

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

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Wednesday, June 15, 1966

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Helen woke me at a quarter of seven to begin my big day, and I tried to slip quietly from the bed so as not to wake Lyndon. But he did awaken, and he talked so sweetly and so sadly about my going and being away for a week or so that it gave me a pang and I wondered if I was being selfish to want to insulate myself in silence and nature and solitude and leave the endless problems behind for awhile.

I went in to kiss Luci goodbye. As I leaned over to put my face on her velvet cheek I heard the little tinkle of Him's tags on his collar. He had spent the night in Luci's room. He is a most comforting companion and love is bountifully returned.

I went in and kissed Lynda. I did not ask what her plans were. I did not want to know, because what I don't know I cannot inadvertently let slip. At 22, with her sound character, good heart, good judgment, it's time she starts making her own decisions. If the press cuts her up ^{for} her fighting for whatever privacy she can get, she'll have to live with that too.

And then I walked out at 5 minutes past eight. I was at National to join Liz and a small party of about 9 on the JetStar and we were airborne a little past 8:15 with a good breakfast served on board and the fullest agenda of any day of the year.

On the way, I read my speeches -- 5 of them -- over several times and the briefing on every stop in Omaha. We arrived practically on time ^{at} Offutt Air Force Base -- the new center of SAC. And there at the foot of the plane was

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Governor Frank Morrison and pretty Mrs. Morrison and Mayor and Mrs. A. W. Sorensen of Omaha and General and Mrs. Nazzaro, Vice Commander of SAC, and low and behold, Colonel Bill Reynolds who had been with us on that happiest of all vacations when Lyndon took me to Paris to NATO in the fall of '56. I'll always remember him walking bouncily along without purchases from a flea market ... grass bedwarmer on its long stick. And Eloise's huge white lavabo looked just as though this was the most pleasant duty any officer could have.

Seeing Bill was a good augury for the day to me. It was bound to be a good day. He showed me a picture of old Ft. Crook taken at the turn of the century showing it as a barren prairie. But those early officers and soldiers -- bless them -- had been tree-planting folks and now there were winding streets lined with huge elms and pleasant green lawns and old-fashioned red-brick houses with which had been combined the great expansions of the jet age as it became the headquarters for SAC.

Then we went past the Strategic Air Space Museum -- a 10-acre outdoor site. And there were parked missiles and aircraft that had been used by SAC in its twenty year history. It must be a very mecca for little boys that like and identify airplanes and for all those who would remember them from past combats just as though they were people as Lyndon and some of those who were with him talked about the "Swose" "Spacs".

At the end of the tour I went to the lawn in front of the SAC headquarters for the welcoming ceremony. We looked out on a beautiful rolling verdent

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countryside. And there were about 3,000 servicemen and their families -- all the children in front of course. And it was here, I believe, that the charm of the day first took hold of me. One writer described it: "It was a day of flowers and flags, bands and balloons, cameras and kids, gifts and greetings, and gorgeous summertime weather."

Bill Reynolds, General Nazzaro, Mayor Sorensen and Governor Morrison -- all made brief remarks.

The wind was whipping into our faces right off the prairie. And suddenly right behind me was a wild clatter. I knew some of the flags on standards behind me had gone over in a gust of wind. I jumped but was proud of myself ~~not~~ for not turning around. And with military discipline, the speaker went right on.

It's on times like this on platforms that I really know what bouquets are good for. ^{Also} programs -- also purses. They are useful to cover your knees in this day of incredibly short skirts.

Our few words were mostly of praise for the someone -- or many someones -- who had the foresight to plant these trees years ago, to those service people who thought that home is not a place back over the hill behind us. It is wherever we are. And I am thrilled to pay tribute to the thousands of people over the years who have made Offutt their home and left it a little more lovelier every time.

And then I planted a two-year old seedling from the John Quincy Adams American elm that grows on the White House lawn. I am beginning to think that that tree is mighty prolific! I hope there is just one left for the Ranch of the Johnson City house.

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And then suddenly the SAC band struck up "America", and Mrs. Frank Morrison in a beautiful voice began to sing. I lifted my head ~~ix~~ and joined her as I continued shoveling in a few more spades full of dirt. And all the kids in the crowd were singing too. And there was one of those rare moments of enchantment when you feel that ~~you're one with~~ you're one with all those around you. I am a sucker for that song. I have to blink back the tears because the words of it come straight out of my heart.

