

PREFACE

I began talking my White House diary into a tape recorder at our home, The Elms, two or three days after November 22, 1963. A little of it was recorded in hotel rooms on our trips, and in my bedroom at the LBJ Ranch, but the great bulk of it was done in a small room in the southwest corner of the second floor of the White House, which became a combination dressing room and office for me. I loved that room. I put my own furniture in it—my blue velvet sofa from The Elms (the back of it is faded from the sun that streamed in the southwest window), two comfortable French armchairs flanking the fireplace, and a desk that has followed me through all of my three Washington homes and now sits in the bay window in my “forever” bedroom at the Ranch. The walls were covered in the loveliest Chinese wallpaper I’ve ever seen. In winter, I often recorded sitting on the sofa looking at the fire burning merrily in the little corner fireplace. And in the summer I reversed one of the chairs and talked into my machine while I looked out over Andrew Jackson’s magnolias to the Washington Monument—my favorite view in all of Washington, often outlined against

the drama of sunset. Sometimes, I sat at the desk and looked right down into the Rose Garden and across to Lyndon's office. By all odds the best time to record was from about 7 in the evening till 9 or 10 or whatever late hour Lyndon came home to dinner. The day's activities were at an end, my staff had gone home, and this was "my time."

Why did I record it? I think for the following reasons: I realized shortly after November 22, that—amazed and timorously—I stood in a unique position, as wife of the President of the United States. Nobody else would live through the next months in quite the way that I would and see the events unroll from this vantage point. And this certain portion of time I wanted to preserve as it happened. I wanted to remember it, and I wanted my children and grandchildren to see it through my eyes. The second reason is a difficult one to describe—it has something to do with discipline. I wanted to see if I could keep up this arduous task. In a way, I made myself a dare. And somehow if you make yourself record what went on in the day, it makes you more organized, it makes you remember things better. My third reason for recording this White House diary was that I *like* writing—fearful labor though I sometimes find it—I like words. As time passed there began to emerge a fourth reason, dimly felt, something like this—I wanted to share life in this house, in these times. It was too great a thing to have alone.

I soon evolved the system of having a manila envelope for each day with a mimeographed sheet in it on which my secretary wrote the day's appointments. Then I would collect, or ask her to collect, two or three newspaper headlines of the day and stories that related to what Lyndon was doing, or I, or the children, speech cards if I made a speech, the schedule if I was on a trip. Or, if there was a White House entertainment, guest lists and menu and program. Then when I would record—and it might be the next day or two or three days later, or sometimes a week later—I would have the material at hand to put me back in the mood and the spirit of that day. The greatest help were the little shorthand notes I had jotted down in my daily schedule book. Gradually I, the most unmechanical of women, made friends with this little machine and learned how to thread it and change it, and hold it in abeyance while I thought of my next phrase.

A tape recorder makes for a far more verbose volume of work than a pencil in your hand. And so I left the White House in January of 1969 with a suitcase full of tapes, recorded over five full years and the brief six

weeks or so of the year 1963, and the first twenty days of the year 1969, all in all a total, as well as I could estimate after it was transcribed, of about 1,750,000 words. During the last year and a half, I have re-read it all—and sometimes smiled wryly at my judgments and reactions of that time. I have tried to select from this mass of material days that would carry the narrative and convey the changing mood and feel and color of the times, hopefully significant days, but some quiet days. It has been a gargantuan job! Sometimes I have felt like William Faulkner, who is reported to have said to his editor when he was slashing out some of his favorite writing "You are killing my darlings!" The result is actually a "sampler" of my diary—a book of some 800 pages—using about one seventh of the material. But the full diary—many golden days that I loved living and writing about, and others that I'm afraid I made sound tedious and dull—will be in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and will in the future be available for scholars or historians to peruse, for whatever little crumbs of interest they may add to the story of our life and times.

Editing was not easy. I have tried as much as possible to use full days but could not avoid using sections from others. For the benefit of the reader I was told it was necessary to identify or give full names to people or events already familiar to me, thus intruding on the casual and sometimes intimate character of these recordings.

This diary is throughout completely personal and subjective. It is the way I saw and lived these events and knew these people. It is, if anything, the story of a family in a unique set of circumstances at a significant point in history.

