

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

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Wednesday, December 18, 1968

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It was another day of battering emotions and events. After I had left Lyndon's room I rested only about an hour -- unable to actually sleep. And then I got up, made ready for the day and was out in the West Hall by 9:30 to meet Carol Fortas. Just at that moment Lyndon came from his bedroom headed for the hospital, bundled up in his dark overcoat with his hat on, looking ill but very much in charge of things. And I think he was right not to go dashing off to the hospital at 4:00 in the night.

I kissed him goodbye as Carol called out a greeting and he was gone. And we talked for half an hour or so. And I told Carol my plans -- to give half of the undivided interest in my diary to the Foundation and retain half for myself which would be paid out to me in installments over say possibly five years. She thought it made sense and was quite possible and would do some estimating on the taxes of the various installments.

I called Mildred Stegall and asked her to prepare a resume of my income and taxes over about four years -- one selected before we came into the Presidency, and then three of the years since we have been in the Presidency.

Carol is at once one of the coolest and warmest people I know. And we are fortunate beyond words to have had them for friends for more than three decades now.

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Then I called Margy McNamara and told her that Lyndon had gone to the hospital. We would not be there for dinner. But oh yes, I would adore to come by, at least for a drink before dinner.

Then I made a series of calls to Earl Deathe about a projector for Luci and to John Fleming about a rare book for Lynda -- Tom Sawyer, "A Wind in the Willows", an early edition, illustrated by Mr. Shephard. A string of other calls about my many-faceted life -- J. C. Kellum and J.B. West and Diana MacArthur about Tony.

And then about 12:30 I left for Bethesda Naval Hospital. Always except once I have loved that drive. It soothes the spirit. And now as we drove past the Kennedy Cultural Center I looked up and there was the star again, and below it, oddly, the word Bethlehem. I suppose the maker of the big steel beam.

Lyndon is in the comfortable Presidential suite. He was just lying there. In fact, that is what he did all day -- and for a couple of days -- not talking, not reacting to anything -- a very untypical posture for Lyndon and the measure of how sick he was.

During the day his fever went up and down. It was as high as 103.6 once I think.

I went into the bedroom reserved for me and gratefully, blissfully, went to sleep and slept two hours.

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A little past 4:00 I returned to the White House, said goodbye to the Tippetts over a cup of tea in the West Hall, told Tony a little bit about the party we were having downstairs for the underprivileged children -- 200 of them from Junior Village, and 50 from the Southwest area. It's just the sort of thing he would adore coming to watch. But I told him no adults were invited except Santa Claus. This party is always happy pandemonium. And he moves so uncertainly on his cane -- Martianna to help him.

And then I summoned up a big smile to go with my Christmas red wool dress and went down stairs to the East Room just in time to see the finale of the Wizard of Oz -- all those delightful characters lined up on the stage -- Dorothy and the scare crow and the tin man in his marvelous costume and the cowardly lion and the wicked witch of the West looking very fierce. It was a precious sight -- good theatre to a good audience.

The children were all sitting forward in their chairs, and many of them had moved down and sat on the floor right up close to the stage or even on the steps mounting to the stage.

I made my way among them, waving at Walter and Mrs. Washington and their cute little granddaughter, little Elaine Jewels Roset, in an adorable Christmas dress -- probably straight from Paris -- glimpsed

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Luci across the room in conversation with a group of children and holding Patrick Lyn in her arms. She had welcomed the children and introduced the show, standing in as hostess for me. She has a rare and wonderful talent for this. And I must give to this House credit as one of her teachers, for developing her sense of responsibility and her generous grace with crowds.

Up on the stage I thanked all the cast for the pleasure they had given the children. And there were pictures. And then I led the way to the State Dining Room, gathering three or four little guests along the way. And there were the familiar little low tables and tiny chairs with about 10 guests at each, ranging from five to eleven years old. And all these Junior Village children are so well behaved. It says something to us, and not a popular something these days. But they are disciplined and they are well behaved.