Then I went around the crowd shaking hands with as many of the people as I could reach, smiling, calling greetings. There are the most wonderful sights you see in crowds like this. Once there was six little girls -- I could hardly believe it -- all dressed alike in blue. I didn't know whether it was a school uniform or ~~what~~ what. I asked and one of the little girls said, "We're sisters." I hugged the smallest one.

The Texans always identify themselves. Then everywhere I meet someone who was a good friend of someone I know.

And then we were back into the car. I rode with Mayor ~~and~~ and Mrs. Sorensen and the Governor. And I learned from them how the Mayor had proposed a bond issue to combat the ^{pollution} ~~solution~~ of the Missouri River. Some 75 years ago when the packing houses -- Omaha's most important industry I gathered -- built their plants right along the River so they could use it as a sort of a sewer in which to pour all the refuse from their business. The bond issue provides for a chemical treatment of this refuse before it is put into the river. It sounded like a good step forward, though I don't know ^{whether} ~~that~~ it is just palliative or cure.

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And then the Mayor told me about his "operation alert" which attempted to enlist the ardent cooperation of everybody who worked for the City -- some 2,000 or so -- to doing a better job of maintaining and beautifying Omaha -- to create a spirit of teamwork among them. And through their example and leadership to create a sort of yeast that might work through the whole population of Omaha.

We put the top of the car down. There were certainly no great mases of people to meet me. But on the other hand there were probably as many as greet a lot of foreign Chiefs of State on our Washington parades.

We went to the Assembly Hall in downtown Omaha. There were about 600 Omaha City employees including the street cleafners. My message was totally soft-sell -- a memory of Omaha winning the National Cleanest Town trophy -- praise for what they were doing, reminding that beauty is really everyones' business, and a word about Lyndon. "High standards of public service are very important to the President, and I know he will be proud to hear of this remarkable program when I get home to tell him about it. He asked me to bring each of you his greetings and best wishes."

Always in every speech I say something like that because that is why I am there mostly.

The Mayor presented me with a painting by ~~xxx~~ a Nebraska artist -- a typical Nebraska farm scene, the artist explained. I liked it, both for the day and for the painting itself.

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And then at 10:20, right on time, I was on my way heading for "Boys Town", once more with the Governor as my guide.

Here Monsignor Wagner met us and gave us a tour through the grounds, telling us that about 900 boys of all faiths and backgrounds live here. They come as young as 10-years old on up to 16 and stay until they are 18, except of course for the drop-outs.

It is his unhappy job to choose from 3,000 or so applicants they get each year, the 200 or so that they are able to take in. He proudly told me that ^{then} they ^{graduates went into} had boys from all walks of life, every profession -- doctors, lawyers, big businessmen -- about as high a percent of successes as there would be in the average high school class. The alumni of Boys Town keep in touch and get together in New York or Seattle, wherever life took them, and every few years there were big reunions right here at Boys Town which great numbers of the alumni return.

He was full of his subject in that extraordinary way that Catholic priests often have. They sometimes make me think they would have made good as advertising executives too.

He said the famous Father Flanigan who started Boys Town had great faith in divine providence, as he put it, and had gotten the school planned and obligated to expand to some astronomically high figure. And then Father Flanigan died, leaving him his successor to execute these ambitious plans -- somehow it had all come out all right.

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After we ~~had~~^{just} toured the grounds -- ~~seen~~^{saw} the dormitories and bungalows where the boys of various ages lived and the staff houses -- and very beautiful grounds they were and so well kept. And the regular high school and the vocational school. And I kept on telling the Monsignor in the vocational school I hope they had some sort of a course in nursery work that might lead to jobs in Park maintenance or highway beautification. And he kept on seeming to think that I was only referring to how well they kept the grounds there, which was quite true.

And then when the tour ended a lot of very delightful things happened all quite quickly. I was escorted to an honor guard formed by Boys Town high school students, up a red carpet to a speaker's platform where a fed coated, freckled faced, very serious young man about 9 -- Kenneth Gerig -- welcomed me to the "city of little men" and a well-done speech without a single note. I could have hugged him! And then acting Mayor Patrick Coggins, about 16 I would say, -- very handsome poised young man -- presenting me with the first Boys Town high school diploma ever awarded to a lady. I was made an honorary citizen. The little girls about 4 and 6 all dressed up wandered up to the platform ~~where~~^{before} their mother could reach them. I gave a group of books -- mostly about the White House -- one about Lyndon -- to the Boys Town Library -- one of them inscribed "With warm best wishes to each of you in the prayer that you grow up in a peaceful America."