I want to express my gratitude to everyone who has helped on this book, in editorial assistance, and research, and typing—to the wonderful staff, past and present—Charles Maguire, Harry Middleton, Walt Rostow, Mary Rather, Dorothy Nichols, Helene Lindow, Carole Bryant; to Dorothy Territo and her researchers; to the White House photographers—especially Yoichi Okamoto, Frank Wolfe, and Bob Knudsen; to Maggie Cousins and Liz Carpenter for their dedication to the task of helping to select which days and events should appear in the book; to Pace Barnes of Holt, Rinehart and Winston; to Arthur Krim who has shared so much; and to my family—Lyndon and Lynda Bird and Luci.

As I look back on those five years of turmoil and achievement, of triumph and pain, I feel amazement that it happened to me, and gratitude that I

had the opportunity to live them, and strongest of all—out of all the trips that I made and all the people that I met—a deep, roaring faith in and love for this country.

LBJ Ranch
August 15, 1970

BOOK ONE

1963-1964

Winter 1963-1964

DALLAS It all began so beautifully. After a drizzle in the morning, the Friday, sun came out bright and clear. We were driving into Dallas.

November 22, In the lead car were President and Mrs. Kennedy, John and 1963 Nellie Connally, a Secret Service car full of men, and then our car with Lyndon and me and Senator Ralph Yarborough.

The streets were lined with people—lots and lots of people—the children all smiling, placards, confetti, people waving from windows. One last happy moment I had was looking up and seeing Mary Griffith leaning out of a window waving at me. (Mary for many years had been in charge of altering the clothes which I purchased at Neiman-Marcus.)

Then, almost at the edge of town, on our way to the Trade Mart for the Presidential luncheon, we were rounding a curve, going down a hill, and suddenly there was a sharp, loud report. It sounded like a shot. The sound seemed to me to come from a building on the right above my shoulder. A moment passed, and then two more shots rang out in rapid succession.

There had been such a gala air about the day that I thought the noise must come from firecrackers—part of the celebration. Then the Secret Service men were suddenly down in the lead car. Over the car radio system, I heard "Let's get out of here!" and our Secret Service man, Rufus Youngblood, vaulted over the front seat on top of Lyndon, threw him to the floor, and said, "Get down."

Senator Yarborough and I ducked our heads. The car accelerated terrifically—faster and faster. Then, suddenly, the brakes were put on so hard that I wondered if we were going to make it as we wheeled left and went around the corner. We pulled up to a building. I looked up and saw a sign, "HOSPITAL." Only then did I believe that this might be what it was. Senator Yarborough kept saying in an excited voice, "Have they shot the President? Have they shot the President?" I said something like, "No, it can't be."

As we ground to a halt—we were still the third car—Secret Service men began to pull, lead, guide, and hustle us out. I cast one last look over my shoulder and saw in the President's car a bundle of pink, just like a drift of blossoms, lying on the back seat. It was Mrs. Kennedy lying over the President's body.

The Secret Service men rushed us to the right, then to the left, and then onward into a quiet room in the hospital—a very small room. It was lined with white sheets, I believe.

People came and went—Kenny O'Donnell, the President's top aide, Congressman Homer Thornberry, Congressman Jack Brooks. Always there was Rufe right there and other Secret Service agents—Emory Roberts, Jerry Kivett, Lem Johns, and Woody Taylor. People spoke of how widespread this might be. There was talk about where we would go—to the plane, to our house, back to Washington.

Through it all Lyndon was remarkably calm and quiet. He suggested that the Presidential plane ought to be moved to another part of the field. He spoke of going back out to the plane in unmarked black cars. Every face that came in, you searched for the answer. I think the face I kept seeing the answer on was the face of Kenny O'Donnell, who loved President Kennedy so much.

It was Lyndon who spoke of it first, although I knew I would not leave without doing it. He said, "You had better try to see Jackie and Nellie." We didn't know what had happened to John.

I asked the Secret Service if I could be taken to them. They began to lead me up one corridor and down another. Suddenly I found myself face

to face with Jackie in a small hallway. I believe it was right outside the operating room. You always think of someone like her as being insulated, protected. She was quite alone. I don't think I ever saw anyone so much alone in my life. I went up to her, put my arms around her, and said something to her. I'm sure it was something like "God, help us all," because my feelings for her were too tumultuous to put into words.

