

Dear Jim,

Forgive me for not writing sooner. It was with great sadness to hear about Olivia. I trust that you, Geoffrey, and Adam are able to smile and take comfort with the memory of a remarkable lady.

I have taken the liberty of jotting down some of my favorite OBJ memories. Please excuse any misremembrances – the fog of time is to be blamed.

Those of us who had the pleasure to meet Olivia knew that besides being beautiful, she was quite talented. Moreover, Olivia would be one of the most fascinating individuals we would ever have the privilege to know.

My most treasured memory of Olivia has had a lasting impression inasmuch as I learned valuable life lessons. And, that remembrance is The Dinner Party.

To me, Olivia stepped right out of central casting. Did I feel this way because Harry Carey, Jr. was her uncle? Or, was it because she reminded me of Katharine Hepburn? Olivia, like Hepburn, was equally at home working in her garden or entertaining a President of the United States in her apartment furnished with (too small) wicker chairs.

I digress – back to The Dinner Party.

Jim and Olivia were hosting their first Washington dinner party. Although Jim was a Freshman Congressman, his Rolodex included the names of prominent public officials from when he served as President Johnson's Appointments Secretary.

The guest list was impressive: the Speaker of the House, Carl Albert, and his wife, Mary...the British Ambassador, Sir Peter, and Lady Ramsbotham...The New York Times Supreme Court correspondent, Warren Weaver (which was opportune because of the following day's event)...and my personal favorite, Congresswoman Lindy Boggs. (To this day, I am unable to watch Cokie Roberts without thinking of her mother.) Being in their early thirties, Jim and Olivia were much younger than their guests.

The Dinner Party was held the night before the Supreme Court was handing down its decision on whether or not the President of the United States would be required to release the Oval Office tapes. Just two blocks from Jim's and Olivia's house, people had been gathering for hours to watch the next day's Supreme Court proceedings.

A constitutional crisis, the likes of which we had not witnessed since the Civil War, could soon be upon us; and, some of the diners would have a direct or indirect role to play. Washington, along with the entire country, was anxiously waiting for the Justices' ruling.

I felt honored when Olivia asked me to help with The Dinner Party. Without hesitation, I signed up as did two interns. (Although I was in college, as were the interns, I thought they were novices since I had been working on Capitol Hill from the time I was in high school.) We would be The Dinner Party staff. It's unclear who was more nervous that summer evening – President Nixon or me. (The interns thought it was great fun.)

Admittedly, I was overawed by Olivia's intelligence (Stanford undergraduate and Harvard Law). On top of that, she was politically astute. A favorite remembrance is when we learned that Senator Goldwater was to visit Tulsa days before the 1972 election.

Olivia called Senator Goldwater to tell him that he would be campaigning for her husband's opponent. She was in a position to do this since Barry Goldwater and Olivia's mother, aunt, and uncle were close family friends. During that weekend campaign trip, whenever Senator Goldwater was next to Jim's opponent he would ever so slightly turn his shoulder away from him. Plus, the Senator mispronounced the Republican candidate's name. Although Goldwater's body language and mispronunciation were slight, reporters made comments by the second day.

The fact that Jim won in a Republican district during the Nixon / McGovern election was so unexpected by the national media that during the election night coverage Walter Cronkite proclaimed that it was a major upset. I have often wondered what Olivia said to Senator Goldwater after the election. I'm not sure if I would have had the courage to call the Senator knowing that when he was running against LBJ, Olivia's family told Senator Goldwater that they would be voting for President Johnson.

I digress – back to The Dinner Party. Along with her many other qualities, Olivia was charming and creative with exquisite taste. And, exquisite is often expensive. Jim, being a wise husband on a Congressman's salary, gave Olivia a budget for The Dinner Party.

One characteristic I especially valued was Olivia's cleverness. I'm still impressed with her ability to make a chandelier from a bicycle wheel, to teach herself how to reline a chimney flue, and to reupholster a chair – for the first time – days before The Dinner Party.

Olivia assessed the budget constraints for The Dinner Party as a military leader would survey the landscape where her side was undercapitalized. The food was to be simple (cheap), but classic (familiar). Fortunately, it was mid-summer and the produce was fresh and inexpensive.