Monsignor responded with a prayer for the President and his burdens and a gift for him. It was a little statue that is a symbol of Boys Town, -- a youngster carrying his small brother in the motto, "No mister, he's not

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heavy, he's my brother."

And then there was a bit of laughter. I was presented with a donkey brought up to me by two young residents of Boys Town -- both Texans. He was a solemn, amiable looking donkey, and he actually had bangs. Fortunately I didn't have to carrying him back on the plane with me. He had been given to President Truman -- he had been given to all of the visitors who had come. Maybe even to Luci when she came during the campaign. But he was always allowed to remain here at his home in Boys Town.

The famous choir of Boys Town sang two beautiful numbers, and I went over to thank them. There were earnest, good young faces. I kept on thinking this is great, I love it. It very probably means a constructive future for the 200 who get in each year. But what of the other 2800 who don't?

And then it was time to go. And on the way out, I asked the Monsignor to tell me something about what happened to the boys when they leave. Well, about 60 percent of them go into the service. And there are plenty of jobs waiting for those who have been prepared in the vocational schools. Industry is most cooperative. There is no scarcity of opportunity for them, and each one is guided into a job and a smaller percentage goes on to college. How, I didn't get to hear because by this time we were at the gate and it was time to say goodbye.

And then the Governor and I had about a 50-mile drive from Boys Town to the Capital of Nebraska -- Lincoln -- which had been settled before the Civil War but was renamed after Civil War, after President Lincoln.

We rode on Highway 80. It ~~was~~ already showed the marks of landscaping.

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There were groupings of young trees I did not recognize, some a silvery gray green -- so pretty. I wished I knew what they were. Sometime the banks of the road were covered with rather tall-growing plants with yellow blooms. The Governor told me it was clover. And then in the median strip there would be low-growing white and pink clover and fields of ~~lavender~~ which he said was alfalfa.

The most thrilling sight of all were the fields of wheat waving in the wind like an ocean reaching on across the horizon as far as you could see sometimes. It was a rich country. The farm houses looked well-kept -- places you could love. I asked him how much ^{LAND} sold for here, and he said about \$500 per acre way out in the country or maybe \$1000 as you neared town.

It was just about my favorite part of the day.

He used an interesting expression, "The State slept for 30 years", and another one when I asked him how he became interested in conservation. And he said, "Well, I had gone through the dust bowl period." His father had died when he was 2-1/2 years old and he had a pretty hard time growing up with his mother making a living in Kansas and in Nebraska. The dust bowl years would shock anybody into thinking about it.

We reached the Governor's mansion almost on time right after noon.

Amazingly enough, a very southern, white-columned Georgian house, handsome, dignified -- right across from the Capitol building which has a gold dome with a statue poised on top of the ^{power} ~~sear~~ -- a figure of a man spreading seed.

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The Governor told me that the statue had been put up there after the gold dome had been completed and there was quite a feat -- engineering wise -- to get this figure, which weighed several tons, and had to be balanced, poised atop the dome.

I went in just long enough to freshen up and then quickly to the Cornhusker Hotel -- well named. I love the names I come across in looking at the map on the way. There were several: Red Cloud, Broken Arrow, many that show an Indian heritage.

And at the Cornhusker Hotel there was the main meeting of the day -- what I had actually come for -- the Governor's Conference on Natural Beauty. It was a part of a day-long session. Opening talks in the morning, three workshops in the afternoon, the luncheon with several speeches. I was one of them.

There were about 450 community leaders present; the Governor's Council to Keep America Beautiful sponsored the meeting along with the Game and Soil and Water Commissions and the Nebraska Roads Department and Division of Resources.

Mrs. Leslie Anderson of Omaha was the sparkplug of the day I gathered. It is a conservative State on which the real pressure of urban living has not yet made the dent it has in the crowded East. And so quite naturally, litter prevention was the key of the day. It's the least controversial. A sort of opening wedge to all the things that come later. I was famished. The luncheon was good. The room was hot. My speech was far too long I thought. But I gave it my best, still running on the high octane feeling I had gotten in the early morning when I landed at Offutt Air Force Base and saw Bill Reynolds and heard "America

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the Beautiful".

