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	Transcript	Lady Bird Johnson's Diary, Wednesday, May 19, 1965, Page 8		1	5/19/1965	C

Collection Title Lady Bird Johnson's Diary
Folder Title Lady Bird Johnson's Diary May 16-June 6, 1965 [Book 21]
Box Number 3

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11/17/2014

Initials

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Wednesday, May 19th

Was one of those days so full to overflowing of demanding events, each one so important that I strained to learn all about it, so by the end of the day I felt like I had been trying to learn Chinese in three lessons.

First on the agenda was to go down to the Jacqueline Kennedy Garden to present certificates to the S. Klein Department Store, who had planned and landscaped the grounds of Jefferson Junior High School. The youngsters themselves had done most of the planting, and the Greenleaf Community Center. And to the Hechinger Company for furnishing plants and shrubs for the grounds of the Richardson Elementary School and East Capital Community Center. Little scrolls expressing my appreciation and the Committee's appreciation for their work for the community. It was Nancy Hechinger's grandmother who received the award for the Hechinger Company. Their donations totalled some seven or so thousand dollars. This is another of Walter Washington's good deeds. He works at this, and the dull and cheerless grounds of the District schools are certainly prime ^{sites} ~~sights~~ for contributions by public-spirited citizens.

About this time I got an SOS from Lyndon. He was tied up and would I please take his place greetings the Members of the Charlotte, North Carolina, Chamber of Commerce in the Diplomatic Reception Room.[?] So I bounced around saying hello to them, gathering them together out into the Rose Garden until Lyndon came along, knowing that at about

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the same time I had Jane Freeman holding down the fort for me with the National Farm and Garden Club, which had just completed its White House tour.

We converged on our gay little mini-bus a few minutes late and set off for the meeting of the Beautification Committee, this time on the U.S.S. SEQUOIA. Stu Udall, Jane Freeman, Libby Rowe, Bill Walton, Mary Lasker, Kay Graham for the first time, and Mrs. Kitty Haynes for the last time. Someone else has been selected to succeed her as Garden Club President, and Nash Castro, on whom I have grown to depend more and more. He's the real backbone of this beautification program. And John Secondari was going along just to see what a meeting was like.

Victor Green had brought his wife, much younger than he and exotic in a quiet way. We were to board the U.S.S. SEQUOIA at the Navy Yard and were met and escorted through by the Admiral, saw the historic old home that is a Washington landmark, went briefly through the Naval Museum, and inspected the model of the Potomac River and the plans concerning it, the urban renewal in the Southwest, the proposed controversial bridge across the Washington Channel, the new aquarium for Haines Point, the industries on the Georgetown Waterfront, the hopes for an eventual park there, and the proposed

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development of Jones Point as a park.

And then on to the SEQUOIA, which I remember happily from the days of Jim Forrestal. ^{It was} Gay with white fringe on the top. We looked and listened and tried to learn. Libby Rowe was a sort of Master of Ceremonies for a series of informal briefings. Frederick Gutheim, the "Boswell of the Potomac," talked about the river, its illustrious past, and plans for the future. Francis Lethridge, who is Chairman of the Landmarks Committee of the Institute of American Architects, and Stu Udall discussed the problems and their possibilities, the industrial encroachment, the pollution, the bridges, the freeways.

We got one very graphic picture when we passed by the lovely, graceful Memorial Bridge and then a little farther up, a new bridge which certainly got you from here to there across the river, which was, I suppose, designed by a cost-conscious engineer of the Bureau of Public Roads, interested in the functional and not the aesthetic. On this particular landscape I wish it could have been both.

It was a crash course in the past, present, and future of the Potomac, and I felt stuffed with facts. We cruised to 14th Street and then changed to the Admiral's barge because the SEQUOIA can't go under that bridge, and then on up to Key Bridge and close to the rocks called Three Sisters, where the river becomes almost unpolluted.

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Then back to the SEQUOIA, where we had a delicious lunch. It's getting to be ^{so that} ~~where~~ the people I work with on the Beautification Committee are my closest friends in town!

What is MY usefulness to it? I suppose the fact is, only publicity, maybe to some extent example, maybe I can learn a lot about it and be a sort of funnel for ideas, put a sort of a tag on it and say, "This is fashionable."

It was a big day and there was much to report. A \$10,000 check from Brooke Astor, Mrs. Vincent Astor. In the back of my mind I wished this could be used for sort of a playground, such as she has established in New York.

The formation of an arm of our big Committee, a sort of a clearing house to accept gifts, to screen them, and to do something with them. Mary Lasker is Chairman, and Trustees Conrad Wirth, Carol Fortas, Bill Rogers, Ralph Becker and Polly Shackleton. The title is Society for a More Beautiful Capital, and its purpose, to handle gifts more widespread than the Park Service could undertake.

