

WHD

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The golden coin is spent, this is the last full day in the White House. Sunday January 19th.

I was up a little past eight--it was gray and dreary, a light rain falling, and I've lost my wish to have a snow before I left Washington--only a few scattered flakes one afternoon and they didn't stay. Carrying an umbrella, I went down to the Children's Garden. I've been watching the flagstones go in during the week and I know that Bess had gotten an imprint of Patrick Lyndon's foot and Lucinda Desha's hand and had them transferred into a bronze plaque in what must have been the quickest job the artisans had ever done. It was a charming little spot, even in the gray day. Down next to the tennis court, flagstones led off between the hollys in what was almost a secret tunnel and then it opened up into a tiny garden where there was a lovely apple tree--it will be so pretty in spring with blossoms. and then in autumn with red apples. I think Ed Stone told me that it was a winesap and they had searched all over and found just the right size in an old orchard close to Washington. And there's a spot for rustic furniture, child size, which will be nice for six year olds to have a tea party, and there's a small goldfish pond. It is a very secret, quiet place and will be good for some grandmother who's in the White

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House to roll a baby carriage and enjoy being outdoors and very private. It is our goodbye gift to the White House and we had talked about something for months and months. But as in so many things, I must give the credit to the action to Bess and to Liz. When we had this idea only about ten days ago, I thought there couldn't possibly be ~~enough~~ time, but they, the eternal optimists, called in Ed Stone Jr. presented me with a sketch, we decided to go ahead and here it was.

Back in the White House, I went up to see Billy and Ruth Graham who had spent the night in the Pineapple Bedroom. We were going to church together ~~to~~ Dr. George Davises' and for once both Lynda and Luci were really in good time, Lyndon too, and we went off to the National City Christian Church.

The girls have been so dear, especially since March 31st, to give their Daddy every support and co-operation, and sense of family prescence. Dr. Davis, no surprise to anybody had a bulliten in his little church phamplet which was ~~the~~ according to Luci, "the essence of Daddy". It spoke of how hard he worked and how he wanted to make things better for the poor people of the nation, and ^{it} took what for Dr. Davis was a rather restrained jab at the press, and ended with

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praise of Lyndon's generous attitude toward Nixon. He called on Dr. Billy Graham to give the benediction. And then we went downstairs briefly for the coffee hour, ~~and~~ found ourselves engulfed in a receiving line -- smiled and shook hands and listened to "God bless you's" , and then made our way to the door ~~at~~ and down the steps where the photographers had gathered. And then the Grahams, the girls and us into the big black car and back ~~to~~ the White House . On the way Billy had introduced us to several of the top men in his organization and he said he'd like it so much if they could come and see the White House. We told him to ^{ask} ~~tell~~ them all to come right down and notified the gate. On the way down, he told us of Mr. Nixon's plans for religious services in the East Room with a different minister each Sunday. He was going to do the first one, next Sunday--a final interesting touch to the transition. He had told me this Friday night as we waited for Lyndon to come home for dinner and then Lyndon had immediately asked him to go to church with us on Sunday before I had had an opportunity to impart this interesting bit of information. Billy had spoken of the fact that having the service in the house would make security easier and would also give an opportunity to invite many people to the White House.

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who would otherwise perhaps never come. I said goodbye to the Grahams and their daughter and son-in-law, the Dan Lottes (?) as soon as we were in the house and went upstairs.

There was one more small, but important, use of the day I wanted to make and that was to write a letter to Jim Ketchum the Curator, which he could keep if he wanted to in the White House file. We have been making a collection of letters from First Ladies. We already had several and promises or possibilities of more ^{so I wrote mine} ~~the~~ - the next to last on White House stationery that I would write, about our goodbye gift, the little Children's Garden saying why and how I hoped it would be used and enjoyed in the future. And thanks to him and all ^{them,} the White House staff who added so much to the pleasure of living in this great house. And then I wrote my really very last letter to John Loeb, a thank you for one of the nicest letters I shall ever receive in my life. It had been on top of my stack of 'read and file' when I came in from having dinner with him last night.

Lyndon had gone straight from church to his office. With less than twenty four hours left, he still had some important decisions to make. One, what to do about setting aside the 7 million or so acres of land for National Parks that Stu Udall had recommended. The conservationist in him was excited by

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the idea, but the old congressman of twenty four years tenure withdrew from it. He really didn't believe in government by executive order, but in a mutual working together of the Congress and the President and so sometime in those last hours, I don't know just when, he settled for setting aside some of the areas that were adjacent to National Parks already in existence, but did not go for the huge acreage in Alaska.

