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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Date 5/22/75

TO: BRENT SCOWCROFT

FROM: JERRY H. 

Do you have any problems with the
attached letters?

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON


May 22, 1975

ADMINISTRATIVELY CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM FOR:

ROBERT T. HARTMANN

FROM:

JERRY H. 

The following notation was returned in the President's outbox with the attached material:

-- All excellent suggestions. Make sure Bob O. carries them out.

Please follow-up with the appropriate action.

Thank you.

cc: Don Rumsfeld

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Bob H

All excellent suggestions.
Make sure Bob O.
carries them out.

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN. *lg.*

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 7, 1975

TO: BOB HARTMANN *10/11*
VIA: PAUL THEIS *PT*
FROM: BOB ORBEN *R.O.*
SUBJECT: Observations on recent speeches

WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENTS' ASSOCIATION DINNER: (11 minutes)
Well delivered, good pacing. The serious part, in particular, was done in a very effective manner. The humor was delivered with a smile and communicated well to the audience.

As you know, this was no normal night and I would like to touch on the consequences of the Danny Thomas performance. It might be assumed that following somebody who does badly might be a plus for the next speaker, but this is rarely the case. The mood and responsiveness of any audience changes with startling rapidity. Danny started off with a warm audience -- had their attention but wasn't doing that well. Then he did the "wife" material that brought on the hissing. The audience became restive and when he went into the ethnic and religious stories, he lost even more of his listeners. A few even walked out at this point.

Fortunately, he was able to regain control of the remainder of the audience, but he finished leaving the group not in the festive mood they began the dinner with. He worked forty-five minutes after Marlo had worked seven minutes --- way too long for the structure of the program and far longer than the committee had asked him to perform. The result was that the President had to begin his remarks in a less than fun atmosphere. He did very well, and since the tone and subject matter of his talk was everything that Danny's should have been, it stood out in sharp contrast and has been well received.

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BUT, and I touched on this point in a memo some months ago, I don't think the President should have to cope with this sort of situation. When you close a long program you are presented with a number of problems: The audience is tired. The good subjects may have been picked over. If the program is too long you may lose news coverage. And if a professional entertainer or comedian precedes you on the program, there is always the danger of their doing very well and being a hard act to follow --- or doing very badly and frosting the audience. These are problems that can easily be avoided.

I have now talked to dozens of program committees as part of researching material and I have found that with few exceptions, they are more than willing to spot the President's speech wherever we want it to be. There are a few events where tradition is so strong that this might not be proper (Gridiron and Alfalfa), but in discussing this WHITE HOUSE CORRESPONDENTS' event with some of their officials afterwards, I felt there would have been no objection or problem in having the President go on when the dinner ended and before the entertainment.

This is the way it was handled at the WHITE HOUSE NEWS PHOTOGRAPHERS DINNER and it worked very well. The President followed the awards and he had all of the good spirit of the audience going with him. If he had been positioned after the entertainment and remember, Buddy Hackett worked almost an hour and had to be nudged off, I doubt if the reaction to his talk would have been the same.

This problem rarely intrudes itself except at fun and mostly social events, where there is entertainment or other speakers in a light vein, or awards. My recommendation is that I work with the Advance Office on such programs to make sure that the President's positioning on the program is to his maximum advantage. I would attempt to avoid such situations as following a Bob Hope or Danny Thomas or excessively long program --- or anything else that might minimize the effectiveness of the President's appearance.

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ROGERS MORTON SWEARING-IN CEREMONY: (10 minutes)

This was only the second swearing-in ceremony I have seen. The other was for Carla Hills. I have listened to tapes of similar events though and feel the President comes across more effectively and much more naturally when working from talking points rather than a fully worked out text.

Basically, these texts are all the same. These obligatory remarks are rarely distinctive and it's a question of getting a few facts of background mentioned and expressing some hopes for the future. I feel that when working to small groups, a prepared text is an artificial barrier to the President's rapport with his audience. He wings these events very well and with the help of a fact sheet -- I believe he would come across more naturally than with a complete speech. As usual, I would recommend brevity -- perhaps five minutes tops for this type of event.

I mentioned to the President the other day that I had inadvertently thrown him a curve by the nature of the two pleasantries I gave him for this event. I now see that if humor is to work on these special occasions, it has to be set up more as a relevant story than as one-liners, so that the audience has time to assess the fact that something funny might be on the way. In the future, if there is sufficient time for research, I will go for true, personalized observations like those used for the Shultz portrait on Monday.

However, I would repeat what I wrote in a recent memo. The President has often scored a better humor reaction from the small, intimate audiences with his own ad-libs than with prepared material he is obviously reading.

Immediately following the ROGERS MORTON event where the first prepared pleasantry went completely into the ground and the second just about --- the President did two ad-libs at the BICENTENNIAL BOND ceremony that got good laughs because they were said naturally and were totally in keeping with the flow of events. These small ceremonies are almost private parties and you wouldn't think of going to a party and reading from a script. I think the closer we can keep the President's remarks to an informal, just-between-us-friends delivery -- the more effective they will be.

Could we try talking points on future ones and if I can research some honest story or anecdotal humor, this will be included fully fleshed out. But there will be occasions when easy, natural humor can not be produced -- either because there is not the time or the proper contacts to research

(more)

it, or because of a dearth of inspiration on my part. In such cases, I think the President will fare better by using his own spontaneous ad-libs as opposed to reading humor dragged in by the heels.

Once again, I am only talking about the small Oval Office and East Room type of ceremony --- not the larger, more formal audience events.

GEORGE SHULTZ PORTRAIT UNVEILING: (4 minutes)

This event comes close to what I am suggesting. The President did have a prepared text but he obviously used it as talking points. The three humor pegs were all based on inside actualities and all worked. It was short, light, properly laudatory, did not repeat the listing of credits and accomplishments described in detail by Secretary Simon, and effective.

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