

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Monday, February 15, 1965

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It began with work at the desk, and then a little past 12, leaving with Bess for New York, to attend the premier of The Greatest Story Ever Told, based on the life of Christ, by Fulton Ousler.

And tonight, a benefit for the Association of the United Nations, and the Eleanor Roosevelt Memorial Fund.

But first, I had planned two treats for myself, so when we arrived at LaGuardia, after lunch on board the plane, we went to the first treat. A visit to a project in Harlem, sponsored and paid for by Mrs. Vincent Astor. Sort of park/playground project.

Mrs. Astor met me at the plane, beautifully dressed, vivacious, and very knowledgeable and interesting, in her park project. I had heard about it from Stu Udall. It was awful, really, to ask to see it in February, that drabest of months, rather like insisting on seeing the baby, when the baby had chicken pox and had just spit up.

But Mrs. Astor met me and took me to George Washington Carver Park, in Harlem, an open area surrounded by highrise apartments, 11,000 families live surrounding it. Grass is impossible where you're going to have that much use, the density practically forbids grass, so there are ^{plane} ~~plain~~ trees and flowers, planted in raised cement tubs, or long boxes. She said begonias grow the best in the summer time, and there is much use of ivy. And a long pergola or arbor with vines growing ^{over it} in the summer time, but, alas, in winter quite bare, and seats underneath, where old people can sit in the shade, and watch the children play, in the attractive play yard close by,

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filled with sturdy, imaginative play equipment. Huge round masonry pipes or culverts, that could become a good place for hiding, or for races, or maybe be a cave, with a little imagination. And amusing stone animals; a goat, a bear, others to ride on. And then a semi-circle of stone seats that descend to a "theatre in the round," where, I am told, in the summer time the local youngsters who know how to play a guitar, or sing, can entertain their neighbors. And also the real theatrical productions are put on by schools and drama troupes.

built for
It's ~~about~~ a usage of 2000 people per night in the summer time and then of course, in the center of it, there was a statue of George Washington Carver, holding, I suppose, a peanut. He was a little boy in this statue, very appropriate for a children's playground.

This would lead you to believe that the population of the place was Negro, but Mrs. Astor told me that the Puerto Ricans had just about taken over the section, and sure enough, in a few minutes, we were surrounded by youngsters, very Latin looking, who would use a Spanish phrase as they sidled by.

It's not easy to do this sort of thing unannounced, and presently more people with TV cameras hove into view. I would have loved it, if it had been May with the trees green and the flowers blooming and lots of children playing, and watching the fountains!

And, I had done my homework, enough to have just the right phrase to be useful and spreading interest in such projects.

From there, we went to Mrs. Astor's apartment, taking with us, people from the city Housing Commission, and I believe the City Park or Planning

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Commissions. At any rate, the people that she had dealt with. And over tea, I talked about this project which had cost over \$300,000., and saw the model for another and much larger one, that she is in the process of building. How perfectly marvelous, that a woman of wealth, and charm, and conscience, should put her money into something like this, instead of purely self-serving things, such as jewelry!

And I discovered that she is the person who gave the French wallpaper in showing the American scenes that is the family dining room in the second floor of the White House.

Oh, how dull of me not to know it before I met her. This is the sort of thing, meeting a woman like her, that makes me like my part of Lyndon's job.

Next, I went to see Mr. Bobbie Lehman's art collection, my second treat. It was housed in a five story town house where Bobby Lehman's parents lived, until the death of his father in 1947, and it was much as his father had left it - the same rich, elegant, forbidding, antique furniture in the salons, but of course, many paintings added.

It was an absolutely fabulous collection, ranging from Venetian glass, through Rembrandt and El Greco; the Renoir and the French impressionist. I was told by Ed Weisl that it was the largest private collection in existence and had been shown at the Louvre.

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Mr. Lehman is in Europe, but young Eddie and Rena Weisl met me, and his curator, and a nice butler and maid were on hand, with tea and information.

Then back to the Carlyle, (I've almost gotten over feeling like I'm invading the tour of the ^{inner} fairy princess) to dress and go to Ambassador Stevenson's for cocktail and sandwiches before the show.

He, alas, was up in the air somewhere above Newark, returning from Washington, having encountered all sorts of plane problems, but his son and Mrs. Edison Dick, were there to welcome us and a dozen or so other guests: Mrs. Marshall Field, the Robert Benjamins; and the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Krisone Sachie, from Ghana, very black, very sophisticated, very British accent, and his nice wife.

Just before time to leave, Adlai rushed in breathless. We all had a hasty sandwich and off to the theatre, to the four hour long story of the life of Christ. The scenery and the photography were both magnificent.

It was filmed in Utah. The role of Christ himself, though, to me, is an impossible one to portray. Everyone has his own idea of Christ, and this Christ did not particularly capture my heart.

John the Baptist was the best character in the whole star-studded cast, and the political figures, Herod and Pontius, were excellent.

There were dozens of stars in even minor parts. Sidney Pottier, Shelley Winters, Pat Boone, John Wayne. It was a brutal age to live in and this is a great picture story of the age. But too long.

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We emerged about twelve to spotlights and street crowds, microphones thrust forward, and then to the Americana Hotel with Adlai to stand in line and meet the people who had paid a lot for the seats, thereby ^{hopefully} making money for the two organizations.

And then to our pretty pink decked tables, for champagne and supper. How eccentric of me to prefer any sort of a drink to champagne! It was nearly 3 o'clock by the time I was in bed at the Carlyle and though I'd enjoyed the day very much, I must assess my presence as no real help for the benefit. I guess these things have to be carefully planned for that.

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