Luci had Patrick on her lap, who was hostess at one of the tables. And I at another, and began to strike up a conversation -- "What's your name? What grade are you in? I'll pass these cookies over here and would you over yonder pass that plate full? And tell me, which one did you like best?"

They were as varied and different as any other group of children. From one I could barely elicit any response -- just a shake of the head and a vacant stare. And another's eyes were sparkling and excited

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sentences were tumbling out. Several of them wanted to know about the President. "Where's Johnson?", said one. Probably 80 percent were Negroes. All were dressed up. You could see an effort had been made. There were bright little red bowties on the boys. And lots of the girls in red or green frilly Christmas dresses.

The tin man and the scare crow and the cowardly lion and Dorothy and the wicked witch -- all those delightful characters -- made their way from table to table to the excited squeals of the little guests. And there were a bevy of our young hostesses on hand -- children of the staff usually. I am sure their first and most frequent duty was to escort the young ones to the bathroom.

This is one of my favorite parties in this house -- our fifth and last one -- all beautifully planned by Bess.

I stayed only about 30 minutes. And waving goodbye and Merry Christmas before Sandy Fox, the Santa Clause, made his entry as the star of the occasion.

I left the field to Luci -- the perfect hostess for this party -- and went upstairs to the Yellow Oval Room to my Reception for the photo lab personnel. These were the people from Okie's shop who have produced our marvelous collection of stills -- the best I believe that any President has had -- an historical record without parallel.

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But, alas, the boss was not there. Okie was sick with the flu.

His wife was one of the first I greeted. Most of them I had to be introduced to, though I see their work every day I do not know them as I do Tommy Adkins and Bob Knudson.

Once more there were bars in the hall and hot hors d'oeuvres being passed. And there was a guide standing by to take them to the Queens' Room and the Treaty Room and the Lincoln Room.

I went from group to group expressing my appreciation and my feeling that we had all shared in producing something that history would find very exciting.

And then I described something of how the Johnsons had lived in and enjoyed this lovely Yellow Oval Room which they had produced so many times in photographs, and which none of the wives had seen and many of them had not since they are the laboratory workers.

Mr. Per was waiting to give me a comb-out. I slipped into the blue dress that I had worn to Lynda's wedding and left a little before 8:00 to go to the McNamara's to the dinner that had been planned in honor of Lyndon -- feeling for once actually sorry for him, for this was going to be his night. Last night had been at the Negro officials' Reception, and he had enjoyed it. And I looked forward to him enjoying tonight too, because this Cabinet that he works with is a

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wonderful assemblage of men. And I felt there would be a warm and intimate atmosphere. And some words of shared troubles and triumphs that would be good for him to hear. And now he was going to miss it.

We drove down Tracey Place and the car came to a halt. And I got out and went up to the door thinking isn't it funny, I've been to two parties at this house for my two marrying daughters and stood at that door for photographs, not to mention several arrivals at parties. And somehow it doesn't look like I remembered it. But such was my faith in the Secret Service that I never questioned it. I knocked on the door. Presently a butler opened it. I went in and stared into a hall that I had never seen before. No picture, no piece of furniture, no face. The butler and I stared at each other in growing confusion, and in a moment I summoned, "Is this the McNamara's house?" No, Mam~~e~~. "please excuse me." And swiftly I went out the door.

Well, it must have provided an interesting note for the guests whoever they were at that house that night. And we went on down the street about a half a block -- my driver and Agent much chagrined. And we walked in to be greeted by Margy and Bob, the hosts, and most of Lyndon's Cabinet at a warm and lively party.

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Most everybody was there -- Dean and Virginia Rusk, Henry Fowler and Clark Clifford. But without Trudye and Marny. Margy told me she had had three cancellations this morning. For instance the Celebrezzes had been coming. And I haven't seen them in years. And how I would adore it. The flu is taking its toll everywhere. And the Nick Katzenbachs -- who used to be Attorney General -- and tall Ramsey Clark, standing quietly in the background, indeed one of the most interesting and difficult to understand members of the Cabinet.