And then I went to see Nellie. There it was different, because Nellie and I have gone through so many things together since 1938. I hugged her tight and we both cried and I said, "Nellie, John's going to be all right." And Nellie said, "Yes, John's going to be all right." Among her many other fine qualities, she is also strong.

I turned and went back to the small white room where Lyndon was. Mac Kilduff, the President's press man on this trip, and Kenny O'Donnell were coming and going. I think it was from Kenny's face that I first knew the truth and from Kenny's voice that I first heard the words "The President is dead." Mr. Kilduff entered and said to Lyndon, "Mr. President."

It was decided that we would go immediately to the airport. Hurried plans were made about how we should get to the cars and who was to ride in which car. Our departure from the hospital and approach to the cars was one of the swiftest walks I have ever made.

We got in. Lyndon told the agents to stop the sirens. We drove along as fast as we could. I looked up at a building and there, already, was a flag at half-mast. I think that was when the enormity of what had happened first struck me.

When we got to the field, we entered *Air Force One* for the first time. There was a TV set on and the commentator was saying, "Lyndon B. Johnson, now President of the United States." The news commentator was saying the President had been shot with a 30-30 rifle. The police had a suspect. They were not sure he was the assassin.

On the plane, all the shades were lowered. We heard that we were going to wait for Mrs. Kennedy and the coffin. There was a telephone call to Washington—I believe to the Attorney General. It was decided that Lyndon should be sworn in here as quickly as possible, because of national and world implications, and because we did not know how widespread this was as to intended victims. Judge Sarah Hughes, a Federal Judge in Dallas—and I am glad it was she—was called and asked to come in a hurry to administer the oath.

Mrs. Kennedy had arrived by this time, as had the coffin. There, in the

very narrow confines of the plane—with Jackie standing by Lyndon, her hair falling in her face but very composed, with me beside him, Judge Hughes in front of him, and a cluster of Secret Service people, staff, and Congressmen we had known for a long time around him—Lyndon took the oath of office.

It's odd the little things that come to your mind at times of utmost stress, the flashes of deep compassion you feel for people who are really not at the center of the tragedy. I heard a Secret Service man say in the most desolate voice—and I hurt for him: "We never lost a President in the Service." Then, Police Chief Curry of Dallas came on the plane and said, "Mrs. Kennedy, believe me, we did everything we possibly could." That must have been an agonizing moment for him.

We all sat around the plane. The casket was in the corridor. I went in the small private room to see Mrs. Kennedy, and though it was a very hard thing to do, she made it as easy as possible. She said things like, "Oh, Lady Bird, we've liked you two so much. . . . Oh, what if I had not been there. I'm so glad I was there."

I looked at her. Mrs. Kennedy's dress was stained with blood. One leg was almost entirely covered with it and her right glove was caked, it was caked with blood—her husband's blood. Somehow that was one of the most poignant sights—that immaculate woman exquisitely dressed, and caked in blood.

I asked her if I couldn't get someone in to help her change and she said, "Oh, no. Perhaps later I'll ask Mary Gallagher but not right now." And then with almost an element of fierceness—if a person that gentle, that dignified, can be said to have such a quality—she said, "I want them to see what they have done to Jack."

I tried to express how we felt. I said, "Oh, Mrs. Kennedy, you know we never even wanted to be Vice President and now, dear God, it's come to this." I would have done anything to help her, but there was nothing I could do, so rather quickly I left and went back to the main part of the airplane where everyone was seated.

The flight to Washington was silent, each sitting with his own thoughts. One of mine was a recollection of what I had said about Lyndon a long time ago—he's a good man in a tight spot. I remembered one little thing he had said in that hospital room—"Tell the children to get a Secret Service man with them."

Finally we got to Washington, with a cluster of people waiting and many bright lights. The casket went off first, then Mrs. Kennedy, and then we

followed. The family had come to join her. Lyndon made a very simple, very brief, and, I think, strong statement to the people there. Only about four sentences. We got in helicopters, dropped him off at the White House, and I came home in a car with Liz Carpenter.

Saturday, November 23

THE ELMS, WASHINGTON

Today the President lay in state in the White House. It was a gray day, suited to the occasion.

