

MEMORANDUM

WHD
THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, December 24, 1968

Page 1

Christmas Eve of '68. It was the nicest day of the Christmas to me. I had decided just the day before to gather together some close friends -- quite informally -- for open house from 4:00 to 7:00 this afternoon.

I spent all the morning winding up the endless and enslaving list of pictures, books and engravings that I was autographing for friends and family and staff. And finally I opened up my heart to the Christmas spirit. The house was beautiful. It was a time of frost patterns on the window panes. I love especially to stop by the entrance to the Yellow Room and look at that great central window and the Nation's Christmas tree framed through the frost patterns, and if you move a little bit there is that Washington Monument. And it is the time of smelling evergreens. They welcome you the minute you step in the door down at the Diplomatic Reception Room. And holly everywhere throughout the house, around the great light fixtures, huge bowls of it on the tables. And deep within me -- and millions I think -- there was a feeling that at the end of this most awful year, there were a lot of things that had come out right. A story that said unemployment was at a 15 year low. And the Pueblo men were at home. And the great glory of achievement of our three astronauts flying around the moon. And for me quite personally the word from Mayos that Tony was successfully over his brain.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, December 24, 1963

Page 2

surgery and had been the least of the three dreadful things that faced him. And Zephyr's husband, though very sick, was getting better. And a call from Liz said that Les was well enough so that they were flying to Texas and on down to Acapulco to get some sun. And Lyndon of course home from the hospital and just about all right. Why do I put him last? Because I always expect him to come out of everything -- to survive all assaults. So it was a time of deep joy and thanksgiving and a sort of reassessment of values. Never was a party at the White House put together so quickly and informally. I made many calls myself -- to Charlie Boatner. Both we and the Alexanders would enjoy seeing him and Alice and any of their children that were in town. And the Bill Whites. I asked everyone to bring any children or grandchildren that were visiting. And Bill Deason and Dr. George Davis and his new wife. And Buzz and Juanita to bring her mother. And some of the members of the Texas delegation -- Jake and Jim Wright and John Young. And Ray Roberts whose old NYA days and days of being our perennial border I do not forget. And a little of the windup business, like discussing with Larry Temple Zephyr's pension. It is about worked out and will be by the time we walk out of here.

And then off to Mr. Per's for a hair-do. And at 4:00 I was down on the first floor in my garnet red velvet dress with the ruffles that

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, December 24, 1968

Page 3

frames the face. And every fire was burning. And the spirit of Christmas and old friends and real joy was as strong as I have felt it in my time here.

Bill and June and their married daughter -- the Holdorfs -- and their other daughter were the first to arrive, which gave me a chance go visit with them. And then the Charlie Boatners with their young son, now a dentist. And pretty soon, Dr. Janet Travell with her husband and daughter who is a singer with her Italian husband and darling little boy named Mark Antonio.

Lynda Bird came early and stayed late, bringing miss Lucinda in her carriage dressed like a princess with a little white fox fur on her jacket. I think it was a ^{Dir}~~deer~~ dress. And she received in the Red Room and the Blue Room with the Christmas tree and the Green Room and up and down the great hall giving most of us an impassive Buddhist stare -- so Lynda describes it. But I tell her her husband will have seen enough Buddhist to last him a lifetime -- so not mention it to him.

And there were Dale and Scooter Miller, with Dale, Jr. back from the Peace Corps, and Meed, both handsome, long-haired with side-burns -- very much the young men of '68. And Stu and Marta who is just about going to last the course here. She will stay with us til the end. And then her baby is due in February.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, December 24, 1968

Page 4

Early arrivals and ones I much love to see were Earl and Sarah Clements -- she looking quite fragile and lovely. They took their seat on the sofa in the Red Room, and I visited with them quietly.

