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WHITE HOUSE DIARY TAPES

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Tuesday, New Year's Eve at the Ranch was dreary and cold. An ominous headline for the world. With the renewed fighting in the Near East, the U.N. is about to censure the Israelis for an attack on Lebanon, and I pray that any crisis will hold off another twenty days. And for the country, an interesting headline. Senator Teddy Kennedy will fight Russell Long for the job of Senate whip.

Lyndon is not waiting for the New Year. Ever since we arrived on the twenty-seventh, he has been swimming a long way each morning, more than twenty round trips, with Marie, his faithful companion. Afterwards I'd join him, and the three of us walk fast for a mile to the gate down past the family graveyard. And this morning we were heavily bundled up against the biting wind. The country is gray and sere. The only splash of color the small pilot [?] down by the river close to the Lutheran Church. This is the time I shall want to travel in years to come. After Christmas and in January and February, perhaps into mid-March, and then it will be hard to leave the Ranch until perhaps the deep middle of the summer.

The book on aerobics directs you I think to walk that mile in about thirteen minutes. Alas, sixteen is about as good as we can do. I'd much rather stop to see if that is a kingfisher skipping across the water and where that squirrel is going up a tree and think what I'd like to plant by the entrance to the Ranch than to jog breathlessly against the second hand on the watch.

We got in the car and drove over to the Truesdells, where we had a cup of coffee, and then swiftly back to the airport to meet David Kennedy, who is the secretary-designate of the Treasury. He's a solid, gray-haired man, important looking, and affable enough, almost exactly like he ought to somehow for the Nixon cabinet. As we drove back to the house he said to me, "You know, my wife always speaks mighty highly of you. You certainly were a good first lady. Yes-sir, you did a good job of being first lady." And then rather self-consciously, "Of course you still are." Oh, how quickly titles and power evaporate.

I worked for an hour while he and Lyndon talked, and then we went in for a rather early lunch, Lyndon and Mr. Kennedy and Tom Johnson and Jim and Olivia Jones and Marie Fehmer and I. Afterwards I made a long series of calls about the Library and the park across the river and my own office business, [inaudible] to Mary Lasker to thank her for my lovely pajuda that sits on an easel on my dresser.

The solstice has passed and the days are getting longer by ever so little. Nevertheless, it gives me a lift of spirits. There is something in me attuned to the weather, long days and bright sunlight are life and short days and the grays of winter are old days and the approach of death. So my spirits began an ascent even in late December.

To catch the last of the evening I went riding and caught up with Lyndon and Marie on the radio. We drove in companionable silence and then stopped at the Malechek house, where they were just sitting down to supper with the kitchen full of children and the signs of Christmas. They were having chili and hot tamales. Lyndon had a sample and then another and

presently he was eating his dinner. They're such a good family, the Malecheks, and the pleasure of owning a place like this is entirely in proportion to the quality of the people who run it for you, who staff it for you. And so we realize we are lucky.

Back at the house there was an interval before it was time to go to the Krims for their New Year's Eve party. So I diligently did my exercises, the third or fourth night I've done them since we came down from Washington, aghast at how stiff I had become in the several months since I left them off, disdainful of the encroachments of the years and confident that I can one more time emerge supple and fairly slim. And then I indulged myself in "Gunsmoke," and next got up and put on my deep garnet velvet holiday dress and Lyndon and I helicoptered over to the Krims, stopping to pick up Mariallen and Mary Moursund and Jesse Hunter. A. W. is still sick in bed with a very bad case of Hong Kong flu.

A little past ten we arrived at the Krims, settling down on the hillside that might have been entirely remote from civilization, so carefully had they placed their house away from roads and people. And walked into one of the most delightful parties of the whole year of 1968. What makes a good party? In part, it is a sort of pervasive good will that flows between the hosts and the guests, and a sense of excitement, a high singing feeling that this is a rare and special occasion. It's fragile, it won't last long, let's enjoy it, and then a setting of charm and warmth, and good food and drink I know is a part of the mix, and a chance to move from group to group for reminiscence or serious conversation. And before the evening was over there was dancing to the piano music of an eighty-one

year old German with a curly white mustache and an alpine cap and a vest that was covered with medals. He played all the old favorites like "Carolina Moon" and "Let Me Call You Sweetheart."

Everybody explored the presidential suite. There was a fire going there and everybody was enchanted by Mathilde's handiwork. And in the firelit main living room, about forty of us talked and danced and mingled with ease. Mathilde brought out some hats and it was hilarious to look around and see Don Thomas with hair grown longer with ducktails in the back, wearing a small black derby that gave him an extraordinary roughish look, and the same on Roy White, almost as though he was saying "I will be young and bet on those racehorses." Jesse was there with Olga, his favorite widow, with Billy and Mary Love Bailey and both the Max Brookses, she full of her trip to Russia and her experiences in Paris at the cultural meeting of UNESCO. I was delighted that they had invited the young Tom Johnsons, because I want them to know everyone we know in Austin and a lot of the young people to boot. And in a manner so typical of Arthur and Mathilde, they had arranged that Lessie, the maid that they share with Luci, appeared in a smart and charming dress, as proud and happy as any of the guests. Her children and Mary's children were standing around the edge of the room, helping some I'm sure, but ushering in the new year along with all of us.

I had a very interesting snatch of conversation with Joe Mashman, who had made a recent trip to India and another to Israel to demonstrate to their defense departments the new helicopters of his company. He described the different approaches of the military personnel in each country. The

Indians, full of the British tradition, a bit stiff and proper and aware of titles. The colonel who drove him in the jeep over the narrow winding roads to where the demonstration was going to take place stayed on the road while the huge, heavily loaded lorries as they approached, no doubt driven by a sergeant, took to the ditch. In Israel the officials he met, even the high military, were likely to be quite young, upper thirties or forties, very much in a hurry, aggressive, gung ho, reaching for the future.

When the hour of twelve struck, we all sang "Auld Lang Syne" and gathered in a sort of circle and looked around at each other for the depth of feeling about the year passed and the year to come, and the magic of the moment, and no doubt each with our separate gratitude. We had so much fun that it was close to one when we left. And so we began the year 1969 on a gay note and a late hour at the LBJ Ranch.