I went down to the Executive Office Building to meet Lyndon and we went over to the White House and met the Kennedy family in the Green Room. Lyndon walked slowly past the President's body in the East Room. The catafalque was in the center and on it the casket, draped with the American flag. At each corner there was a large candle and a very rigid military man, representing each one of the services. At one end was a Catholic image, I don't know quite what it was. It wasn't just a cross, but more elaborate. That was the first time in those three days that I was reminded, caught up in the thought, that the Catholic faith has a pattern for everything—a pattern for life, and a pattern for death.

Others were there besides the family of the President—the Cabinet, Congressional leaders, the Supreme Court, and White House staff. An air of quiet prevailed, an utter, complete quiet that seemed to grip—well, the whole country, I suppose—and certainly the surroundings where I spent the entire three days.

Part of the Cabinet had been called back from half way around the world. They were on a plane bound for Japan when they heard the news in mid-air and turned the plane around and returned. They were here now, standing shocked and sad-faced, filing past as all of us had filed past, like automatons. There was black crepe on the chandeliers.

After we left the White House we went to a brief service at St. John's Episcopal Church, right across Lafayette Square, a very "high church"—a stern, rigid church—but most fitting for the day. And then we went on—and what we did the rest of the day, I don't remember. I am sure Lyndon worked terribly hard. I collapsed with Luci.

I thought—I will have to sell our house, give up control of my business, see about getting Lynda Bird to come back and live in Washington with

us and go to school somewhere up here (and that will be a selling job!). There are all the million and one things to be done—just the simple things that are part of going on living, if one is among those who are going to go on living. Lyndon will be wrestling with the very big business of making the country go on living.

Sunday, November 24

This was the day that President Kennedy lay in state at the Capitol. It was a day I will never forget—nor will the people of America. In contrast to yesterday, it was a bright, clear day of sparkling sun. We began by going to St. Marks to church, with Luci and Congressman Thornberry. There was a haunting line in Bill Baxter's sermon—something about how every man who had fostered, or had permitted to be fostered around him, an atmosphere of hate had had his hand on the gun barrel that day.

After church we went to the White House and waited in the Green Room for the Kennedy family. After they came Mrs. Sargent Shriver turned to me and said, "I hear Oswald has been killed." It was the first news I had had about Oswald.

We were told by protocol officials that we would ride with Mrs. Kennedy and the Attorney General. Suddenly Mrs. Kennedy came in, leading John Jr. with one hand and Caroline with the other, the children looking small and so dear in little blue coats. Then I realized there would be six of us in the car and I wondered if the arrangement shouldn't be changed—if we shouldn't ride in another car. But it turned out that we all got into the same limousine—Mrs. Kennedy and Lyndon in the back seat, the Attorney General and I in the jump seats, Caroline next to her mother, and John-John, in a peripatetic mood, jumping from the back seat to his uncle's lap to the front seat and back again.

As soon as we emerged from the gates of the White House, I became aware of that sea of faces stretching away on every side—silent, watching faces. I wanted to cry for them and with them, but it was impossible to permit the catharsis of tears. I don't know quite why, except that perhaps continuity of strength demands restraint. Another reason was that the dignity of Mrs. Kennedy and the members of the family demanded it.

In front of us was a handsome, black, riderless horse, carrying reversed boots. I recognized this at once as the symbol of the fallen leader, but I didn't really know much about the tradition. I asked Lynda Bird later

and she said the custom went long back into history, back to Genghis Khan, when the leader's horse was always sacrificed at the grave. A few centuries ago they abolished that part of the ritual.

In front of the horse was a caisson, drawn by six white horses; the caisson itself was draped with the flag. Soldiers were marching, and always there was the sound of muffled drums in the background. Flags flew at half-mast. But most vivid of all was the feeling of a sea of faces all around us and that curious sense of silence, broken only by an occasional sob. I kept on comparing it in my mind with the time Franklin Roosevelt died, but that was so different, because then everybody could be as emotional as they felt like being. The feeling persisted that I was moving, step by step, through a Greek tragedy. I remembered a definition from college days—that a Greek tragedy is concerned with a noble protagonist overtaken by an inevitable doom. There is a third ingredient but I can't remember it. Some time I must look it up.

We were a silent group as we rode along, each wrapped in his own thoughts. The only light moments came from John-John, who jumped from the back to his uncle's lap to the front, until finally Bobby Kennedy said, "John-John, be good, you be good, and we'll give you a flag afterward. You can march with Dave Powers."

