

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Monday, December 9, 1968

Page 1

My Lynda's first wedding anniversary. It was a day so full at the White House that I felt like I was going through it on roller skates. Events and groups followed so fast on each other's heels that you could have almost made a musical comedy out of it if you had had time to laugh.

At one point after my group of engineers had left a little past 6:00 and before the astronauts came at 8:00, I came upon the housekeeper, Mary Kaltman, busily applying the carpet sweeper herself at the head of the stairs, tidying up before the next event.

And best laid plans came thudding down around my ears.

In the middle of the afternoon there was a visit from Bess and Jim Ketchum with disaster written on their faces. And began before boding "We have been putting off telling you this and hoping we wouldn't have to, but we feel that you must know." So that I felt at least the Washington by Gilbert ^{Stewart} must have been stolen in the night.

But no, the problem was that one of my long-sought aims which I now thought had been brought to happy conclusion, that is the acquisition of the Madison portrait, which we were going to celebrate with a reception on Thursday afternoon. This aim so nearly achieved had floundered. It appeared the owner from whom we had bought it was in the throws of getting a divorce and had turned over the proceeds of the check for the portrait to the lady he was in love

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Monday, December 9, 1968

Page 2

with in Germany. And his wife was bringing suit, not for the picture to which she did not claim title -- at least they so assured me -- but to a portion of the proceeds. And so if we didn't want the White House mixed up in a messy front page divorce proceedings we had best quietly keep the Madison in the Curator's office and let Mrs. Nixon hang it probably next year some time when the divorce case was settled.

By the time they had finished I was greatly relieved. Apparently the house will still have the portrait. It is just that I won't get the credit.

I thought it was dear of them -- of Jim and very especially of Bess -- to care so much. And as if this weren't enough, some time during the day Liz called me with storm signals in her voice. She had asked a ^{de Huvel} Gerry Vand ~~huvel~~ to try to find out what color Mrs. Nixon's Inaugural dress would be. Gerry had just notified her it would be red.

Sometime last week I had finally made the decision on the loveliest Swatch of red wool for a coat and dress ensemble to be bought through ^{Magnin} I. Magnin. This must be canceled of course and we must start all over. And quick.

The day began early. And there was a nice picture of Lynda walking down a Hong Kong street, but the dateline said Bangkok.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Monday, December 9, 1968

Page 3

So she had reached there. But Chuck, not yet.

Bess and Carol and Marilyn and I met in the early morning on the Christmas list which had proliferated from 14 pages to 35 sometime last week and I had called an SOS, and they were making suggestions. And I asked Marilyn to feed it to me 25 or 50 a day, because I want to ^{7 9200V} save out Christmas. I want Christmas itself to be unhurried and deeply favored every moment of it.

And then a series of calls. And then finally a solid hour with Harry McPherson, going over the list of oral history names which Dr. Frantz had prepared. I had done the same thing with George Reedy on Saturday. I look to Bill Deason as my judge and assistant on Lyndon's early days -- that is up through NYA. And George through the House and the Senate. And Harry through the Vice Presidency and the Presidency, although of course there is much overlapping.

We had weighed and evaluated and scratched out many names, put a priority on some. And I think produced a much more realistic list.

I had lunch on a tray in my room alone. And then the sad but almost comical meeting with Bess and Jim. So much for five years of searching.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Monday, December 9, 1968

Page 4

And then into an afternoon dress and to the Army-Navy Club where there was a reception honoring Jane Freeman.

Liz and Marcia and Helene rode with me -- a brief stay. I stood in line with Jane and met a lot of city officials and Girl Scouts and garden club ladies and conservation workers.

She was receiving an honor from them, and I wanted to be there to add my words of praise and fondness.

And then quickly back to the White House where at 5:00 in the Yellow Oval Room I met with Alan Boyd and 35 highway engineers. They were all young men who were just completing an 18-month training program in Federal construction project offices. And they were scheduled to go out and work in different states where Federal money is being spent, to make sure it is being used according to the philosophy of the Transportation Department, which under Alan Boyd has meant building roads with some regard to esthetics, to the social problems of the people that it effects. And to start landmarks and park lands.

There was an ample tea tray set up and also drinks were passed. Sharon was with us of course. And a good deal of the hierarchy of the Bureau of Public Roads, including Mr. Frank Turner. I talked and they talked about how building roads was effecting the fact of our country. Sharon and I had planned this hopefully as a small shot-in-

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Monday, December 9, 1968

Page 5

the-arm maybe -- a sort of a last planting of a seed on my part for beautification in years to come as it would rest in the hands of these young men.

It was a pleasant exchange.

Finally I said, "Does anybody want to ask any questions?"

"Yes," said one young man. "Are you going to be sorry to leave here?"

I laughed. It always gets back what people are really interest in.

"Yes, how does it feel to be First Lady. What do you do. Will you be sorry to see it end."

