

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Friday, September 8, 1967

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The second of our four days at the Ranch. I was up and back at work at 8:30 with Mr. Wells. Roy came out, and the three of us surveyed the little shield for the long hall lights. Between them, they designed a little molding, and decided against the use of sconces on the other wall. The sconces in the little entrance are good. But the hall simply cries out for some texture -- a wallpaper -- a background for all the pictures that I am going to hang there. The painted wooden chandelier in the little sitting room has gone up, and I like it very much.

I spent the morning stuffing albums and books into the new bookcases, and the first decorative object that went in was Madame Shoumatoff's painting of FDR -- my favorite of Lyndon's birthday presents of '67.

And then right away we pulled the books out again because it is obvious we need a color as a background for the memorabilia, the artifacts, the treasures. And we took some masking tape and put up a flight of 20 or 30 more yellow birds in Lyndon's bath. There are so many hundreds of details in working on a house. I relish each success, revel in the sensuous pleasure of lovely colors put together and find more abrasive all the things that are wrong.

The ^{big}event of the morning was the arrival of a little ^{van} ~~band~~ with four pieces of furniture that had been recovered -- two brown velvet chairs for Lyndon's room. And we found they were wonderful when the off-white

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linen drapes went up and the spark of the red pillows was added. And especially when we hung the Wya~~the~~the -- the one of covered wagons crossing the prairies and the blue, blue skies. And the Melvin Warren of "The Riders" in the Big Bend country. It is going to be a good room. And the other two chairs were the bright yellow and green ~~the~~ ^{John} silk print for the sitting room. The yellow and white plaid curtains there were a triumph too. But alas about 2 inches too short. So down they had to come and go back to Houston. But it didn't matter. The rug pads went in today in no time at all. But the rugs themselves are not here yet.

Yesterday it had been a wonderful relief when John had wired us from the hospital, M. D. Anderson in Houston, that Nellie's operation had turned out all right -- no malignancy. A little before noon, he came up by plane for a visit with Lyndon. I knew it would be an important one. They were riding around together, and I told Mary to change from souffle to curry shrimp for lunch. This would have to be one of those meals that ^{is} served when the people want it and not when the food is ready.

We were a big lunch table full -- the five Nugents and Mr. Wells and Roy White and Lynda and Chuck and Lyndon and John and the staff and I. Lyndon took a look at little Lyn, placid and roly-poly in his mother's arms and said, "He looks like Alvin Sultemeir! That is the last straw. The baby is going to have to go on Metrecal.

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After lunch he and John continued their talk with Jake Pickle joining them sometime. And they rode and rode, and I wished I could be with them. But I was struggling toward making decisions on my own bedroom. Mr. Wells had brought some more beautiful fabrics -- a ~~fortune~~ ⁱⁿ and peach that I love, and the fresh, exciting Spring green and pinks ⁱⁿ ~~and~~ ~~a~~ ~~Shenwa~~ ^{Shenwa} drawing, "Chintz" that I keep on coming back to. ^{Chinois}

It was nearly 7:00 when I said goodbye to him -- many decisions made and more still to come -- and put myself into the hands of Mrs. Frederick Burg for a shampoo and set. It was the wrong thing to do. I soon got a message from Lyndon on the business telephone that they had been "waiting for me all afternoon and when could I join them?" Sometimes I have to make a guess on timing and sometimes I guess wrong. So I got out from under the dryer -- not a moment for a comb-out, and put on my lovely Madame ^{Chicago} ~~Shong~~ Yellow robe. And with my hair all in little sausages I went down to join the President, the Governor and the Congressman for what turned out to be a most serious and lengthy conversation of great import. Lyndon and John and later joined by Jake had spent an 8 or more hour session riding and talking about Lyndon's big decision -- when and how to announce that he is not going to run again for the Presidency. Jake's attitude I think was simply not to believe it -- not to face up to it. He spoke of the other folks that were running including himself. It would be hard on them

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he said. And I found that rather flattering really. ^{TP} John did believe it. We had I think convinced him earlier in the summer. Lyndon asked him to explain to me how he would write the announcement. It went something like this: First, you must do it early to take it out of politics, to keep it from looking like you were running out, to make it fairer, to give more chance to the other possible contenders. He spoke of the October 8th date at the dinner or soon thereafter. And the reasons -- because he, the President, wanted to devote all his time, his brain, his energy to the coming 15 or 16 months to bringing the war in Viet-Nam to a successful conclusion, to attacking the problems of the cities. And in short, to working on the major difficulties that face this country. A campaign would necessarily siphon off hours and days of time and energy and brain power. He wanted to be free to do his best in the time he had. It was good reasoning. It was appealing. And I took the floor and talked about my feelings -- that I simply did not want to face another campaign, to ask anybody for anything. Especially not to ask for and acquire the obligations that went with receiving donations. And mainly the fear that haunts me is that if Lyndon were back in office for a four-year stretch -- beginning when he was 60 years old -- that bad health might overtake him, an attack, something not quite incapacitating, and he might find himself straining to be the sort of a President he wanted to be -- to put in the 18 hours a day and not be able to draw it from the

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once bottomless well of his energy. A physical or mental incapacitation would be unbearably painful for him to recognize and for me to watch. And who -- who -- can tell? His Aunt Frank lived to be 90, and Aunt Jessie is still going strong in her late 80's, and his father died at 60. And he has had the most roaring energy and will of anybody I have ever observed. But it is not inexhaustible. I said something like, "If we ever got sick, I want ~~it~~ to be sick on our own time." And that broke the tension and everybody laughed.

Somewhere in the course of it I ordered in dinner on TV trays, and there I sat in my sausage curlers, eating and trying to help my husband and two good friends decide his future.

It was past 10:00 when John left to fly back to Houston to join Nellie in the hospital. And I think we all knew that we would only really know what was going to happen when we heard it happen.