The only time the Attorney General said anything else was when we passed a big building on the left, and he looked over and said (I think as though to himself, or perhaps to the children), "That was where it all began. That was where he ran for the Presidency." His face was grave, white, sorrowful, and there was a finching of the jaw at that moment that almost made—well, it made your soul flinch for him.

After that interminable drive we reached the Capitol and entered the Rotunda. In the center, directly underneath the dome, stood the flag-draped coffin with the honor guard around it. One of them, I noticed, wore the green beret. There were eulogies by Chief Justice Earl Warren, by Speaker John McCormack, and by Senator Mansfield. I shall never forget Mike Mansfield's speech—he, that most precise and restrained of men, repeated over and over the phrase "and she took a ring from her finger and placed it on his hand."

Lyndon went forward and laid a wreath at the foot of the casket. Then Mrs. Kennedy went over and knelt. I remember how carefully she knelt and kissed the casket, and Caroline by her side simply put her little hand on the flag—sort of underneath the flag. John-John had disappeared. And then we left in separate cars.

To me, one of the saddest things in the whole tragedy was that Mrs. Kennedy achieved on this desperate day something she had never quite achieved in the years she'd been in the White House—a state of love, a state of rapport between herself and the people of this country. Her behavior from the moment of the shot until I last saw her was, to me, one of the most memorable things of all. Maybe it was a combination of great breeding, great discipline, great character. I only know it was great. Her composure is one of the things that keeps on coming back to me. Another is the contrast with the death of FDR, because this time there's something much worse about it. There is shame for the violence and hatred that has gripped our land. But there is also a determination to help wipe it out!

When we got home early in the afternoon, after that emotionally exhausting experience, I began to think of Lynda Bird, and I decided, difficult as it was for her to come up from Texas and go right back in a day or two, I was going to call and ask her to catch a plane and come for the President's funeral. In spite of the difference in age and eminence, Lynda Bird had never felt anything of a gulf between herself and President Kennedy, so I wanted her to be here. I called her and she said she could pack in ten or fifteen minutes. She arrived about 10:30 tonight.

Tuesday, November 26

Now the time has come to get the wheels of life rolling again—so Mr. J. B. West, Head Usher of the White House, came out to The Elms this morning and we talked about moving three suites of furniture to occupy the rooms that will soon be vacant—my bedroom suite to go into Mrs. Kennedy's room, Lynda Bird's probably into Caroline's, and Luci's into John-John's. We discussed what furniture could be stored at the White House and how much I would need to send to commercial or government warehouses. It was one of my first encounters with Mr. West, and I have the feeling that I will be seeing a lot more of him.

At 3 this afternoon came the most important event of the day. Mrs. Kennedy had asked me to come to the White House to discuss the house-keeping details, which any woman moving out would talk over with any woman moving in. A lovely tea table was spread, and we sat down together in the private sitting room—the family sitting room on the second floor called the West Hall.

She was orderly, composed, and radiating her particular sort of aliveness and charm and warmth. Mrs. Kennedy is like an indescribably fresh flower—so I won't try to describe her, except that there is an element of steel and stamina somewhere within her to keep her going on as she is. She told me that two people in the house that I could always depend on were Mr. West, who knew more about it than anybody else, and Mr. James Ketchum, the Curator.

She said, "Lady Bird, never tell a waiter if you don't like this particular type of cookie that you would rather have a macaroon, because you will not see that particular butler again for two weeks. He'll be gone on vacation or working in another part of the mansion. Just tell everything to Mr. West."

She told me she would like to ask a favor of me. The way she asked this, if it had been a request to chop off one's right hand one would have said, "Sure," just that minute. What she wanted was to let the school continue on the third floor where Caroline and about twenty of her young playmates in the kindergarten and the first grade go to school. They will make other plans after Christmas, but they thought it would not be a good idea to disrupt the school right now. It was an easy, most delightful thing to say "Yes" to.

