

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Wednesday, November 10, 1965

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It was a luckless day of waking very early -- before 6:00 -- for both of us, and fitful sleep thereafter until about 8:00.

John was coming to spend the day with Lyndon -- the morning here at our Ranch looking at the coastal Bermuda. And then down to see his new 12,000 acre ranch close to the Mexican border.

He came in about 8:30, and we all had coffee together in the bedroom.

A cloud has passed over Lyndon's day since first he heard about President Eisenhower's being stricken. He is sad, quiet. The aluminum crisis is much more imperative. He sees the prosperity of the country imperiled. With <sup>u</sup>aglow, he's been basking in, <sup>u</sup>dimmed. President Eisenhower's illness touches a tender spot -- a sentimental feeling -- for somebody else who has carried the burden. He sat on the edge of the bed and told John of the troubles he faced. John, a little grayer and very handsome, was full of talk about his Ranch. Part of it is in the winter garden and is in vegetables.

When they had left, I worked on the mail and signed pictures -- three dozen or so -- to the actors who had given their time and talent to the "Salute for Congress". And I made a stack of telephone calls to Bill Heath and Harry Ransom about the meeting on Thursday, to Walter Washington about going to work on the Terrell School, that the money from our Society for a More Beautiful Washington, to Mr. Carter

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about coming on Friday, to Bess about the Christmas list. And then I learned around noon that Lyndon and John and Merrill had left before lunch. I thought, what should I do with the afternoon stretched before me. <sup>had</sup> I looked down from the helicopter to the winding track of the Pedernales to think what fun it would be to follow it for miles and miles and miles. And yet I have not walked it beyond our own river front.

So after lunch, I set out with my Agent and we went to the "3 Springs" Ranch and finally found a road that led down to the bed of the river -- a beautiful spot where a fault caused the river bed to drop sharply -- about 3 feet -- and the water tumbled over the fall with a steady song that you could hear as far as you could see it.

Downstream there was a series of small washboard faults. And then clear, limestone pools deep and quiet and then other falls that were just like a series of stepping stones across the river. You almost thought you could walk them. And then suddenly there would be a gap through which the water rushed tumultuously.

In front of me downstream a cliff rose sharply -- layers of limestone rock with clearly defined different strata running through it like a ribbon. I wished I knew the story of what these different

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colors and textures and kinds of rock meant. At times the cliff actually overhung the river, and I could see a cactus or a persimmon or yucca clinging precipitously to its edge. And sometimes along the face of it picturesque shrubs covered with pale pink blossoms. I climbed up close and found it had a faint odor and was full of bees.

Soon we came to the swallow's nests or high-rise apartments of the summer before -- all deserted now -- hundreds of them -- little mud house about the size of a man's fist with a tiny entrance door -- honeycombed along the cliff's edge. But though the swallows were gone the river flow was still full of life. A blue kingfisher chattered angrily at my approach, disturbing his domain. The sand pipers on their long legs hopped along the sand bars or shrilled off in flight.

And once in a spot of mud, we came upon some perfect tracks of a big heron, a deer, and what we thought was a raccoon.

The going was rough because there were boulders as big as a truck all along the river's bed, and gravel bars and evidence of the last rise and the rise before that, clear up along the cliff's edge.

Suddenly I heard a rustling, scurrying noise. And right in front of me, not more than 10 feet, was an animal I have been waiting to see at the Ranch all fall -- the muskrat or coypu -- lumbering, awkward, ugly with a humped up back and a long thin tail, he hurried into his underwater apartment -- a sort of a pothole in the limestone. I looked

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down and all was water. He <sup>had</sup> completely disappeared.

And we walked and walked and the sun was by turns hot, <sup>and</sup> then when it went behind a cloud, a chill of Fall set in. I wished it was good wading weather because I would adore to get to the other side of the river.

Far down I could see a wonderful stand of cypress trees beginning to turn copper colored and drop their leaves. We had seen a big clear pool down the river in front of us a ways. But now some huge boulders hid from view. And suddenly two mallards rose from it right over our heads, making my heart leap.

Often the side of the cliff was black and damp. And here and there there was a drip of water. But nothing like the wonderful "3 Springs" where the water comes gushing forth from some underground beneficence in limitless abundance. I asked A. W. if it had ever been dry. I thought about these parched years of drought. He said not in anybody's memory had it ceased to flow. There was watercress all around one of the springs. I wanted to eat some but found that I was too civilized.

There were so many intriguing rock formations. One looked like a path, a series of big round circles, about a foot across, darker in color than the surrounding white limestone. I wondered if it could have been trees of long ago that had been buried in sand and become petrified, and this was a cross section of them laid bare by some

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diastrophic movement. Once we came upon a snake skin about four feet long right across my path. It had been discarded by a rattlesnake. How many months ago I wonder? And it was a total shell, beautiful markings on the bottom. And plenty of life of today. A herd of black angus across the river. This would help me pinpoint with A. W. whose Ranch we were on. I think it was our own "3 Springs" on this side. But whose across? And very frequently climbing up the face of the cliff -- goats -- those delightful clowns of the hill country.

As we walked back under the place where the cliff was steepest and highest I was aware of a steady humming sound -- a deep sort of a roar. I wondered if it came from within the cliff. Could it be some underground water or was this just an echo chamber? Then we got the playback from the falls a half mile or so away. I asked my Agent and he could hear it too. It was not until we were within just a block or so of the cars that I began to feel real tired. And as we climbed in we looked at the pedometer and it was 3-1/4 miles -- a good adventurous walk, but far from following the river down to where it enters the lower Colorado.

And we returned to the Ranch and I signed 26 books on the "Art of the White House" as gifts for the secretaries for Christmas while we watched the fire and Lyndon told us about his visit with John, seeing his new Ranch, eating a big Mexican lunch, and ended up philosophizing

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that he guessed every man's own land looked best to him. I could see he was quite smug ~~about~~ about his ranches.

We were a small group for dinner -- just six of us. After dinner we called Mrs. Eisenhower. Her voice is usually so gay and animated. She would be cheering company for anyone who was ill or that carried the weight of worry. And she said, "Now we will just have to wait. We are disappointed. We thought the General would be going home today. But now we will just have to wait and see."

Lyndon's unfailing concern for the former Presidents -- a sort of bond that he seems to feel with them -- is a marked characteristic that has grown in this office.

It was an early-to-bed night, and well that it was so because tomorrow will be a big day.