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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

January 30, 1940.

Memorandum For Paula Larrabee:

I think this should be in the President's files, Don't you?

James Rowe

Re-Sholtz, Gov
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

June 26, 1940.

JIM ROWE:

FOR YOUR INFORMATION.

F.D.R.

6/26 - Noted.

Paula,

I think you had better
drop this in your file.

J.H.R.
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

September 13, 1940

Memorandum For Grace Tully:

Nan Honeyman

I spoke to Dan Tobin and he said he would see what he could do. He sounded a bit doubtful. As you know, Oregon is "Dave Beck territory" and he and Dan recognise "spheres of influence" when they see one.

James Rowe, Jr.
Gracie,

As usual, will you give this to the Boss, if it is the right time and place. This Irishman is a natural for U.S. Attorney and when Tammany and the Democrats agree with me, it must be right.

No news from here, that you can't get more accurately from the room next to you. I am still content but there, many hours when I would like to see Mrs. Rowe, Miss Rowe, my Irish setter, and then take a walk down to the W.H. to pass the time of day with you. Tell Kitty she is well in the dog house now. I guess this fellow Rosenman, whoever he is, has replaced me in her affections. I hope he chokes, or in the alternative, I hope you choke him.

The servicemen still are for the Boss and still are not voting for him. Wasn't that last speech a corker? By "last" I mean Fala. That's the only one I've seen. It made me really homesick!

I envy you the glamour and excitement and fun that is whirling around the W.H. these last few weeks before election. At the time it seems like a grind but you will never have as much fun again. Take it from one who has been there, and ain't no longer!

I hear The Cork had another son. Is he working for the Boss or sitting on the sidelines. I certainly hope it is the former. We need him and if isn't helping I'll kick him in the pants personally. My love to Benjy Cohen, Bill Hassett, my favorite brunette beauty Dorothy (she probably thinks its brown) and all the rest, including Mike Reilly...... and give Miss Gilligan a very distant and quite haughty and reserved hello.

My best,
Lt. (jg) James Rowe Jr., USNR
U.S.S. Suwannee
c/o Fleet Post Office
San Francisco, California

Miss Grace Tully
The White House
Washington, D.C.
26 August 1944

Dear Grace (and the Boss, if he has time)

This is Rowe reporting in from the Pacific. I have been somewhat dilatory of late, because the President has been renominated and has covered the Pacific since last I wrote. I was and am somewhat alarmed that three different people took the trouble of writing me that he would be out my way long before he got to the Pacific. I wonder how the devil those things get out, but certainly this last trip did! Tell Mike Reilly he’d better crack down. (By the way I had a letter from a lady I know who had met Mike down South and said he was the handsomest man she had ever seen. Is that true?)

You will not be surprised to know I have several complaints to make about the way the country is being run. I am deeply disappointed that the Democratic platform did not have a plank promising to fire Jessie Jones after November seventh for the Texas double-crosser. As you may remember, I have devoted many of my moments to prove to the Boss that Jessie always was and always will be a double-crosser. I sometimes wonder he doesn’t cut his own throat by mistake. I will definitely become anti-Roosevelt if he stays in this time.

Nor was I happy about Truman. Wallace looked better losing than he ever did in winning and although I know it is sentimental, I liked the crowd on his side better than I did the boys against him. I am pleased he ran so well because it shows the New Dealers still have some power, even if we never would get down and try to take over the Democrats instead of complaining about how much say they had. And I was disappointed that Ed Pauley was still in the party. He doesn’t belong there and never did.

Of course I know Truman is a better man, in terms of competence, than the people are going to find out. He is certainly better than Bricker and I have even found myself telling the Republicans aboard ship that I would prefer him to Dewey as President. But I would still hate to see him President.

That is all the complaining I have to do at the moment. I have been out of Washington a year now and living with officers who are mostly Republican. I have kept from being court-martialed by the skin of my teeth several times. I have learned, when some
moran says "Even if you're for Roosevelt you don't mind my saying he's a (s%& (do you", I should say "Oh, not at all," instead of "How would like a good kick in the teeth, brother?" It seems they have rules against busting people in the Navy.