She went on to say a lot of things, like "Don't be frightened of this house—some of the happiest years of my marriage have been spent here—you will be happy here." In fact, she repeated that over and over, as though she were trying to reassure me. Then we got up and walked around from room to room so that I could see how my furniture would fit into her bedroom. We went into her sitting room (or perhaps it should be called a dressing room)—one of the most exquisite rooms I have ever seen, with the closet doors covered with bright and beautiful trompe l'oeils—little pictures of *Profiles in Courage*, Caroline at two, a yacht at Hyannis Port—all the things that mean something to her—a stamp or trademark that will not be repeated by anybody for a long time. For me, so much work will have to come first that I expect the room will be turned into an office rather than a dressing room, and it will get short shrift, at least these first few months.

We talked about the staff. She said that the French chef, René Verdon, was "absolutely divine," although everything he did for them was "very rich." She used the words "Jack never likes those rich things that René does." Neither one of us noticed the present tense—or rather neither one of us showed that we had noticed it. She said René has absolutely no

temperament, which is "divine in a Frenchman"—that I was fortunate to have him.

We walked through the hall and Jackie pointed out a bust by Houdon, circa 1795, of Joel Barlow, Chaplain in George Washington's Army. She told me of the incredible value that is put on this art object. It was an anonymous gift—anonymous, I hope, to everybody except the Internal Revenue Service! We went into the lovely Yellow Room where the Cézannes hang, and this room, obviously, is what Mrs. Kennedy likes best in the whole house—or so I gathered. There on the table were the black boots—the boots that were on the riderless horse in the funeral procession. There was also a folded flag.

Then we went into the two rooms that are now Caroline's and John's. And such exquisite gay little confections of rooms—Caroline's especially, delicate pink-and-white sprigged material on a canopy bed, with pictures, pictures, pictures everywhere—some of them crayons done by the children themselves, I think, and I believe one or two painted by Mrs. Kennedy. There were several Kennedy family members running in and out of doors as we wended our very businesslike way through the halls.

Finally, about 5, we went to the East Room, where Lyndon was meeting with the Alliance for Progress members to reassure them of our country's continued strength and interest in them. We took our seats very quietly behind him and listened to his speech. It is doubtful that anyone else is a star when Mrs. Kennedy is present—but all the more my heart went out to the bravery of Lyndon, who marches into this circumstance with so much determination and not all the preparation that one would have sought, if one could have foreseen one's destiny at sixteen.

In the evening I went home to dinner at The Elms and the companionship of a few close friends.

Monday, December 2

Lyndon presented the Enrico Fermi Award to Dr. Robert Oppenheimer in the Cabinet Room late this afternoon in an atmosphere charged with drama. The event was the climax of a story that has gone into its third decade, beginning in the 1940's when Dr. Oppenheimer was Director of Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory in New Mexico, where he helped produce the first atomic bomb. In the aftermath of the war, when so many were being questioned as to their association with Communists and he came

under public suspicion, President Eisenhower ordered a blank wall placed between him and secret information—in other words, he took away Oppenheimer's security clearance. Now, in the sixties, the last act of the drama occurs. Oppenheimer, in receiving the Fermi Award, is having his name cleared and his reputation upheld before the American public once more as a great scientist who has served his country well.

I felt that I was in the front-row seat of a good Broadway production. Dr. Oppenheimer is a lean, pale, white-haired man who looks as if he has been seared in the fires of public suspicion and doubt. He is a living example of how somebody survives that, and it must be one of the cruelest ordeals a person can live through.

Dr. Oppenheimer's wife stood by him—a gentle-faced, happy, sensible-looking woman. She must have helped her husband keep his sanity when it was all going on. His children, Katherine and Peter, were there as well as a group of his friends; also the senior Democrats on the Atomic Energy Committee; Dr. Edward Teller, once his chief adversary on the question of whether to develop the hydrogen bomb; and Dr. Henry Smyth, the lone dissenter in the 4-to-1 Commission decision when Dr. Oppenheimer lost his security clearance. Notably absent were the ranking Republicans—reportedly some had sent word that they could not, in good conscience, attend.

Lyndon praised Dr. Oppenheimer as a leader of learning and a scientist who had set high standards of achievement. Dr. Oppenheimer responded with a reply about Thomas Jefferson and the brotherhood of science, and then, speaking in a low voice, he said: "I think it is just possible, Mr. President, that it has taken some charity and some courage for you to make this award today. That would seem to be a good augury for all our futures."

I wonder if anybody knows how often one has to dare to use that courage and charity and how there are a good many times when you cannot foretell the long-term outcome of your actions and cannot be entirely sure you are doing the right thing. That's the painful thing about this job. In this case, I have the happy feeling that it was the right thing and I am glad to see Dr. Oppenheimer come out from under the shadow.

