

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Saturday, June 18, 1966

Page 1

Saturday, June 18th -- the second full day of my vacation.

I spent the morning recording -- an early lunch -- and then walking in the Sharnhorst with Calvin Sultemeier who would actually do the work of harvesting the wild flowers -- and Jerry Kevett and Ben Blossman.

We tried to find the exact places from which last year's good stand -- the runway -- had come, to see if we had just as much abundance after the harvesting. But, alas, it was a different season -- less spring rains and more goats and sheep. So there is no fair comparison. And only a couple of weeks ago it had been a carpet of yellow and red.

We staked out some pretty good stands and then went to the Danz. Here in the 80 acres of pasture where the well is we parked the car and walked practically the circumference and across it a couple of times staking out grand areas for harvesting truck loads of a mixture of Indian blanket, wine cup, coreopsis, wild verbena, wild ^{phlox} ~~floss~~, pink Texas star.

Suddenly in the brush we saw four vigorous moving lines. I looked at one -- a small armadillo. I ran up and down the road looking at the others. It was a family of armadillos! How fast they could go. It was surprising. Ben caught one and held him up by the tail. He was probably 3 or 4 months old. Fairly good eating, Ben said. His shell is still pliant and rather soft. When we put him down he scurried after the other three and they ran along the road where under a clump of trees there was one hole, two, three, four -- all entrances to an underground apartment house -- inhabited by who knows how many armadillos.

MEMORANDUM

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Page 2

The main entrance had a hideous escutcheon over the door -- about a million daddy longlegs all in a cluster. ^P There had been rain at the Sharnhorst the night before and thunder showers were threatening. So I decided not to walk the River again today, ^U But instead read for an hour or so, "The Devil's Advocate", by Morris West.

And then because the River was high and I couldn't cross it at our dam, I set out toward the Boy Scout hut.

Right between James Davis' house and the Hodges I saw down to my left in the high grass the head and neck of a turkey hen cautiously stepping along. And in a moment out of the grass I could see she was accompanied by six little poults. In a moment another appeared also with poults. They were headed for the River. I asked Ben, "Are these wild turkeys?" They looked wary, more at home in the woods than in the pen. He assured me they were wild turkeys. It was the closest I have seen any ^{to} at our house. And suddenly there in front of me was a big snake. I rushed to run over him but he slithered off into the tall grass and I called Ben to get his gun.

They got out and walked back. So did I. But we couldn't find him. Ben had seen him too and said he was a water moccasin.

I shall have to be a fatalist if I am to continue walking in thick high grass ^{and} in the hot rocks of the river country!

I stopped at the entrance on the other side and walked to where the fence separates us from the Hodges' land, staying as close to the river as I could. There was a pretty good stand of Indian blanket with a strange, fluffy/flower ^{lavender} --

MEMORANDUM

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Page 3

rather like a bird of paradise, growing precariously from the steep bank of the river. The grass was deep and lush. I must tell Dale that he might want to put cattle in it before he mows it.

How I wish for a combination tree surgeon and fisherman to take up his abode in the guest house as we had once for several years each summer, but he grew sick and had to go to the Veterans Hospital. But not before he had worked on dozens and dozens of trees on the riverfront, to their everlasting beautification. But there are still more trees, and such a man is hard to find in our affluent society.

It's a strange contentment to be away from the abrasion of contact with people.

Today for the first time I did not call the family. But I could feed for a long time on the long sweet talk with Lyndon last night and with Luci who has given up crying and is determined to comfort her Daddy.

One small bonus from this pain would be an increasing closeness between Luci and her Daddy. It's been happening for several years now, to my deep satisfaction.

Some day soon I shall want to start seeing a few good friend again. But not just yet. Solitude and nature are balm and soft velvet caress.

I watched Gun Smoke and read myself to sleep. The world is still no doubt full of troubles, but I am quite insulated here.