The cocktail hors d'oeuvres came from Safeway's frozen food aisle. Olivia explained that (a) the booze took precedence and (b) the hors d'oeuvres were a casualty of limited resources. They were not a smash; it didn't matter.

The morning of The Dinner Party, Olivia and I made mayonnaise for the salad dressing. It was delicious. I had never made mayonnaise. I'm not sure Olivia had either.

Next, we made chocolate mousse. We filled the beautiful crystal parfait glasses with the delectable looking dessert. Simultaneously, we reached for a spoon to sample the remaining mousse. Something was wrong...we looked at each other and questioned why the mousse was on the heavy side and had a slightly bitter flavor. Then we noticed that we forgot to incorporate the second half of the whipped egg whites.

Since we didn't have enough ingredients to remake the chocolate mousse, Olivia said that we would go ahead and serve what we had made. At the time, I didn't have a firm opinion on frozen hors d'oeuvres, but I did know my chocolate mousse.

Luckily, Olivia suggested that we make chocolate chip cookies just in case the dinner guests noticed the not-quite-right mousse. When the dessert course was served, one by one the guests put down their spoons after the first bite. Out came the cookies. They were a BIG hit. I wonder how many Washington dinner parties with the Speaker of the House or the British Ambassador as guests have served chocolate chip cookies.

Once the food preparation was completed, we drove to the best butcher shop in Georgetown to buy eight filet mignon steaks – one for each diner. The meat would be the star attraction; budget be damned.

Purchasing the wine and spirits was our next stop. Because Jim and Olivia were not big drinkers, this was the biggest part of our budget.

The steaks were to be grilled in the backyard. When I asked about the barbeque grill, Olivia said let's build one from the bricks being used for the apartment renovation at the back of the house. The grills, of course, would come from the oven.

My grilling experience was somewhat limited to be generous. And, because of the tight budget, we did not buy an insurance filet mignon. Did I mention that OBJ was fearless?

By late afternoon, I went home to clean up. It wasn't long before I returned since my apartment was a couple of blocks away. As I was walking up the street, I saw Olivia sitting in her front yard flower garden talking to a neighbor about gardening and appearing to not have a care in the world. It was either my look of panic or she realized the time. Within a few minutes Olivia came into the kitchen with bunches of flowers – roots and all – and arranged them in elegant sterling silver bowls. The flowers, which were for the dining room table, looked beautiful. (Olivia was again ahead of her time. Years later, I saw similar flower arrangements.)

Soon thereafter, Jim came home to dress for The Dinner Party and saw that the table was not set. He walked to the back of the dining room, which had built-in shelves for

the china, silver, and crystal, opened each door and started tossing plates, silverware, and glasses to Olivia and me.

As we were setting the table, Jim asked if I had ever served. My look told him the answer. Jim said to serve from the left, remove from the right; and, to start with Olivia and go counterclockwise.

With the last piece of The Dinner Party in place, Jim and Olivia went upstairs to change. And, this is yet another attribute that I admired about OBJ. It wasn't ten minutes before she reappeared looking gorgeous.

At the appointed hour, the first guest arrived. Within a few minutes, Jim and Olivia and their guests were having cocktails in the living room.

Everything was on schedule. I went through my list once again. That's when time itself stopped. I had forgotten to start baking the potatoes. (And, not a microwave in sight.)

I had one of the interns go get Olivia. When I told Olivia what I had done or more importantly hadn't done, without missing a beat, she said to make instant mashed potatoes. (A box was kept in the cupboard.) I said that I could not serve the Speaker of the House instant mashed potatoes.

Then, Olivia suggested serving potato chips. She reached for the large container of potato chips on the kitchen shelf to make sure that there were enough chips for everyone. I felt my face turning red and said that I could not serve the British Ambassador potato chips. Olivia turned to leave the kitchen and nonchalantly told me that whatever I decided would be fine and joined her guests.

Regrettably, I never asked Olivia if she really didn't care or if it was an attempt to keep me from melting down. Whatever the reason, her dispassionate response enabled me to recover from my mistake.

After some contemplation, I called the Hawk 'n' Dove. I pretended to be Congressman Jones and explained that I needed eight baked potatoes ASAP.