Lyndon got a laugh when he gave the handsome gold medal to Dr. Oppenheimer and then turned to hand the \$50,000 check to Mrs. Oppenheimer and said: "The wives usually get hold of the money." In this case, Lyndon was only the agent, because the citation had been signed by President Kennedy a short while before the assassination.

We went on home to dinner at The Elms with Drew and Luvie Pearson,

sitting in front of a fire made with Drew's own wood. There were also Justice and Mrs. Arthur Goldberg and Bess Abell, my Social Secretary, with Tyler, her husband. I keep thinking that Justice Goldberg, with his rampant energy and his warm feeling of working for his fellow human beings, his shrewdness and his humor, is oddly removed from the fray of public life in the cool halls of the Supreme Court. I always love to hear Dorothy Goldberg talk about art and we discussed her book. Luvie Pearson talked about her work with a group of women who are teaching the rudiments of reading to underprivileged children here in the District of Columbia. She's the spearhead of the movement. I take off my hat to people who really spend the days of their lives doing something like that.

THE WHITE HOUSE

We are now moved into the White House, at least partially, but we shall be bringing things down for months, as I sort out and store and send to the ranch or storage the accumulation of twenty-six years of living in various houses in Washington.

Mr. West notified us that Mrs. Kennedy had left and this afternoon the house was ready for us to move in. It will be infinitely more convenient for Lyndon and the staff, who have been working in makeshift arrangements, but both of us have loved The Elms and hate to close its door.

The press has been asking, over and over since President Kennedy's funeral, when we were moving in. Several days ago I became rather impatient with that staccato question and simply told Liz Carpenter (now my staff director and Press Secretary), "I would to God I could serve Mrs. Kennedy's comfort; I can at least serve her convenience." Liz told them just what I said and the question seems to have abated for a while. I know it must be difficult for Mrs. Kennedy to gather everything together in the agonizing aftermath of the assassination.

But the call came today to move, and Luci took the two beagles, "Him" and "Her," in her birthday convertible, and I got in another car, taking Liz and Bess with me so we could carry some of the breakable objects. I had our favorite picture of the Speaker, Mr. Sam Rayburn, in my hand. His is the only photograph of a person that we keep in our living room wherever we are, and I wanted it with us at the White House. His face is comforting at this milestone, just as he was at so many happier ones.

When we drove through the gates, several newswomen awaited us. That is a whole new adjustment for me—having every move watched and covered and considered news. I want to be fair, but I am sure that even at this most public address—1600 Pennsylvania Avenue—there are moments which are rightfully private.

Since we stepped off the plane on the night of November 22, there have been relentless demands for interviews—hundreds of them from all parts of the world. We have fended them off and directed them to Pierre Salinger. Now the time has come to lift this burden from his shoulders. Liz has been meeting with various groups of newswomen to seek their advice on the most efficient way to handle their needs. I want a workable formula that will allow us to live happily together—the press and me. I know many of them personally, value their friendship, and I respect their profession. Liz has combined their thoughts into a memo which boils down to two basic requests: "Be Available" and "Never Lie—tell us you can't tell us, but never lie." Well, I see no problems on either score, though I am sure there will be times when I will flinch from so many spectators looking into this glass house. But we can try. We can be cognizant of their needs and considerate of their deadlines.

When we arrived, Mr. West was waiting at the door for us and greeted Luci and me and took us to the second floor. He has worked at the White House for twenty-three years and is now Head Usher—a totally un-descriptive title. If he were at court he would be called Head Chamberlain, for his job embraces everything required to make this 132-room house operate smoothly. A few days ago when we visited with Tish Baldrige [Mrs. Kennedy's former Social Secretary], she called him "Mr. Wonderful," and I can already see why. He finds solutions to so many problems with quiet efficiency.