Only recently I have been told that Roosevelt got us into the war, and that Roosevelt has always been against the Navy. When I rather simply try to recount how he started building up the Navy(against my better judgment as usual) in 1934 I am told it was inevitable, that anyone would do it. I now have an office in the forecastle where I can lock the door, scream for five minutes and come out smiling.

I see where we are flubbing the campaign as usual. My scouts report the Democratic headquarters is just as dead under Hannegan as it was under Flynn and Walker. You will say that is a mathematical impossibility and so would I, but honest Grace, that's what the folks back home tell me. Thank God for PAC, Sidney Hillman's outfit. I hear "Beanie Baldwin is really running it. Do you remember the time, almost four years ago, right after Wilkie tried to save America for the Americans, when I told Beanie to send you a note about the Agricultural Committee, and he called Sam Rayburn and the Boss didn't read it and you didn't read it and the Boss sent it to Sam Rayburn and he read it? Sam stayed mad at me and Beanie for a year.

Why didn't we get Rayburn as Vice President? He was the only real Roosevelt man in the whole crowd except Bill Douglas?

Oh, yes the serviceman's vote. It bothers me. The Navy Department has done a beautiful job in getting out applications for ballots and has had good posters, etc. It keeps pushing the thing, completely impartial of course, and has done an excellent piece of work in trying to make the complicated vote law work. I am "Voting Officer" on my carrier which means I handle the ballots. Since I am interested in politics (and believe the more servicemen vote the better for the President) I also did a good job in trying to get the men to apply for ballots. I picked a time for handing out the postcards when we were not busy and the men were relaxed. I did it also right after Dewey's nomination when there was more interest in politics than before or since.

aren't

Well, the simple answer is that they aren't interested enough. The officers are and they divide about 50-50 for Roosevelt and Dewey. (I would guess the Roosevelt percentage on this ship is higher than usual.) The men are almost solidly for Roosevelt. But 40 per cent are too young to vote and of the rest, only about one in ten bothered to apply. They admit either they don't care or that Roosevelt will win so easily it isn't worth bothering about.
If they get interested later on, it will be too late to apply and vote.

I am afraid that is what is happening in the States, from all I read and hear. The people who would vote for the President normally just aren’t interested enough this year to go through the mechanics, mostly because they think he has a weakaway.

But we know that the lower the vote the larger the percentage of the Republicans. We can’t win unless we get out the vote. And if the experience on my ship and nearby ships is symptomatic of the servicemen’s vote there just won’t be any. I think the conditions have been ideal for them. Shipboard life is so completely monotonous that any thing new interests the men and they should have grabbed at this. Their conditions of living are so much better than Army troops that they have leisure enough to do this sort of thing. In brief, if they wouldn’t bother on the Suwannee when every effort was made to get them to, I don’t think they will in France or New Guinea in the dirt and mud.

I hope I am wrong and that Hannegan and the Bosses are wondermen in getting out the vote. I doubt that Labor can get it’s vote out, because bellies are too full.

And I also am another one of the harping critics who believes the President is too far away from us, the people, today. Everyone sits around and says when the President goes campaigning, he will get the votes. But in 1940 he started awful late. One of my friends who works for the Republican National Committee wrote me the other day very cockily, pointing out how beautifully organized the Dewey machine is, and saying “we won’t get caught napping and let F.D.R. pull it out of the fire with four speeches this time!” Incidentally, he laughed at the Democratic Committee, said he always knew they were asleep in past elections but that they have the graveyard tombstone set up this time.

So I hope the Boss does a lot of talking about something and continually. I hope he tells the people that he is going to campaign for one week only, saying that it shows how strong and united a democracy we have that in time of war we stop for an election and even the President must present his side as a candidate to the people. And except for that one week he will be too busy with his job to campaign. Someone else can ask how the wartime governor of New York can spend so much time away from the desk. And the President should do it now (announce it now, I mean) so the Republicans can’t say for psychological purposes that we are scared.