At 2:00 there was a very special ceremony. A week or so ago General Chapman had said that the Marine Band would like to come over and serenade us, to say goodbye. Heywood brought General and Mrs. Chapman up to the Yellow Oval Room where Lyndon and I met them, and with Lynda and Luci we went out onto the Truman Balcony and there on the South Lawn was the last performance for the Johnsons. The Marine Band in their bright red uniforms ~~was~~^{were} a stabbing note of color in the grey day. I had worn my red coat so they could see me from the Balcony. They played the "Perd~~e~~^emales River March" which had been composed and dedicated to Lyndon. And then when they played "The Marine Hymn" I looked at Lynda Bird, her face was quivering but strong. We leaned over the balcony and thanked them and waved. And then an affectionate goodbye to General and Mrs. Chapman and then I went I went down to

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the swimming pool --there was time for only twenty laps, but I did not want to leave the house without one more swim and saying goodbye to a very special place that I have loved for five years . And then hurriedly back upstairs, Mr. Per was waiting. I had a quick shampoo and set, signed the last letters , Ashton had been working most of the day.

And then at 4:30 was dressed to go down in the Library to meet our little group for the dedication of the Children's Garden. There was Nash Castro and Rex Scouten of the Park Service , and the gardeners, Mr. Williams and Bill Ruback and Ed Stone Jr. who had done the design ~~and~~ ^{with} his partner, Mr. Alexander , and Ed Stone Sr. , and the Leonard Marks with their son, and the Carpenters and the Abells . There was a fire going in the Library and a table with drinks and hors d'oeuvres. And I suddenly realized ^{that} I was famished, I hadn't had any lunch, but just as I applied myself to the hors d'oeuvres, Bess said we had better go while there was still some light so we could get pictures. So the stars of the event, Lyn and Lucinda joined us with their mothers and off we started down to the little Children's Garden , a straggling retinue led by Lucinda in her baby carriage, Lyn marching sturdily along, always glad to go anywhere.

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Mr. Williams had told me that there would be crocuses coming up under the apple tree and between the flagstones in about two months and we talked ~~about~~⁵⁶ putting a little basket swing on the sturdiest limb of the apple tree. We got some rather good pictures I think, of Lyn with his feet planted firmly in his own bronze footprints. And then we filed through the tunnel to the tiny garden, but we only got two or three pictures there before we lost our 'star'--Lyn walked into the fish pond. Somebody turned loose of his hand for just one split second. Curiosity and trust led him on and he walked right in--falling with an outraged expression, up to his shoulders. Everybody jumped to ~~the~~^{the} rescue, I think it was Mike Howard who actually pulled him out and both Liz and Bess had their coats off in a flash and the wet and howling little boy on that really icy day was wrapped in one fleet second in Bess' coat. Luci picked him up and the last we saw was her running up the driveway to the White House with that big bundle in her arms. The rest of us collapsed in laughter, half real, half from nerves. ^{And} Lucinda became the star and we wheeled her under the apple tree and then we sat down in the children's furniture, Lynda and Lucinda and I, though she's not the tea party set yet. And there were pictures with the

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designers and I think, with the gardeners. And then I ran on ahead of them back to the White House and ~~back~~^{up} to the third floor to make sure Luci had put little boy into a hot tub and rubbed him good. There he was, all grins, none the worse for his experience and warm and dry in another cute outfit. Luci has so many delightful outfits for him; the little navy middy with it's slightly bell bottom trousers, the lederhosen with the little Alpine hat, perhaps his most picturesque; and his sophisticated outfit from the Dick Berlins, the blue and white striped shirt and the checkered pants in which he looks 'so man about town'; and probably dearest of all, his AirForce outfit, just like his father's, which his Grandfather had had made for him. Both of the girls enjoy dressing their children.

I went down to the Library where everybody was relaxing and finishing their drink. Mr. Alexander told me not to worry--that they would install a sturdy mesh wire about two inches below the surface of the pool, strong enough to support a child, but the fish would still be clearly visible through it.

Back upstairs, I was going through some final drawers. My beautiful room is a shambles. There are packing boxes all over the floor, and an open foot locker to receive contents of drawers that have not been really properly sorted.