Luci and Patrick Lyn made their appearance presently -- with Lyn the center of all our friends' exclamations and interests. She had invited Dr. and Mrs. Kraskin. I've urged both the girls to think of everyone they wanted. And Lynda Bird had her baby doctor -- Captain Lonegan with his wife and five children. And the friends of her other life, the military one, General Walt with his daughter, General and Mrs. Chapman and their children and General and Mrs. VanRisen with children and sister. And Mike Howard who is as close to her as a brother, with his wife and daughter. And Willie Day whom she never forgets. And for that I love her all the more. And Pearl Mesta who has been dear to Lynda. She looked very festive in her velvet dress with rhine/stones. But also a little sad, speaking of this as the last time she would see the White House. I remembered that she had been for Nixon after Lyndon did not win the nomination in '60. Yes, true, but after the things she had said about him on television a night or so ago, she didn't figure he would ask her. Well, I like all the world, will be interested to see who does come.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, December 24, 1968

Page 5

Finally Lucia and Birge came and Becky -- her husband was out shopping and she did not venture to bring Lucia Jane down. And it was 5:00 when Lyndon came.

He has not returned to robust strength -- it is slow. This is a depleting illness.

There was a table in the State Dining Room decorated with holly -- coffee and fruitcake at one end, a great bowl of egg nog at the other and punch for youngsters.

Pretty Andre~~x~~ Lindow and Lester were there with Helene helping out as always. I mentioned to her and to a dozen or so more that our two portraits were on view on the second floor in the East Hall and I would love for anyone to go up and look that wanted to. And I think nearly everyone did.

Marilyn had come with her nice husband, David. And Mary Rather and Marie. But Mildred Stegall was in Texas. And Bill and Jeannie Deason with his Patrick Lyndon and their Diane back from college. A guest whom we met with very great interest was Dr. George Davis' new wife -- pretty, gentle, middle-aged. How nice to think of him not being lonesome. And Buzz without Mary Vee who has the flu and three of their children. Quite a group of the Texas delegation. Jake with Peggy and her husband. Jake carrying on his shoulder his granddaughter named Bergen in a Santa Claus suit. She is only

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, December 24, 1968

Page 6

three months old. And she had the biggest smile like she understood everything that was going on. It was an hilarious sight really. Babies of two months, three months, five years, on up to friends of 80, -- as pleasant a picture as these State rooms have seen I think.

And there were Jim and Mary Wright with three of their children. And the John Youngs with five of theirs. And Ray and Elizabeth Roberts. And Juanita Roberts with her mother. And a really Christmas like entrance was the Hale Boggs -- 15 in all -- Hale and Lindy looking rested and wonderful after their grueling campaign a vacation trip that must have done them good. And children, brothers, sisters, aunts -- all whom we had met before at Boggs' weddings or the big lawn parties -- including one Priest, Father Robert Boggs -- and Koki with her new baby, two or three months old. It was just the sort of thing I love to do. If one of my children goes to New Orleans as a young single girl somewhat in need of a chaperon it is with Lindy that she stays or with some of the Boggs family. If there is an arduous campaign, some of the Boggs are always the first volunteers. And if there is a "Whistle Stop" or any sort of trip, there is a Boggs advance man or advance woman. So this was a particularly sweet part of Christmas for me.

Everybody enjoyed the decorations -- the great tree in the Blue Room and the lovely creche in the East Room. And returned for more

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, December 24, 1968

Page 7

egg nog or sat by the fire with somebody they hadn't seen in a while. Or went upstairs to see the portraits.

And finally, about 7:00, they began to drift away to other parties or home to their own Christmas tree. And presently a small group of us found ourselves sitting by the fire in the Red Room -- Lyndon and I and Bess and Tyler Abell who was just in from shopping at Tiffanys for Bess' Christmas present and their two boys Lindo and Danny. And Lynda Bird and Father Keifer and Mary Rather. And Lyndon was in a mellow reminiscent mood and talked to Tyler and the room in general about how capable and imaginative and fast and calm under all crises Bess was. And there couldn't have been a Christmas gift I would like better for myself except having the Clements there to hear it too. And it was one of those nice moments in the White House to remember.

