

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Friday, March 20, 1964

WHD

This morning I had an appointment that I have been looking forward to very much. Mrs. Paul Mellon came at 10:30 to walk around the gardens with me. Wife of one of the richest men in the United States, daughter-in-law of the Secretary of the Treasury, Mr. Andrew Mellon, who gave the National Art Gallery and the great bulk of its treasures to the government. Owner of a home in Virginia, another in Georgetown, one somewhere in the British West Indies, and wherever else I don't know. She is herself, one of the really great authorities on gardens, on planting in general, and a working-at-it authority, a planning, creative authority. She, it was, who implemented the things Mrs. Kennedy wanted to get done in the White House grounds, transforming the rose garden into a thing of exquisite beauty, changing the flower decorations in the White House into works of art, so delicate and distinguished, and imaginative, and so charming. I love to walk from room to room and see what they're going to be, particularly in the queen's room.

I was very anxious to meet her because I want excellence to be applauded and if possible, to be preserved. We went lovingly into every detail of the story of the Rose Garden, we walked around much of the grounds, and then we went into the comparable garden on the East side and it is there that Mrs. Mellon has a plan to transform that garden into a very dainty, feminine garden and put up a little plaque, as a tribute to Jacqueline Kennedy for all that she did for the White House. I think that no accolade could be enough and am all for getting it done, and I will go ahead with that idea.

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and see what we can bring into being.

She's a very easy, unassuming person, I liked her very much although I could by no means match knowledge with knowledge, but I can at least match it with understanding and appreciation, and let her know how much it means to thousands, even millions of people.

Next in the day was desk work. And then this afternoon, I had a very pleasant interlude. Mrs. Clayborne Pell, Lindy Boggs, and Scooter came over and we went swimming in the White House pool. Lyndon has a cold, which he has had since about Monday, I think, probably the result of all those hot lights on the TV program, so I felt pretty sure we could have the pool to ourselves.

And we just had ourselves some drinks down there, and just swam around lazily, and talked and talked, and talked. I wanted a chance to thank them for all the hard work they did in putting on the dinner. They were the three co-chairmen. And also it was fun just to get to be with them.

There are so many people that do so much for us and I could spend four hours a day saying thank you without catching up, quite. This was one of those times when I was determined to enjoy the ["]here and now["], this hour, the special perogatives of the White House, among the nicest of which is the pool. Not only to enjoy, but to share.

After they left, I went up to the solarium, had a bite of supper on a tray with ^{Marilyn} Mary Allen, Lynda and Warrie Lynn. The four of us played bridge and looked out at the Washington Monument, and I thought how charming this room really could be with a touch of the hand.

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I had asked Lyndon what he thought about the project of naming the East Garden, the Jacqueline Kennedy Garden. He thought it was fine. I then ran it by Clark Clifford, the legal advisor to the White House, since Truman days, and continued by us without portfolio. He thought it was an excellent idea, but suggested that it might be well to mention it to two people, which I could readily see why. First, Mr. Hertzog, the head of the National Park Services, whose job it is to oversee the White House grounds. I tracked him down and he was very much in agreement, although I asked him to make sure there wasn't any fine print lurking in the legislation anywhere, that might make it difficult. He called me back and said that there wasn't indeed, it would be fine. And then I called Bill Walton of the Fine Arts Commission. Except for his failure to call on the Fine Arts Commission, Mr. Truman wouldn't have had any trouble with his famous Balcony, so I did want to touch that base. He too, was very much in favor of the idea. It only remained to call Mrs. Kennedy herself. I did, she said, "No." She didn't think first ladies deserved any recognition, it was really just her husband's job, that had accomplished anything.

And then she went on to say, but the important thing was to have the work continue, to have the garden finished, to have Mrs. Mellon go on and finally, laughingly, she said, "Well, if she wants to scratch my initials on a tree, or put a plaque ever so little underneath some bench."

So now I must get back to Mrs. Mellon with that, and I think it will happen. My main hope is to have the grounds and the flowers in the house, continue to feel the artistry of Mrs. Mellon's hand, and I believe is the

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only way she approaches the job, will be if she can name it the Jacqueline Kennedy garden.