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When will they be? I am afraid somewhere there will be left some hostages for the future. It ~~is~~^{was} a rather sad note to open a cupboard door in the West Hall and come upon some of Mrs. John Fitzgerald Kennedy's notepaper--I turned it over to Mr. West.

About a quarter to six, I got word that Averell Harriman was in Lyndon's office. I went over and hugged him and thanked him for myself, ~~for~~^{and} our children, for all that he had done this ~~on~~ country.

And then quickly back upstairs and into my red velvet dress with the portrait collar to be ready with Lyndon to go to the reception, ~~the~~^{that} the Henry Fords were giving for the Rod Markleys at the F Street Club. That most dignified door was lined, crowded with young people and I wondered briefly if they were some of the protesters who were having their own counter Inaugural march on the Mall involving ludicrously a pig whom they were installing as President, or whether they were just young college kids from nearby George Washington. And then I thought gleefully that I really didn't have to care because by tomorrow noon we had no further obligation to them for their future. They were smiling broadly and a cheer went up from them as we made our way between them up the steps and they called out, "Good luck, Mr. President", and

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~~and~~ hands went out from right and left. Lyndon stopped to shake a few and I kept walking. And one boy called, "You sure did try, Lyndon". It was all sort of merry.

And inside that sedate, but elegant old club, where I've had so many good times, there was jovial Henry and lovely Christina. We thanked them for their part in the party for us last Monday night in New York and told them how beautiful their daughters had been. We mingled briefly with the guests, finding that there were not many that we knew. Well these old rooms will see a lot of new people and maybe some old, old people in the next four years. How interesting it will be.

And said a swift goodbye and back to our own party at the ~~the~~ White House, but there was yet one ^{more} small thing before we greeted our own guests. Buford and Catherine Ellington -- ~~Lyndon~~ ~~who we~~ had talked to sometime earlier and asked them to drop by, -- were coming upstairs to the West Hall. We hugged each other and had a drink and talked about what we were all going to do. They had bought a house in Florida and were going to spend quiet weekends and maybe retirement time there. They both play golf a lot together. And we talked about our horses from Tennessee and visits in the future and it was a happy moment and about 7:15, a quick goodbye and Lyndon

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and I went out into the West Hall to join our guests for our last party in the White House.

Weeks ago when Bess and I had talked about what we wanted to do with this last night, I had said there was only one bunch of people to spend it with and that was those we had worked most closely with -- Lyndon's top assistants and mine. And so there were about sixty guests for drinks and buffet dinner. Those that I think of as the early morning boys, Jim Jones with his pretty young wife and gentle Larry Temple with Lu Ann, and young Bill Blackburn, and Lyndon's Press Secretary George Christian whom I never see anymore without thinking of that ludicrous nickname he has recently acquired, "Old Blabber Mouth" with Joanne who will be having a baby in a couple of months, and that workhorse, Joe Califano over whose desk has passed such a great mass of the important legislation of this administration, and in spite of the hours and the load, he always has that little boy smile. And the speechwriters, headed by Harry McPherson who has been with us since Senate days and his wife and the Peter Benchleys -- to me a newcomer, but very attractive, the Larry Levinsons, the Charlie Maguires and the Ben Wattenburgs and my own special speechwriter Erv Duggan, one of the gayest hands in the White House.

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He has defied all of Liz's efforts to marry him off. And Lyndon's own secretaries, Juantia and Mary and dear Marie bringing John Criswell with her. And my folks from the East Wing, Bess with Tyler and Liz and Les, and Ashton and John Gonella, and dear little Carol Carlyle who touched me very much when she said she wanted to needlepoint one of my dining room chairs -- one has to feel close to undertake all that work. And those who are going to Texas with us, the Tom Johnsons, the Harry Middletons with whom I've worked so much, and the Bob Hardestys, and Walt and Elspeth Rostow, that unique man. I think if Lyndon had to choose one person from among those he's worked with to honor and respect ~~and~~ the most, it would be Walt. And those hands who managed the Congress Mike Manatos the Senate, and dear Barefoot Sanders, the House, and I think ~~his~~ his appointment to a judgeship is going to come through, one last grace note as we bow out. And there was that sturdy veteran of three or four Administrations, Charlie Murphy who is helping on this transition, and Betty Furness, who has become a great favorite with Lyndon for her out-spoken, able, loyal handling of her job with her husband, Mr. Midgley. And Lynda and Luci, both very close to all these people. It is a joy to me that they are. Their children were with us

