Luci and Patrick on television. It won't take but a few minutes." Actually, it was thoroughly in keeping the tone of the evening. It was high time everybody had a drink. And the line formed quite casually just a few minutes later, and there was a sumptuous buffet in the State Dining Room which I sought as soon as the line was finished. I hardly remember a happier time in the White House, and

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I stayed until 9:00. Lyndon had only gone up a few moments ahead of me. I was going from group to group. And there was a note of sadness as one after another and another told me goodbye and talked of the good times we had had. And around 9:00 when I went up to the second floor -- the West Hall -- our house guests were there --

Dr. and Mrs. Norman Hackerman and the Stanley Donors (he is head of the Communications Department at the University and I had looked forward very much to meeting him. I hope we can work with him at the Library). And our own artist friends, the Melvin Warrens. And Lyndon. And we all had a drink, and I had served plates brought in for those of us who had not eaten downstairs.

Meanwhile I could hear the sounds of gaiety continuing down on the State Floor. But it was not until the next day that I heard that Izaac Stern had coaxed Abe Fortas into playing a duet with him. He borrowed an antique violin from a member of the Marine band. And Dr. Howard Mitchell had accompanied them. And then Duke Ellington had sat down at the piano and played "Satin Doll". And the illustrious Leopold Stokowski had for a few moments directed the Marine band.

So, I managed to miss some of the high moments of one of the best parties we ever held in the White House. But there loomed ahead of me the four most demanding days of this Fall. And I knew

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how unprepared I was. So I talked with the Hackermans and Donors and Warrens til close to 10:00. And then I kissed Lyndon goodnight and went in and had a bit of a rub while I read my speeches over and over.