It is a very personal thing. How could it not be.

After about an hour I said goodbye. And this time I laid down exhausted, getting a rub, but working at the same time -- enumerable telephone calls to Walt Rostow about Friday in Mexico, to Carol Carlisle about tonight's seating list, Leonard Marks about setting up another meeting and the agenda for the Audio-Visual Committee. And Wayne Grover. This had been the last straw today -- a shattering letter from him saying that he felt it was time he went off the payroll and would like to as of December 20th for the Library. I told him quite simply I very much hoped he would stay on until at least February 20th. I could not urge. I could only express the feeling that it would be a very much better handled project if he did stay.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Monday, December 9, 1968

Page 6

And he agreed.

I have found myself working as Lyndon so often does -- while he gets a rub or just lies in bed, reading enumerable reports, making enumerable phone calls, doing two things at once as it were.

And then at 7:00 it was time for Mr. Per to give me an up hair-do, and put on my lovely gloth of Thailand dress and go into the Yellow Oval Room to greet our honored guests.

We had asked to come upstairs Jim and Patsy Webb and six of the astronauts -- the Cunninghams, Eiseles and Schirras. These had flown the Apollo 7 in October. And the Anders, Bormans and Lovells. These men would fly on the Apollo 8 in December. And of course Jim and Patsy's children, Sarah, an attractive young woman of college age I thought. And James Webb, Jr. who is at Princeton. And his brother and sister-in-law, the Gorham Webbs.

At all these parties we try very much to have the families of those we are honoring. It adds to the meaning of the occasion to the honoree I think.

And as always with us, Muriel and Hubert, who add immeasurably to any party. And we had asked the Charles Lindberghs of whom I must admit I stood in more awe than anybody there. But he seemed to have a good time and to be quite easy. I noticed him sort of rocking backwards and forwards on his heels, listening intently to a group

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Monday, December 9, 1968

Page 7

of the astronauts. And I joined them. And we talked of the earth resources satellite -- the most exciting thing in the whole program to me.

An extraordinary group of young people these men. And versatile. It interests me the way the space program has used the Astronauts themselves as a sort of PR instrument to explain the space program to the country at all sorts of events from a harvest festival in Iowa to a dinner at the White House. There is likely to be an astronaut as a sort of an Ambassador from the space program. And they are easy, articulate, many-faceted people, those I've met.

After a drink and a little visiting and Lyndon's circling the room speaking to everyone, Liz gently gathered us up and piloted us -- that is Lyndon and I and Jim and the six astronauts and Hubert (I was the only woman in the group) into the Treaty Room. Tonight we would have a different picture. And then rather hanging back Mr. Lindbergh was being ushered into the room. I'll bet it was Liz' idea. We had set the stage earlier in the day -- and an exciting one it was. President Grant's table crossways at the end of the room with six chairs for the astronauts. And on the tables spread open the two books that are the Space Treaties signed during my husband's tenure as President. The one that says there will be no warheads on satellites in space. And the other that says that signatory nations will attempt to give aid to the astronauts downed in the wrong country or help them in any way they can.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Monday, December 9, 1968

Page 8

It takes a book of course instead of a page for these treaties for with some 50-odd signatory nations the same treaty must appear in numerable languages, and there are pages of signatures.

One treaty we had opened at a page of the text -- the most important page. The other treaty where the signatures of Dean Rusk and Sir Patrick Dean and Anatoly Dobrynin appeared.

I would like to have these treaties in this Treaty Room. They are a bit more important than those of extradition with Luxembourg dated 1888. But how do you exhibit a treaty that is indeed a book.

Lyndon and I and Jim Webb and Hubert lined up behind the astronauts -- Colonel Lindbergh standing a bit diffidently to the side. And the astronauts signed the document which began in Sandy Fox' elegant script, "On the occasion of a dinner given by President and Mrs. Johnson honoring James Webb and the Apollo astronauts". And it will be hung on the walls of the Treaty Room to join one which Jacqueline Kennedy had put there on May 21st, '63, when President Kennedy had presented awards to the astronauts, and it is signed by Gordon Cooper and Scott Carpenter and Schirra and Shepard and Gus Grissom and Donald Slayton. And a second one which I had put there in June of '65 when the first American astronaut to walk in space, Edward White, and his fellow pilot, James McDivitt

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Monday, December 9, 1968

Page 9

received an award from Lyndon and brought their families to spend the night at the White House.

And so this paper will add its bit of lore to those who come after us here.

And then we lined up behind the color guard -- Lyndon and Patsy and Jim and I -- and went down the stairs and into the East Room to receive our 140 guests who were probably the most homogeneous group ever to assemble in the White House -- certainly in our time -- because all of them were connected with space.