Mostly, my speech was praise of Nebraska -- the big sky country -- underlining some headlines of the past year in the battles of beauty: the dedication of ^{City} ~~Reece~~ plaza in New York; the work we had done in Washington; 400,000 flowering bulbs in the Parks and roadsides ^{16,000(?)} ~~16,000~~ shrubs and 5,000 trees; school ground beautification in Washington; and mention of the Youth Conference in Washington on Natural Beauty just 10 days from now. Actually later on I met two of the delegates to it. What we could hope for from the Highway Beautification Act. And a salute to Nebraska for beginning Arbor Day -- the most popular of beautification institutions. And then a bit of a challenge to them -- their centennial year -- 1967 -- to make their State, which is the passage way between the crowded Eastern seaboard and the vacation land of the West, to become more and more a place to go to as well as through when it's scenic and historic features are wisely developed. There is the Oregon Trail and the Mormon Trail and the route of the Lewis ~~And~~ Clark expedition and the Niobrara River in the Sand Hill country, and many inviting sounding places.

It seemed interminable but I felt I did it fairly well.

And I was given a charm -- the outline of the State of Nebraska -- with
by
a little diamond at Lincoln, ~~Then~~ Mrs. Anderson of the Beautification Committee.

And then when the luncheon was over the Governor and I and Mrs. Morrison whom I admire more every time I see her went out to stand in line to say "hello" to all the delegates. It is a symptom of the West -- their people are not crowded -- the receiving lines linger and everybody has something to say.

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There were only 500 of them but it went slowly. I was the one who had wanted it. I do enjoy it, but I began to realize about 2/3 of the way through that I was bone tired.

There are always interesting moments. There was the girl who knew Karnack and daddy's store and the brick house, and the youngsters that I would see in 10 days at the National Youth Conference, ~~The~~ Garden Club lady I had met at Jackson Hole.

Finally about an hour behind schedule we left the Cornhusker and returned to the Mansion in time for a good hours rest before the Nebraska Land Days Parade.

I simply merged into the sheets and turned into a vegetable with no feelings or plans.

And then it was time to go to the Nebraska Land Parade -- a sort of pageant of history.

I put on my bright red suit and my most enthusiastic smile and started out the door. There were 330 girl Staters in convention in Lincoln who had assembled around the Mansion to serenade us. I knew just the Governor's predicament! They had petitioned him to put me on their program. He couldn't squeeze me in. This was his suggestion and a good one.

They sang patriotic songs ending with "Beautiful Nebraska". It was the first time I had heard it, and it was a delightfully tuneful song. Thanks, handshakes waves, and then into an open convertible pursued by the press car.

They soon asked us -- the Governor and Mrs. Morrison and me -- if we would sit up on the back seat.

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We rode through the downtown section of Lincoln, acting as the parade's grand ~~marshal~~ before some 75,000 people, trying to give them what they gave me: interest, attention, excitement, often a loving greeting, "God Bless you", "God bless the President".

It was about that time that Jerry came up to me with word that there was bad weather between Lincoln and Texas. I would either fly back through a turbulent front or else go back in the jet to Washington, flying high enough and off the route missing it. Or spend the night here. The front would go through by 3:00 ^{a.m.} and leaving ~~ing~~ early tomorrow morning.

Mrs. Morrison rose handsomely to the occasion. She said it would be no trouble at all, please spend the night. I decided I would far rather do that than be frightened for hours as I had been returning from New York. And if it's Dale's advice, I had better take it.

The Governor led me up to the reviewing stand while Mrs. Morrison went home to attend to some details, alas, of my staying.

For over an hour we watched floats go by ~~by~~ ^{from} some 55 communities. My favorite was a Conestoga wagon pulled by oxen. There were Indian dancers in feather-head-dress and jingling bells up and down their legs and red paint. And others that didn't need the red paint.

About 55 communities had sent in bands and scores of floats. Remarkably enough, many of them related to the water. They had boats, bathing girls, water ski equipments on them, and the Governor told me there was a series of lakes in Nebraska. How much you can learn about your own country by going to see!

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There was a wagon train that had actually come in from across the prairie from Fairbury along the Oregon Trail, with frying pans and coffee pots and a big pot to cook beans in, dangling from the sides.

And one little Indian about six years old riding bareback ~~with~~ was swinging a tomahawk as natural as you please.

There were a lot of beautiful horses -- palominos, paints, every kind -- and western cloth^s from about 1840 to 1966 version.

Of course the inevitable clowns throwing candy to the crowd. One of them hit me on the head. I promptly picked ~~it~~ it up off the floor and ate it. Days like this find me constantly hungry.

And I love the stage coaches. Quite authentic looking ones. The Governor assured me they had carried passengers and mail along the Trail, and they varied from small ones that would hold only about 4 people to great big ones that would hold about 12. They usually were full of lovely ladies dressed just like Miss Kitty and there would be a man riding shotgun -- which the Governor explained to me ^{was} "on top". And there were several older ladies in quite authentic calico and sun bonnets. And all the time there was the constant stream of people coming up and being introduced or sitting for awhile in the reviewing stand with us. Three pretty little girls -- Zeta Tau Alphas -- sorority sisters of Lynda of course.