I decided that one of the first things I wanted to do was to meet the people who staff the household. I asked Mr. West to introduce me to all of them, for I want to know personally the people I shall be working with. By now, in fits and starts as they were on duty, I have met and shaken hands with what seemed to me dozens of butlers, maids, cleaning men. Bess Abell, my Social Secretary, went with me, and Liz went off to the East Wing to that ever-ringing telephone from newswomen who wanted to know the details of moving day. I told Liz when the need arises to use the library for briefings and to be sure the fire is lighted, and hot tea ready. During these past few days I have seen Isabelle Shelton, Nan Robertson, Frances Lewine, Helen Thomas, and Nancy Dickerson stand-

Saturday, December 7

ing hour after hour at the funeral and then outside The Elms well into the night. They must be exhausted and chilled to the bone.

Late this afternoon Walter Jenkins [Special Assistant to the President] and his wife Marjorie thoughtfully invited us to dinner at their home. There is nothing nicer than being invited out after a busy moving day. So I called Lyndon and we quickly accepted. Perhaps this also gave a breathing spell to the staff here at the White House who must have been carrying on with heavy hearts. We had a nice evening, comfortable with close friends. That is, we were as comfortable as you can be knowing that out in front are dozens of reporters and TV cameras waiting for you to leave. Well, I daresay they are uncomfortable too.

The whole country is still numb from the tragedy and it is hard to sort out the days and encompass all that has happened, but I keep reminding myself of Lyndon, for whom it is hardest of all to carry on. I find myself repeating that "new resolve" which he urged on all of us last week in his speech to Congress. Our challenge, he said, is "not to hesitate, not to pause, not to turn about and linger over this evil moment but to continue on our course so that we may fulfill the destiny that history has set for us."

That, we in this house must do most of all, but as I told Nellie Connally the other day when I talked to her over the phone, I feel like I am suddenly onstage for a part I never rehearsed.

Saturday, December 14

This has been the most restful day since November 22. I slept late and read the papers as much as possible. Then I spent several hours at The Elms. What a job, trying to sell that house I had filled with much love and some taste, I hope, and a great deal of care! It took me three or four months to decorate it and get settled in it. Now I must dismantle it in a couple of weeks, taking into consideration what Lynda and Luci might want when they get married. I must decide what furniture might appreciate in value and what could depreciate, and what I must leave behind in order to effect a good sale for the house.

Today Luci had a handsome young midshipman from the Academy over, LeRoy Bates, and I was so happy to see children and laughter in the White House. There were several young girls here too and just watching them dashing about the halls made me feel good.

Then for dinner, not forgetting the big business of future legislation, we

had a representative group and their wives from the Hill: Hale Boggs, Albert Thomas, Wilbur Mills, and Jack Brooks—he's one of the liveliest people I know.—Carl Albert alone (Mrs. Albert was ill), the Gerald Fords—he's a Republican leader—and, of course, Homer Thornberry, our own Congressman.

The conversation was about recognizing the Dominican Republic and naming Tom Mann [former Ambassador to Mexico] to—I don't quite know the title—an all-over Latin American Administrator in the State Department. And most of all, the talk among the men was about the Tax Bill, the Tax Bill, the Tax Bill.

In the course of the evening I took the ladies to see our bedrooms and was touched and pleased to see how interested they were. I also discovered some pretty interesting things—for instance, that Carl Albert is quite an authority on the Catlin Indian pictures in the hall. And everyone, of course, loved seeing the Treaty Room with the chandelier which came from Lyndon's old office, P-38, his habitat as Majority Leader and later as Vice President.

So it was a good evening, but what depths of friendship we really have and what feelings of warmth it created remains to be seen. At any rate, the Hill is my Hill, and the people of the House and the Senate who make it up are so many of the people I care a lot about. Besides just plain liking Gerald Ford, it is nice to remember that Betty Ford and I came to the Eighty-first Club together. (That's a club consisting of the wives whose husbands were elected to the Eighty-first Congress in 1948.) I hope there will be a lot more nights like tonight.

Wednesday, December 18

Eva Adams, Director of the Mint, came over this morning with Gilroy Roberts, a sculptor, to show me a head of Lyndon that he is doing. It's a model for the Presidential medal. (Every President must have his likeness struck for the Presidential medal.) They wanted my opinion of it. I think the hardest thing for a sculptor to capture is the eyes, and the eyes were wonderful, and the brow and the shape of the head. (Lyndon, I think, has a rather magnificently shaped head.) The ears were just as big as Lyndon's are and I wouldn't have them the slightest bit smaller. The mouth I didn't really like much. It had an almost too beneficent look, a look I have seen many times and like. But I think for the purposes