

MEMORANDUM

WHD THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, December 3, 1968

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All days begin early now it seems and end late. And the crowding rush of events grows ever more unmanageable as we try to add just one more thing and at the same time our staff gets eaten away at the edges by people leaving and illness.

It was only this morning that I heard that Les Carpenter had gone to the hospital last night with an extreme nose bleed that was really a hemorage and they found that he had terrificly high blood pressure and great difficulty in stopping the bleeding. Poor Liz. What a year for her. And Bess is off wearing her other hat as wife of the Chief of Protocol with the Hoveidas. And so I spent an hour in the early morning with Carol Carlyle going over the two upcoming dinners, we have a little backlog of people we wanted so much to ask if we could at the last minute and planning on Christmas parties.

Then at 10:00 I went out to the Naval Photo Lab with Simone and Tommy Adkins. And this was a highpoint of the day, of the whole Fall. We saw the film of "Life in the Family Quarters at the White House". No music yet, and some lighting will be improved. But I thought it was very good. And then when we came to Lyndon's part at the end I almost jumped up and shouted. This was pure undiluted Lyndon. No reading of careful speech cards, expression, words, the very essence of the man and of his handling of this job.

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I was so proud. How I wish somehow we could have extracted this and funneled it to the public during these last five years. It would have served our cause well. And the things we've worked for. And I hope maybe there will be some use of it other than just as an exhibit in the Library. Even so it's in the can, and I mark off on my mental tablet one more check by things done.

Tony Loeb, all the staff, were all smiles. And that air of expectancy I hoped I poured into my response all the fullness of my satisfaction in the job they have done.

And then next after a bite of lunch I went out to Mr. Per's with Mrs. Berg, and this is an experiment. We are trying to see how much Mrs. Berg can learn in four or five days so that hopefully she can turn me out down on the Ranch looking ready for whatever comes. She combed my hair while Mr. Per watched.

Then back at the White House for some desk work, and it mounts and hangs heavy over my shoulders.

And then little Carol came to my door and said, "They are ready." This was the first of two parties for the Viet-Nam veterans who are hospitalized at Walter Reed or Bethesda. They had arrived at 2:00 and they had had a tour of all over the White House including the Lincoln and Queens' Room and Treaty Room. I stood in front of the theatre. The hall was all bright with chrysanthemums -- white and

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yellow. And the forty of them came by -- four in wheelchairs, two I remember double amputees. And you had to be careful with a flick of the eye when you put out your hand to make sure you didn't reach for the right hand when there wasn't any, but instead grasp the offered left hand with no flicker of recognition. And then once in my palm I found something cold and steely. When the hand I had seen outstretched looked like anybody's.

They were very young, this group. And all Privates -- or nearly -- with a few Sergeants or Corporals.

By the time I shook the last hand and went into the theatre they were all grouped at the tiny cabaret tables. And the girls from Bess' office and Liz' and Correspondence Section were passing lemonade and cokes and hot slices of pizza and there were on the tables things like peanuts and potato chips. And Tony Maderesa's combo was batting out loud and gay brassy music.

I moved from table to table, changing with Cynthia or Carol or Margaret Deab. We talked of where they were from, when they were going home for Christmas, what they had seen on the tour. And they were always very interested in Chuck and Pat and Lynda and Luci and the children. And I told them that this was the first party like this I had had without either Lynda or Luci present because they like to be the guides and they always had so much to say to men.

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There were some interesting bits. I asked one man how long he had been in. And he said 11 months and he was due for more surgery. And another who said he was supposed to leave the next day to return home and then got ordered some place else and was hit there. And he quickly answered, "It's all right now. I've seen my wife and everything is fine." Fine except that he is in a wheelchair and I did not ask the reasons.

In some things they are very alike in these groups of servicemen, and I keep feeling over and over that they are so young and that there are not many of them who seem like college men. And there have been I believe more than the 12 percent of the population Negro or whatever it is. But they are very varied too. Some so bright and inquisitive, sharp and eager and full of questions. And some as stolid as oxen. But almost all of them act as though it were a real pleasure and a real surprise to them that they are here and that it is like this, so informal and frequently it turns into a stream of autographs and always a bunch of White House matches on the table have disappeared by the time the party is over.

Often they ask me what the President is doing. This time, and this is the only time, we had Bob and Tommy Adkins down and we took some pictures. And I am not sure we should have. I explained

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to them that they were for us only -- the White House -- and I must see if they are any good if some go out to the hospitals. And after a n hour I had covered all of the tables and said goodbye and went upstairs for a solid hour's work with Marilyn. Ashton has been in just for a few hours this last day or two.

And then Mr. Per came in for another comb-out while Mrs. Berg watched and learned.

I told Lyndon that I hoped he could make it by the Womens' National Democratic Club Reception in honor of us both. I was expected for sure, but he said he would come if his work permitted at the last minute.