There were 23 astronauts and their wives. Four of the original astronauts -- the Gordon Coopers, the Walt Schirras and the Alan Shepards and the Donald Slaytons. And the widow of one of the first who had died -- Mrs. Virgil Grissom. And there were the other two widows of astronauts -- Mrs. William Canfield who had been the wife of Roger Chafee and Mrs. Edward White who had spent the night here at the White House -- that fantastic, unbelievable night after Lyndon had decorated him for being a part of the first team that had walked in space. And then they had left in the middle of the night to fly to Paris to represent this country in an aviation show. And there was the other member of the team who had walked in space -- the James McDivitts. And another important widow whose husband had been a major architect of the space program -- Mrs. Albert Thomas of

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Monday, December 9, 1968

Page 10

Houston. It was Lyndon's thoughtfulness that had added her to this list, and so right for her to be here. Her presence added to the fullness of the evening for me.

And there was all the NASA big brass. From Washington, Thomas Paine, the acting Administrator. And Dr. Ed Welsh whom we had known since our Senate days. And from Huntsville, that handsome, assured, Wernher von Braun, accompanied by his lovely wife, and radiant young daughter who somehow and rather appropriately slipped gently into the background in his colorful presence.

From Houston, Dr. Gilruth. From Cape Kennedy -- the whole host of those who I met down there, and I greeted as old friends -- especially Dr. Kurt Debus. And also the commanding General of Patrick Air Force Base, the attractive David Jones.

Of government big brass, there were few. Just the Clark Cliffords of Defense, the Mike Monroney's from the Senate, great personal friends of Jim Webbs as well as a big figure in the space program. And from the House, genial Jim Fulton and the Tiger Teagues. He has tried to get me to go to Cape Kennedy for five years. He is a very committed space man.

And there were scientists -- James VanAllen who had discovered the VanAllen belt out in the stars. And Frederick Seitz, the President of the National Academy of Sciences.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Monday, December 9, 1968

Page 11

And there were leaders from industry whose firms made the craft that the scientists designed and the astronauts flew -- J.S. McDonnell and Donald Douglas, Jr. from McDonnell-Douglas Corporation. And McKenzie of Aerojet, and Morrow of Chrysler, and Donald Rauth of Martin-Marietta, and John Atwood of North American Rockwell.

And then besides Charles Lindbergh, there were other legendary figures from the field of aviation -- Jacqueline Cockron who is our good friend as well as the outstanding woman aviatrix. And Major Alexander de Seversky.

When the last guest had filed by, I took Jim Webb's arm and skipped a little as we went down the hall which might have been an odd reaction as the great doorway framed the Inaugural stands for the Nixon Administration. They are rising day by day.

We began with oyster bisque, and ended with moon-shot jubilee. And one of the interesting moments was when Jim Webb told me that the first astronaut down the line, Colonel Aldrin, had done his thesis on the minimum amount of fuel it would take to fly from earth to rendezvous with a satellite in orbit. And years later, he had been the one who had done it.

The toasting period was probably the most unusual I remember in the White House. Lyndon loved the subject and the man he was

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Monday, December 9, 1968

Page 12

toasting. And so he was very good I thought.

And then in the end he gave the Medal of Freedom -- the Nation's highest civilian honor -- to Jim Webb who seemed absolutely floored with surprise. And Webb responded by toasting Lyndon as our great space-age leader.

And then before we could go out to have our coffee, Lyndon rose to his feet again to tell his favorite Winston Churchill story and to expand his toast to include guests who have built the giant machines. And then Astronaut Walt Schirra got up and toasted everyone including the President.

We had coffee and liqueurs in the parlors. And it was touching and very nice to me to see that the astronauts and their wives were as wide eyed in the White House and in the President's company as all of us are in looking at them.

And then we went in to see Bess' choice -- a return engagement here at the White House Jacques Offenbachs' "Voyage to the Moon". And for once I felt quite at ease in introducing it. And it turned out a delightful choice I think. There is enough youth and sense of humor and acceptance of fantasy among these unusual people to be amused by Sarah Caldwell and her Boston Opera Company doing this fairy story about Dr. Blastoff, the scientist, and the respective Kings of the earth and the moon.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Monday, December 9, 1968

Page 13

We led Hubert and Muriel and Jim and Patsy up on the stage for pictures. And then we were out in the hall, champagne being passed and everybody taking to the dance floor, the astronauts themselves and Hubert of course in the vanguard. It was one of the dancingest nights at the White House. I did not go up until 1:00. Lyndon had gone a little earlier. And I probably wouldn't have gone then except I thought I caught the Webbs with that uncertain look on their face of wondering whether it was proper to take one's departure before the First Lady had left the floor -- a most remarkable man with all his elasticity and all his versatility, having served in about four capacities in the Federal Government, each very demanding. And this last certainly a pioneering one. He still has some of the old manners, the old rules, of the best of North Carolina left in him.

And so I said goodnight and went upstairs and remembered the expression on his face when Lyndon had given him the Medal of Honor.