And then all except the family left and we went upstairs to the Yellow Room where the red velvet stockings -- now eight -- hung from the mantel and my sentimental Lynda had put the small gifts for Christmas morning in them. And everybody came in -- Lucia and Berge and Becky and David and Lucia Jane, Lynda and Lucinda and Miss Glasf^el, up from her sick bed, and Luci and Patrick Lyn in a very silent, shy argor. And Marie of course. She is staying with us because all her roommates have left for Christmas and she is alone

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, December 24, 1968

Page 9

reminiscent of Botticelli. And a handsome Jeffrey Beane ensemble from Lyndon that looked like it was heading for Acapulco. And the promise of buying the White House Christmas tree decorations as a gift to the Johnson Library. And another of my favorite things was a handmade olive green bridge table cover from Jan Sanders. And Lucia in her typical manner, gave me a small antique coffee cup that said, "Merry Christmas" with some quaint little figures on it. It had stood on Mrs. Johnson's shelf and had been used by her at Christmastime. Now we were to use it at the Ranch and eventually put it in the Boyhood Home.

The floor was soon knee-deep in wrappings which Patrick Lyn was enjoying just as much as his toys. Lucinda watched us all from her baby carriage. And the room was a pretty sight. Luci in her mole velvet lounging pajamas. And I feeling elegant in the blue caftan trimmed in gold that Jane had given me. And Lynda Bird regal in the peach brocaded with silver that her father gave her for Christmas. As soon as he gives you something he can't wait until you wear it.

But predictably the character that put us all into hysterics was Patrick Lyn who had been hugging Lucia Jane ever since she arrived following her around. And he tries to climb up onto the baby buggy to look at Lucinda; whenever she is in somebody's lap, he stares at

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, December 24, 1968

Page 8

in that big house in Georgetown. And my patriarchal husband gathers in all of his girls when they need it. And we made Mary stay. Her children are gone to Texas.

Our own Christmas tree was covered with ice cycles and snow flakes and gingerbread men, little toy drummers, strings of popcorn (real) and cranberries (not real) and topped with a star that had been on FDR's tree back in the early 1940's. It was beautiful. And I purred with a sense of completion that any hostess has when she surveys the room and everything is perfect.

I appointed David and Berge as Santa Claus, and they began to take the gifts off the beautiful tree, called out the names. And then everybody would stop to see how Patrick Lyn and Lucia Jane would react when they opened a package that we had given them. I certainly stopped when Lyndon opened the water color by Madame Shoumatoff of Luci -- my gift to him. She is dainty, quaint, terrificly feminine. And it brought forth all the exclamations I thought it was due. I had a very mod, big-faced watch from Luci. She gave her daddy a year book -- I think '28 or '29 -- from San Marcos that she had found soddened and battered in his mother's decaying old garage. She had had it restored. And something that delighted my heart was a painting by Fugeta that Mary Lasker gave me -- delicate, charming, rather

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, December 24, 1968

Page 10

her big-eyed and pokes her with his little finger. Now, he began to climb on the underpinnings of her baby buggy and was soon doing a regular trapeze act there. In and out and spinning above the floor while we all collapsed in our chairs with laughter.

Sometime during the pandemonium Charles and Jane Engelhart called just to wish us a Merry Christmas. And about 9:00 with many packages still stacked up in our own little individual piles unopened, we called a halt and went to the family dining room, loaded our plates at the buffet -- Olga and Miss Glasel joined us and of course Marie and Mary. And we ate heartily and wearily and had an early bedtime. But not before we had talked to Patrick and Chuck. We had put in a call for them sometime earlier. We reached them together right after our dinner. Patrick had gone up to where Chuck is stationed to spend Christmas with him.

Lyndon and I and Lynda and Luci took turns talking, and both the babies were put close to the phone and made noises. And it was happy nonsense, but their voices -- the boys' -- sounded reassured, strong and natural and good. And so we had an early bedtime, wrapped in that warming sense of family and Christmas and Tony's return from the black edge and better days to come.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, December 24, 1968

Page 11

I went to sleep reading one of my birthday presents -- Helen
Hayes' "Reflections".