And so began two of the most hilarious hours I have spent here. It started in orderly enough fashion -- gracious and warm and leisurely. Paula Lockhart, the President of the Club, met me at the door. And I took my place in line with her with Fishbait Miller doing the introducing. And how at just right that was. And some of the old pros like Cary Davis handling the door. And for almost an hour we shook hands with about 800 guests. There were VIPs, the Chief Justice and Mrs. Warren, Joe and Trudye Fowler, C.R. Smith -- first and one of the most faithful of the Cabinet -- Marny Clifford, Orville and Jane Freeman. And then much of my past filed in front of me. Grace Tulley, Mrs. Francis Biddle, Miss Ella Clarey with

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word about the Speaker's sister and the Library at ^{Bonham} Barnham. Glade Biffel. Toi Batchelder who had retired from the White House a year or two ago after a lifetime there. Evie Roberts, gravely ill I am told and wearing a pants suit with what I thought was a sheer spirit of bervado. And Mrs. Selma Burton, frail and very white, still with two earrings jauntily on one ear. And then Bess Porter Parmenter with her husband, looking as young and happier than she had 15 years ago. We greeted each other with a hug, and she said, "When you leave I won't have any reason to come back to Washington."

Every few minutes the press lined up taking pictures constantly, would lean over and asked me, "Is the President coming? When is he coming?" And I would say, "I don't know. I am afraid he can't make it."

Suddenly there was a flurry of noise and everybody rushed to the door and somebody said it's the President. No, it was Hubert. And he came in so tanned and jaunty with his sideburns growing a little longer and a delightful striped shirt. And Muriel looking lovely. And excited gathered around him as he made his way across the floor.

I noticed sadly that most of us looked old. But there were young ones too. The adorable bright Donna Humphrey and capable, sharp Toni Peabody. And then a Secret Service man leaned over and said,

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"The President is on his way." And almost then he walked in the door. And what happened next I do not believe could have been prevented -- my forethought planning for magic -- it was pandemonium. Paula Locker and I made a dash to meet him. The crowd surged around him, and from then on it was like a football game as we flowed, pushed, surged our way through the entrance hall, the front parlor, the receiving line room and on through the large addition where there were I heard lovely tables of buffet spread out, with hands reaching up to him from right, left and front and behind. And people clinging, clutching, calling. It was wild, it was fun. I got left way behind. Didn't mind. Finally squeezed my way through and we arrived at the front door, emerging in dignified enough manner with Paula Locker -- I leaving my coat behind, slowed our pace for final pictures, thanked Paula for the warmth and friendliness of this goodbye reception. And then collapsed in the car -- I in a near state of hysterical laughter, and not at anybody. Just at people.

Lyndon said, "Why don't you call up the Vice President and Muriel and see if they are doing anything. If not ask them to come over and eat dinner with us." So as soon as we reached the White House I did and found them and happily a little past 8:00

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they arrived. I lit the fire in the Yellow Room, and we had about 20 minutes before Lyndon joined us. They looked marvelous. This is what I have wanted and hoped for ever since the 6th of November -- just the four of us together. I promised them we would give them dinner and send them home early. It didn't work out like that.

It was a little past midnight when they left.

Before Lyndon came, Hubert said something that was so exactly like what I often think. He said, "You know, working as hard as we've done keeps us from rusting -- you and us and all of us." He said, "I kept on looking at my schoolmates and the folks I had grown up with and I kept on imagining that I looked younger and I think I felt younger. And it is good for us. We work hard but it sharpens us."

And Muriel added, "It challenges us every day."

And how superbly she has lived up to these challenges. She is so natural and candid -- a full personality, and a warm one, and more stylish and pretty than she was a few years ago.

And then Lyndon came and it was a good, good evening in front of the fire and grouped at one end of the table in the family dining room.

He spoke of Senator Fulbright having come in that morning. And he said, "I will have to admit, he was decent, considerate and

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compassionate. He said we ought to get with the Soviets and lay down our papers." They were talking about a possible ratification of the Treaty I believe.

So much still hangs fire. There is so much that is almost done and perhaps irretrievably beyond our reach. I feel a little bit like Moses.

Lyndon said, "The first letter I wrote was to Khrushchev -- four pages".

There was a great deal of talk about foreign affairs and how or whether we could work toward some better understanding with the Russians in the brief remaining weeks of this Administration. And they spoke of Nixon and the next one. And Hubert said that he had been offered the appointment to the U.N. Of course he had refused. And I believe it was Hubert who said that H. H. Mitchell is the most influential man in the Nixon entourage, and he is able.

Then they talked of the future of the Democratic Party and whether O'Brien will continue as their Chairman or get out as he had said he would. And who Hubert would pick. Lyndon told him in a quite straight-forward manner of how O'Brien had left him, his Cabinet, to work for Bobby Kennedy, and that he, Hubert, could expect him to do the same for him in the future. "Is it

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for you to do more for O'Brien than I did? Put him in the Cabinet? If he left me what do you think he will do for you when the pressure gets enough for him to go to work for Teddy?"

Hubert is trusting and gentle, and a very kindly man. He agreed with Lyndon, "But my feeling is O'Brien will stay if he wants too."

We talked of the Virgin Islands and Waverly. And Hubert coming down to lecture at the University. And I enjoyed them both immensely. We had a good dinner. And I went to bed sleepily about 12:30.