Another announcement. Dr. Skinner, Director of the Arboretum, has agreed to an idea that came from Mary Lasker -- the 50,000 azalea cuttings can be propagated into plants to be used in public areas! After three years, we hope we will have 200,000 plants, with the government

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helping the government. And then there were gifts, big and little, ranging from one pink dogwood from Gordon Junior High School, five tons of fertilizer from columnist Drew Pearson, a thousand marigold plants from the W. Atlee Burpee Company, to Brooke's \$10,000. ~~The~~ business was booming!

But the most important thing of the day was a letter from The Texaco Company signed by its Chairman of the Board Howard Ramben, to inform us about a long-range program of beautification that the company is going to undertake to provide attractive service stations all over the country, urging all Texaco dealers to maintain high standards of house-keeping, eliminate litter, provide for landscaping and beautification in all the new Texaco stations, and establish model service stations in each of the nearly 100 Texaco sales districts in the United States. And herein lies a great opportunity in the hands of an imaginative and aggressive committee or of one woman who had plenty of time, this could turn into a sort of an architectural revolution in filling stations. What is there more of spread across the country? Well, here's our opportunity. Let's try to see that it doesn't dwindle away to a pot of geraniums.

But really the most exciting event of the day was after we got back on land, about three o'clock, we drove by the Jefferson Junior High School on the way back to the White House. There, spilling all over the

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sidewalk, were several hundred students grouped around the new planting they had done with materials furnished by the S. Klein Company waving and waving. It would have been too bad if we hadn't gone by, and it was just a chance dropping by.

Walter Washington's urgings usually bring results, however. There were no plans. I walked up the steps, met the Principal and some of the youngsters, among them a niece of ^{the} Head Doorman ^{at the} White House. Somebody produced a microphone, I told them how happy I was about it, they told me how they had planted things. This was a real "campaign" situation and I was very much at home and just as happy as they were. I told them I knew they were going to take care of the plants because they looked so pretty and it would add so much to their school, and how proud they must be of them and how you liked them better if you yourself had worked on them. And then I started across the street and was soon enveloped in the exciting, shrieking, applauding crowd of youngsters, all shaking hands.

And then back on the bus. The newspaper said, "It was a perfect end to a perfect day for Mrs. Johnson and the 20 Members of her Committee for a More Beautiful Capital." But actually it was ^{not} the end of what was indeed a very full day, ^{for} ~~but~~ much more was to come.

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I had been supposed to spend a couple of hours with ^{Nat Owens} ~~Matt Owens~~, principal architect of the Pennsylvania Avenue plan. He had been prevented from coming because his house in California had been robbed and many beautiful things destroyed. So Moynihan, who is number two in charge, took me down Pennsylvania Avenue, along with Simone. We drove slowly in an unidentified car, part of the time we walked, and he explained step by step what would come out, what would remain, where the National Square as planned would be, the proposed Statuary Garden, what trees would go, where the streets would go under the ground, the underground parking. We peered over the drawings, we walked over the ground itself. I felt once more like a student trying to absorb Chinese in three hours!

And then a little past six back at the White House for a brief session with Dick Goodwin, hoping to imbue him with my feelings about the Conference on Natural Beauty, so that by osmosis he can absorb what I think and turn it into lovely crystalline words.

And then, the most important, probably, business of the day, Mary Lasker and Nash Castro joined me. It has become apparent, because of the enthusiasm, because people everywhere are doing such wonderful things, such generous, overwhelming things for the Committee for a More Beautiful Capital, that we must have sort of packages to offer, saying that if you want to give a thousand dollars here is something just lovely

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for the city that you can give! X number of weeping cherry trees to be planted around Haines Point. A dogwood at the end of such-and-such bridge. Or if you want to give \$10,000, that can form a "tot lot," or go toward it. Mary's sights are very high indeed -- up in the hundred-thousand class, and even higher. Mine are more for the one redbud.

SANTIZED

I want each person to be offered the possibility of something that their name can be associated with, something that will make the city lovelier and will go on into the future. Maybe there will be a little plaque. There must be a wide range of possibilities, and this new arm of our Committee called the Society for a More Beautiful Capital would serve as a sort of clearing house and perhaps to some extent a sort of salesman.

We spent about two and a half hours talking about what we could do. Nash will attempt to put some packages together.

Lynda came in, radiant, lovely, in a two-piece white dress, going out on a date, bubbling. How happy I am to see her like this! She has dates so frequently with [REDACTED] To me he is a very handsome boy. To her he's a fun date, [REDACTED]

SANTIZED

Lyndon was going out to a stag dinner for Max Freedman. I had asked Mary to spend the night with us, so I called Luci and she and Sharon

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and Bill Hitchcock and Mary and I sat down to dinner together. Such fun to have a real meal with my family, any or all of it, beginning quietly with blessing and then having a lot of gay, giddy, funny, serious conversation with the children that were present. I found myself really proud of Luci in front of Mary, and Mary was kind enough to give every evidence of enjoying her.