

Saturday, January 4, 1969

Page One

Our first full day back in the White House on the last lap! I usually feel vigorous when we first return from the Ranch and I tackle my desk. This morning I had a brief conference with Abe and then saw Harry Middleton in the Yellow Oval Room about our films, a never-ending project. And then on into the Treaty Room for our last meeting of the Audio-Visual Committee. I think when this is over I want to declare a long moratorium on several words-- "last," "historic," "feel," would be among them. Everybody was there except Frank Stanton who's in Europe. Dr. Grover, and Jack Valenti and Leonard Marks, the personnel of the Library--Chester Newland, Bill Duncan and Gary Yarrington--and from Lyndon's staff Dorothy Territo, Juanita, and Harry Middleton on whom we have come to depend more and more.

The dominant question was the short movies. "Space" is under way, Leonard reported. He read us a letter from [John] Secondari, the gist of which was it's practically impossible to do a film on Conservation in eight or ten minutes. He used a line which he may rue, something to the effect that it would cost no more to do a thirty minute film than it would a ten minute film. So we all decided to ask Leonard to go back to him and explore the possibility of doing a thirty minute film which could be broken into three parts--if the cost wasn't excessively more, do it that way. And then because we all remembered with admiration the Guggenheim films, we asked Leonard

Saturday, January 4, 1969

Page 2

to see if Guggenheim were available and interested in doing one of the subjects. We brought up Education and Civil Rights and decided on the latter as being more simpatico to him. Then we faced up to the hard problem of our actual cabinet installations which must be decided very soon. Dorothy said that Max [Brooks] would be in town on Tuesday. I suggested that we have another meeting on Tuesday and herein lies the danger of the use of that word, "last," because the upshot was that we asked Dorothy to plan and get on the road a meeting for Tuesday with Max, Bunshaft, Drexler and all the rest of us. And then we discussed when we should meet again and decided sometime in March, probably late in March. Meanwhile the court reporter had been busily clattering away and the quiet kindly White House butlers, those geni who will go back in the bottle in sixteen more days, were circling the room with coffee and finger sandwiches and cookies. About twelve-thirty everybody else went down to see "The President's House" in the theater. But since I have seen the uncorrected work print, I went back to my desk and worked with Marilyn on the stack of windup things that are to be done--pictures ordered for the last two State Dinners, pictures to be signed for other events, reams of Christmas thank you letters. And I called Mrs. Winthrop Rockefeller to thank her for her wonderful invitation to come out to Palm Springs in February, to say that we probably would sometime between the first and tenth for a week, and tried to reach the Nelson Rockefellers to invite them for our last weekend at Camp David--there goes that word again--next Saturday, the

11th. Going back downstairs for a minute I heard glowing reports on what they thought about "The President's House"--the praising centers on me and an enthusiastic flood on Lyndon. They all wished it could be taken out, his part, and used in some separate way in the Library or on TV.

I spent the afternoon working and calling, pictures, the party this afternoon so hastily put together to show our portraits to some good friends, still calling as late as three o'clock. It had been a planned decision on my part to leave the Christmas decorations up, the evergreen trees in the Great Hall, and the columns wrapped with ropes of balsam, the holly on the chandeliers and the great tree in the Blue Room, and upstairs in our hall the pots of poinsettias from friends, lovely ones from the Freemans, and our own Christmas tree in the Yellow Room topped with the FDR star. "The Twelfth Day of Christmas" doesn't come until Monday and I love walking through the halls and looking at them and smelling the evergreens and yet this year all eyes are ahead--that is the way the action points. Nostalgia and backward looks and clinging are out. Nevertheless I had left them up, I liked them, so there it is.