Unbeknownst to me until after the last guest said goodnight that July evening, Olivia had come back to the kitchen and overheard my telephone conversation. She rejoined her guests and told them about the baked potato incident.

As I was serving the baked potatoes, three of the guests made compliments about the potatoes, which I thought was somewhat odd at the time. (In hindsight, I believe they were trying to make me feel better. An act of kindness I try not to forget.) The comment that stood out the most was from Mary Albert. As I was placing the potato on her plate, she looked up at me and said in a soft southern accent: "This is the best baked potato I have ever had."

Unfortunately, this was not the end of the baked potato story. Who knew that you're supposed to remove the aluminum foil before serving a baked potato? I didn't realize until later about my faux pas. Furthermore, I had never heard of botulinum bacteria.

The diners were staring at their aluminum foil wrapped Hawk 'n' Dove baked potato and wondering how to tackle it. Jim picked up his potato with both hands, pulled off the aluminum foil, rolled it into a ball, and placed the ball of foil next to his plate. The others followed suit.

Because of the layout of the East Capitol Street house, some choreography was needed to grill the steaks. While drinks were being served, I slipped out of the dining room door that opened on to the side yard which led to the backyard behind the apartment where we had built the grill. After lighting the charcoal, I returned to the kitchen before the guests came into the dining room.

Upon serving the first course, I ducked out of the living room door with the star attraction. Once outside, I darted towards the apartment's front door. Because the apartment was at the back of the house, I had to crouch down when passing the dining room's windows so as not to be seen by The Dinner Party guests.

Then, I navigated the apartment's construction site and out one of the back windows to put the steaks on the grill. After turning over the steaks, I returned to the kitchen, again crouching down below the dining room's windows, to check on the food. After seeing everything was in order, I retreated out of the living room door, down the pathway, again crouching underneath the windows, through the apartment and out a back window.

The Speaker and the Ambassador were driven to The Dinner Party. I noticed that both drivers were watching me as I was going back and forth. Dinner and a show.

During cocktails, one of the interns asked each person how they preferred their steak cooked. Her notes on the paper napkin became somewhat unreadable – as if it mattered. I pretended to know what each guest requested. While serving, I would randomly select a filet as though it was for that diner, except for one – Jim's. His I knew.

As I was taking the steaks off the grill, I was short one filet mignon. Since we didn't have an extra steak, I was trying to think of a reason not to serve Jim his filet. Then in the dimming light, I saw that the missing steak had fallen into the charcoal. I wasn't sure if it was edible.

Everyone seemed to enjoy their filet mignon except for Jim, which I accept full responsibility. When I served Jim, I told him not to eat his steak. I should have told him to watch out for bits of charcoal that I overlooked. Jim later told me that during dinner he was worried if the issue was limited to only his filet mignon.

Serving the food and wine went off without a hitch thanks to Lindy Boggs. My direct line of vision behind Olivia was Mrs. Boggs. As I was trying to remember which side to serve or take away, the Congresswoman would shake her head back and forth or up and down ever so faintly to signal if I was doing it correctly.

Except for the chocolate mousse, the rest of The Dinner Party was uneventful. The conversation during dinner was lively, witty, and smart.

After the last course was finished, The Dinner Party adjourned to the living room for after-dinner drinks. At some point, the two interns sat down at the dining room table to nibble on the chocolate chip cookies while waiting for the evening to end. Guests would wander in and sit down to speak with them.

Jim later told me that the intern who was serving the after-dinner drinks was engaging the guests in conversation. He also might have had a drink in his hand.

Jim and Olivia complimented us on a delightful evening. It wasn't long before the thank you notes arrived. The notes were more than nice. The general theme was how much they enjoyed and appreciated the not-your-typical dinner party.

Washington dinner parties, at least back then, were a regimented affair. Olivia had everyone feeling as though they were spending an evening with close friends. She knew exactly what she was doing when she told her guests about the baked potatoes.

Four decades later, The Dinner Party is one of my favorite memories. That fun, yet somewhat terrifying, magical evening taught me a lot.

Many years passed before I understood what I liked most about OBJ: Being around Olivia was *never* dull.

Jim, I wanted you, Geoffrey, and Adam to know the influence Olivia has had on my life. I'm so lucky to have known her.

With great affection,

Ken