And then a little girl named Lynda Johnson, aged 6, whose birthday was August 27th -- a blond with a top-knot who sat silently and quite poised beside me for ~~awhile~~ awhile, and we talked about her family and which floats

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we liked best. Later I heard when asked if this was the most thrilling thing~~x~~ that ever happened to her, she solemnly shook her head and said, "No". And when asked what it was, she said, "When Mom and Pop took me on a vacation to Missouri. // Good sense I thought. Finally ~~my~~ her little sister, Shelly, came up with a very proprietary air, grabbed her by the hand and says, "You got to come right now. Mother says so."

And then Jerry leaned over the railing and said to me, "Mrs. Johnson, I know I shouldn't tell you this now. There's been an accident to Him." I said, "No, no, don't tell me" -- an ~~angry~~ angry, foolish outburst. And then, "How bad?" "Pretty bad," he said, "And Luci's very much upset. I think you ought to call her as soon as you can."

I knew there was more to go through. Charl~~ton~~ Heston was going to be given the "Buffalo Bill Cody Award" for producing good family entertainment, particularly Westerns. And I had been asked to stand up as the Governor presented it to him and say a word of congratulations and cheers. So I couldn't go right then.

~~X~~ Handsome and lean, he came up. I remembered how nice he had been at the ill-starred White House Festival of Arts in June of '65 and how I had enjoyed sitting by him at lunch at the National Gallery of Art. A very attractive man.

The Governor presented the Award and then they ^{gave} ~~gave~~ us two big Western hats. I put mine on for the inevitable picture and Charl~~ton~~ Heston -- very quick on the uptake -- said, "Mrs. Johnson can just wear hers in parades -- I

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can use mine making my living." He told me he had been out to Viet-Nam. He thought our troops were wonderful out there and he had just returned from speaking to a Chamber of Commerce group and to the Press -- a rather unlikely audience -- to say a good word about our presence in Viet-Nam in this part of America I expect.

I knew I would continue to be numb until it was appropriate to leave. But I did hurry it up a bit, and we left the stands about 6:30.

Back at the Mansion I talked to Luci. She was crying heart-brokenly. "Oh Mother, he was just out on the lawn chasing a squirrel. And oh Mother I had just seen him when I came in from a party and I wanted to play with him, but I went upstairs to change my cloths. And if I hadn't been so long changing my cloths I would have been back down there with him and I would have been holding him and petting him and he wouldn't have been killed."

She was inconsolable. Pat was there with her. Dear little girl. Poor all of us. And most of all somehow I think of Lyndon. He loved all four of the dogs -- Him most of all. Him had inherited his daddy's quality of knowing when you felt bad or worried and sticking right by you when you're ^{down} ~~dead~~ -- not demanding any attention -- not saying anything. But just being there.

I asked Luci to tend to her Daddy and comfort him. She said, "Oh Mamma, I tried. But you know he can't stand crying, and I can't stop." I told her to go ahead and cry it all out.'

Mrs. Morrison came in and gave me^a drink. It was very welcome. And then she and the Governor were going to a dinner in honor of ~~Sheldon~~ Charleton Heston at 7:30. But first, we had a pleasant little talk. I really got to review

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with the Governor what he thought his chances were. And he said we must understand first that the State is 60 percent Republican and 40 percent Democratic, and it is just a question of whether the State is ~~xx~~ ready to accept someone who wants to move forward. " They know me for that. " And he spoke of how Curtis had been in office for 28 years and had done a great many favors for people that crossed party lines. He said, however, that he had made on an average of 500 speeches a year -- every year that he had been Governor. And his wife must be a great help. I do not think it will be easy but I will watch with great interest.

I told him how earnestly Lyndon had wanted me to come out here and how concerned he was about him -- the Governor. And a thousand thanks for a wonderful time.

And then Mrs. Morrison so thoughtfully had me a delicious broiled steak and fruit salad brought on a tray to my room. I ate a good dinner and ~~got~~^{got} into bed about 8:30, fished some books out of my suitcase. I was just finishing "The Plague" by ~~Camus~~^{Camus} and the last of Beatrix's stories headed by "The Night Visitor" -- a wonderful writer, little known, that is to me.

And then very early before 10:00 I went to sleep thinking it was a different world, that I would awake to a different world. There would be a little hole in it -- a vacant spot -- that Him had filled so warmly.