It was deliberately an early party, six to eight. Mr. Per came and gave me a comb-out and I put on one of my most festive dresses and asked Carol to send up the first comers so that I could savor every moment of the evening. They were very special, these guests--from the Senate, the Birch Bayhs, the Danny Inouyes and Scoop Jackson without

Saturday, January 4, 1969

Page 4

his pretty wife who's in Seattle, Mike and Mary Ellen Monroney, John and Ivo Sparkman, John and Coy Stennis, and the still handsome Stu Symington with Evie--I congratulated them on Jimmy's being in the House, and Loraine McGee, very tan, without Gale, who's off making a speech. And from the Court, there were our life-long friends, Abe and Carol, and Bill Douglas and Cathy--and I must confess looking at him was a pang, and later when I kissed him goodbye at the elevator there was, I think, a deep note of sadness and many memories for us both, and my vigorous disagreement with some of his later decisions does not really erase it. And dear Tom Clark looking in bouncy good health, one of the most genuinely at-peace men I know. Madame Shoumatoff came in and she was indeed in a way the guest of honor this evening. She wears her considerable years lightly and her conversation is bright and spicy. She was accompanied by a plalanx of relatives, the Burton Bosseys, Alexander, a grandson, and Antoni Shoumatoff, a granddaughter, and her son, Nicholas and his wife. It was a good day for cupid with Betty Beale there and her new fiance, whom we all liked immediately. And Wright Patman and his wife, such a pretty woman, and both of them beaming. And beaming Dick Helms with his new red-haired wife. He's come to be one of my favorites in this last year or so. But there was a sad moment too for Rosemary Smathers. She spoke of George and of her sons and of continuing to live in Washington for a year or so, but in true female fashion I could not help thinking with a pang of times past. And there were old friends, the Jim Rows and Tom Corcoran with

his daughter Margaret Josephine, looking prettier than I had ever seen her; and Phillip and Mertie Baldwin whom I introduced to everybody as the grandson of the doctor who had delivered me. And from the House there were the Jack Brooks, and the Bob Poages. It is interesting how at times like this one breaks through normal barriers of civilities and expresses real feelings and they were sad to see us go. And the George Mahons. From my Library work, I had asked Dr. Chester Newland, who is our houseguest every weekend now until we leave, hoping he would absorb the full flavor of the evening; and Dr. and Mrs. Wayne Grover. From the house I had asked Jim Ketchum and his wife, and Mary Kaltman, who very quietly has played an important role here in the White House. And there were old staff members, the Doug Caters, two of my all time favorites; the Jack Valentis and staff members of another time, the Gerry Siegels, who asked me to come back and see my old house any time, and we talked of the back porch and the back yard and how Beagle used to return to visit them for months after we moved into The Elms.

I had placed the portraits at the east end of the hall and everyone wandered down there, drink in hand, and many of them came back to express quite positive opinions about one or the other. Some liked mine best, some Lyndon's. I took as many guests as I could over to meet Madame Shoumatoff. Luci and Lynda were both with us, Lynda in a green lace from her trousseau, looking tall and stately and lovely, going on to a play in Baltimore, so she left early. There was a

delicious buffet, two huge bowls of caviar, courtesy of the Iranian diplomats--ah, what a taste for caviar I have developed and I wonder snobbishly if I will ever encounter it once I'm home!

And there was Mr. Charles Palmer, who had been an executive assistant to [Franklin D.] Roosevelt and a friend of Madame Shoumatoff at that time. It was he who had brought us together in the first place and was responsible for us having the portrait of FDR in Lyndon's office. Katie and Walter Louchheim were very interested in the portraits. Diana and Donald were there and we talked with infinite relief of Tony. There were good Texas friends, the Claude Wilds, and the Gene Worleys, and the Frank Ikards. The only out of town guests were the Ed Weisls of New York. There are no parties left really and I felt that just once more I wanted Ed and Alice to be with us in the White House, and their children were coming so I'd called them rather at the last minute.

It was an extraordinary party from the very mixed mosaic of our lives--everybody had played a part--Dr. Lawn Thompson, Bennetta and Walter Washington, the John Macys--how I shall miss him, and pretty Nancy Dickerson with her husband. To me she is the very prototype of a successful career woman who also majors in family life and social life.

Something before nine everyone had drifted away, except Mike and Mary Ellen Monroney--we were caught up in conversation and lingered in the hall and sat down for a final drink and then we said "Why don't

Saturday, January 4, 1969

Page 7

you come on in and just eat some pot-luck supper with us?" We talked of their campaign and their future and ours. It had startled me during the campaign to read that Mike was sixty-eight. He's still so handsome, his head would go well as a model for a Roman senator--or maybe he's not stern enough. Mary Ellen was bubbly as ever--it was a pleasant, unplanned hour of captured companionship--I think we all savored it. They left a little before ten o'clock. I had a rub and went to bed thinking what a satisfactory day!