And there were Larry O'Brien and Elva who came up to me and said, "Remember me to the President." I said, "I will". And Marvin Watson with lovely Marian, looking -- or was it my imagination -- not quite one of this crowd yet, but nevertheless a deep inter-assurance and poise.

And those other two who have been members of the Cabinet along with Dean Rusk since it began in '61 -- Stew Udall, with a bubbling Lee. And Orville and Jane Freeman to whom I naturally gravitate -- we just seem to have more to talk about. Both my liking and my respect are deep.

I did not see C. R. Smith. But John Connor was there with Mary. Once more affluently ensconced in the business world. But Mary at



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least took an affectionate backward look over her shoulder at their Cabinet days. I always remember him as the best dancer of the Cabinet. And Bill Wirtz and Jane. And the Wilbur Cohens -- wonderful people. Every Government should have some Wilbur Cohens in it. And handsome, romantic John Gardner -- a little elough about Areta. She is ill he said. And Bob Weaver without Ella. And Bob seemed the most pleased man in the group. It was he, it turned out, who had had a sizeable hand in planning last night's activity for Lyndon. He was so happy that it had taken place, that Lyndon had come, and had so obviously enjoyed it.

And there were other Cabinet members -- the John Gronouskis for whom I have an extraordinary respect and liking. She was in black evening pants and looking very attractive. No, she hadn't learned any Polish -- just too hard. And yes, sometimes they had felt that they had made friends. And then the curtain would come down and people wouldn't invite them anywhere and wouldn't see them for days or weeks. And then a cycle of friendliness would open up again.

And the handsome young Trowbridges.

And perhaps those I was gldest to see -- Martha and Luther Hodges. Luther, full of all his activities -- on the board of this, traveling for that, helping to run the research triangle in some way --

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a very happy retired man. And that word is surely in quotes. Martha looking not quite so well. I told her I was coming to Chapel Hill to see my good friend, Emily Crow Selden sometime. And she said, "Well, now you have two reasons to come."

We all had drinks and made our way through the crowd. And everybody -- everybody -- had plenty to say to everybody else. There is nothing like having worked together -- hard and long and in a great common cause to produce comradeship.

That most ebullient man, Hubert Humphrey, is grounded in Arizona with the flu. And Muriel, I think one of the most attractive and well loved. And every day of the last eight years it seems to me she has grown. And especially in the pressure cooker of a campaign.

A group was talking about the election. John Connor said he could sum up his feelings about the whole thing in one word -- "Damn". Actually, he credited this marvelous summary to a story about Muriel in TIME. It could be most perfectly ~~be~~ used about a lot of us I think.

Two of Bob and Margy's children were hovering in the door -- Craig, tall and handsome with sideburns, so grown up. I hardly remembered him. And Margy I believe it was (I get the girls mixed.

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up) darling and as short-skirted as Luci.

Lidia Katzenbach had on a long, sleeky evening pants, and looked as though she had always been meant to wear them with that exotic eye makeup and that piled up hair. I always wondered how she managed to make 8:00 a.m. car pools or putting on that first pot of coffee in the morning.

Margy knew of course that I was not staying for dinner. And so after about a delightful half hour, Bob knocked on something and asked Dean to get up and say a few words. He was magnificent. First, some graceful words to all the ladies of the Cabinet. And then a reference to him addressing all of them as friends and recalling how surprising it is in the context of history that after these tempestuous years they could honestly, all of them, address each other as friends. I think it is well said. One of the many unusual features of this unusual Cabinet is that they have not had any inpublic knock-down, drag outs and not any inprivate ones, that I know about. They really work together.

And then he said, "Years from now our children and their grandchildren will be proud to say, 'they served in the Cabinet of Lyndon Johnson'". A brief resume of these years of struggle and achievement, the void of sentimentality but loaded with feeling. And oh how I wished Lyndon had been there. I have had my nights. I have

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had so many nights. So many people have been so much too generous to me -- all these sayings of goodbye -- the press, the Beautification Committee. But this was supposed to be his night.

And then Dean handed me for Lyndon a package. Bob told me it was a silver tray with everybody's signature and an inscription.