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for a large part of the evening. Lucinda in her baby carriage or being passed around from arm to arm and all the ladies especially exclaiming over her. And Patrick Lyndon weaving in and out between everybody's legs, a menace to drinks and ashtrays and everything he can reach. And there were the Brom Smiths, and George and Lillian Reedy, from our Senate days. George is happily settled down I think with a project involving a newspaper ^{and} ~~in~~ South American countries. And handsome young Devier Pearson with his wife. He's come very close to us in these last months, very quiet but handles a heavy work load with ability, discretion and persistence. And Doris Kearns -- my first memory of her ~~is~~ ^{is} of writing an article "How To Dump Lyndon Johnson" in an intellectual magazine -- there description would be their own -- and here she was after a couple of years ~~of~~ as a White House fellow in our closest circle. We both like her and if I am any judge at all, she has come to understand and like Lyndon. And there were the Bill Hopkins, he's the old stand by, administration in, ~~ad~~ministration out for the White House Office. But Lyndon he's assumed a personal relation. And Ernie Goldstein and Peg who were heading back soon for Paris and who say they would like to advance the trip whenever we come over and plan things for us to do.

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And Lyndon's newest secretary, Phyllis Bonnano.

The evening was long and strange and to me, very dear. It began actually on a strained note, Lyndon was not in a party mood, not even with these people. There's some hang over from those hours of Saturday night when he woke up about 3:30 with severe pains in his chest and we called the Chief and then the doctor and there were two or more hours of real apprehension, real insecurity. And once or twice getting ready to go out to work or something social he said darkly, "I don't think I can make it." And mixed with that feeling was the fact that several things had gone wrong, ugly wrong, in the last day or two--things he could not mend, retrieve, correct and so he was a burdened host, not a joyous one. And I tried to work twice as hard ^{at making} ~~to make~~ the evening all I wanted it to be for these very wonderful special people.

We had drinks, there was a bar in the hall, and everybody signed the guest book, one of the most precious documents I shall take out of this house, and guests drifted down to the East Hall to look at the portraits of us both, and eventually we had a delicious buffet supper eating it actually, literally on our laps, a group with Lyndon in the West Hall, another group in the Center Hall, and I, with about twenty

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or thirty people in the Yellow Oval Room. It melts into a montage, I cannot possibly remember it in sequence with precision, but there are vignettes of me sitting with Joe Califano hunched over a card table in the West Hall while he told me how much these years had meant. He said dear things about Lyndon, and I, with warmth about him. And then in the Yellow Oval Room, when we had finished our plates and we began all telling little stories about our funniest and most poignant or most to be remembered moment in the White House, and Liz, dependably brought forth some hilarious ones and Erv and even old blabber mouth, George Christian who so seldom relaxes into humor or personal anecdotes. It was an evening charged with emotion of overflowing feelings, of keen awareness that this was saying goodbye to so much and so many. Luci said later that she felt Daddy was resentful of the sentiment and that when she asked the orchestra to sing Auld Lang Sang and we found ourselves in a sort of circle in the hall, and to me it was magic moment, and I reached out and took hands and everybody else did so, and everybody really was close to tears--but Lyndon not being willing to accept the sentiment somehow retreated into the Yellow Room. A lot of us congregated in there and then somehow, sometime during the evening Luci

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and I both had the feeling that he relaxed, became mellow and ended the evening on a sweet note. I do not know who or what caused it.

And one vignette is me standing by the window, taking a last look from that spot of the greatest view in Washington out over the South Lawn to the Jefferson Memorial and the tall shaft of the Washington Monument; and then sitting down with DeVier Pearson to talk with him about one of the projects we were both keenly interested in and that he had just had a final conference on today. I asked him what he was going to be doing, he said he was going to stay here in Washington and he used an expression I cherished, "You know the President will still be my client."

The orchestra played "The Yellow Rose of Texas", and "Hello Dolly" and once and last "Hail to the Chief", and we all rode along on successive waves of emotion in our own separate ways. And finally at one point, Harry McPherson made a toast, a beautiful eloquent address to these last five years and to Lyndon. And then Lyndon began to talk, quietly, low key, gentle in fact. It was good and I was proud of him.

And then it was time to go home and everybody began to drift away--it was about 11:00 and here the mood of the party

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perceptively changed . We had all come in at a high key, tense , emotional, and I felt that everybody, me included as we drifted away , were leaving ~~the~~ with the feeling that we were played out , numb, all passions spent, ready for it to be over .

I had a rub and by midnight, turned the light out.