And another thing: watch out for the Commander-in-Chief label. It is all right to crack Dewey for his abdication and to tell the home front that Dewey has abdicated before he is elected.
but for some peculiar reason the servicemen resent the title and it doesn't do any good to explain the Constitution to them.

Interestingly enough, I find the old Roosevelt theme strongest among these kids who certainly can't remember much about 1932. When they get in an argument it always ends the same way: Anyway when the depression was on, he tried. That is religion and that counts even today more than anything else. So Mr. Hoover had better be dusted off and kicked around a little.

And now, Grace, that I have sat down and patiently explained to you how the election should be handled, what is the gossip? As the campaign nears, I regret that I ever left, and wish I were back at least until November 7th. I squelch ever Republican aboard who presumto argue but that is pretty dull dish for an expert. I have visions of the W.H. teeming with politics, war or no war and I hope it is true. The convention seemed to be handled beautifully and for that Hannegan does deserve credit. I have not heard a peep about my erstwhile chums Tommy Corcoran and Dave Niles and would guess they were told to lie low, along with Harry Hopkins, which is what should have been done. I was amused by my friends Biddle and Ickes working so hard for Wallace, a man neither has ever liked for a minute. But, as I say I would have been for him too, despite his astrologer meanderings. But I would hate to see him President.

But someone said to me the other day, "You would hate to see anyone President except Roosevelt" and I guess that is the answer.

My good wife keeps me pretty well informed on the passing scene and Mary Eben gives me the gossip with a regularity that delights me. I wish you would speak sharply to Sam Rosenman and tell him he is working Kitty so hard she never gets a moment to write me a letter and that he will have to make an accounting to me when I return. That is the only explanation I have for Kitty not writing; otherwise the perfect lady would be imperfect. But don't let her read this until she has written one.

There is little I want to say and less you want to hear about Missy. Lib sent me a clipping about it and I suppose it is all for the best, but I have never been one of those who got any pleasure or relief from saying that sort of thing. I know only Missy for my book was just about the greatest lady I ever met and the best thing that ever happened to the President. She had of course loyalty, but who hasn't, to the President (except J.J.)? she knew how to use that loyalty and to separate the self-seekers and those who had some instinct of help for the people. The W.H. was a much better place because of her, and through it so was the country. I have never felt so badly about anyone I haven't seen
for years as I did about her. Anyway, it has always been a wonder to me why the women around the President were so good and the men so damned incompetent. I don't mean that as flattery; it just happens to be true. It would be hard to write a paper without painstaking research to document it about the bungling in the W.H. and the competence in the W.H., but I could write it. I
would have two columns: Male and Female. I hasten to exempt Bill Hashet from this diatribe and of course Rudolph but I can think of no other exceptions (including yours truly).

The war goes well with me. The glamour and excitement is all gone now and it is just a job but it is a job well worth doing and I am content which I would not be in Washington. I have a vague sort of hope that before too many months more have passed I may get to Washington for a week or so but nothing active to base that hope on. If I do I hope it is before election, I can't tell you where I have been but if you are interested enough maybe the Boss naval aide will look it up for you. Just tell him the name of the carrier.

As usual, I end this letter with the delicate hint that I would like to be a very junior naval aide at the peace conference. I keep putting that bait out with regularity but the wary fish doesn't even turn his head. As you may remember, I am persistent.

France goes well and swell and the President fights a very satisfactory war, so far as I am concerned. I think the talk that if France falls it's all over and Germany quits before election it will defeat him is claptrap. All you have to do is ask people to picture the peace table with Churchill Stalin, Chiang---and Dewey sitting there. Think about it awhile and that shake you have is only a cold shudder running down your back!

My best to the President and my love to you and Kitty and the rest.
Dear Grace,

The White House

The White House

Work - 10 C.

USS John Hancock

10 Fleet Post Office

San Francisco

Love

[Handwritten note:]

The letter was not opened by me.

Yours,

James H. Rowe, Jr.

[Postmark: AUG 1944]