And then Joe Fowler got up and delivered one of the most humorous delightful but markedly longer talks addressed to the service and the personality of Hubert Humphrey and handed to Muriel another silver tray.

I responded very briefly, but very affectionately. And Muriel was without doubt the feminine star of the evening -- her little talk so spontaneous and humorous -- even in defeat. This ordeal has been good for them.

And then at nearly 9:00 I said goodbye to everybody, with many hugs here and there. And I was out the door and hurrying back to the White House to a very necessary and very tough meeting.

Jim Cain was supposed to have arrived about 7:00. His plane was delayed. But he was there when I got back in the West Hall. And I called Diana and Martianna from the White House theatre. Actually there was no sensible and respectful way to keep Tony from being present. And after all it was his life we were trying to

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decide about. So presently he and Donald joined us. Dr. <sup>Voss</sup> Vauss was there. Tony sat silently in the chair with considerable dignity and composure. I was proud of him.

Jim Cain took the lead -- explained of how they had gone over all the pictures and all the tests. And he felt it was one of three things -- either subdural bleeding resulting from the fall which had formed clots under the skull and could be removed. Or it was a tumor which was benign. Or -- and this was the one that struck a chill to every heart -- it was a tumor which had spread from other parts of the body. He did not use the word "malignant". He did not need to. And he said he felt very sure that we should set about having the most complete tests without delay. And that he felt the place to do it was at Mayos. Then he launched into the fact that certainly there were very good doctors -- excellent men -- here in Washington. And he recognized the desirability of having one's family present. It was simply that he could not offer any help, any putting everything together, any degree of management here. And that is what he could and would do at Mayos if he decided to come there. At every point, Dr. <sup>Voss</sup> ~~Vauss~~ put in his word.

At one point Tony said, "Yes, yes, we will do it. But I must go home. I'll go home tomorrow." And this was so painful to hear.

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Somewhat to my surprise it was Donald and not Martianna that gave immediate voice to the family thoughts -- that no, there was no point in going home, he was already this far along the way, that Christmas and business and nothing was as important as going on and having the most thorough tests to determine what this was and then operating if operating is what must be done.

Dr. <sup>Voss</sup>~~Voss~~ was relatively quiet. But at every point expressed himself firmly and in general agreement with what Jim Cain said. And Martianna strong and comforting, very feminine but very firm. What a blessing she has been to his life.

I was surprised to see that Jim Cain to be so aggressive, so persuasive -- the deadly seriousness of it, exsensual rather than veiled by his calm manner.

Tony listened. His face crumpled rather, but rather manly. And at one point he said, "Well, I put myself in your hands." I looked at him and thought of all those hikes into the wilderness we hadn't had. And we hadn't really gotten around to seeing the Golden Aspen in September -- quiet-like that is. And all those trips we had planned down into Mexico, discovering its far corners. The one week we had had back in '63 had just been prelude we said. To come face to face with a crisis like this shakes your sense of values into their proper perspective. How unimportant whether we would have

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three servants or four. Or that we dial our own phone calls rather than have a switchboard in the future.

Finally it was agreed almost that Tony would leave the next day with Maftianna for Mayos. Joe himself was returning at 5:00 and there were two planes. And we at least could help on getting the impossible reservations.

And so at 10:00 I left the White House and returned to my own sick husband at the hospital. Thank God -- sick with a minor illness. All of their listenings to his chest had reassured them no pneumonia. That was what had been in their minds this early morning at 2:00 and 4:00.

And so exhausted I went to bed at 11:00. But not even this was the end of the day.

Sometime in the middle of the night I woke up with one of those strange attacks of violent stomach aches -- muscle spasms. I suppose it is just my <sup>Achilles' heel</sup> ~~achilles~~ heel (2). And when there have been enough troubles -- mental or physical -- one's body finally presents the bill in some way.

I tottered to the bathroom for some medicine. And then I phoned the nurse. And then lying flat on my back on the bed I think I fainted. I remember vaguely the nurse and the corpsman and finally the

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doctor and a shot. And then after a while the pain abated and  
blissfully I went to sleep.