

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

Tuesday, June 21, 1966

WASHINGTON

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Each day is different, and I am reluctant to let each one slip through my fingers.

This morning at 9:00 Mr. Bowen came from the Highway Department.

I was up early -- a little past 7:00 -- and got some work done before I joined him and Dale and Melvin to walk the runway and ride and walk over the Danfz discussing "operation harvest" for the wild flowers. The verdict was that he was surprised and delighted that we had as good a stand as we did on the runway and he agreed we should just concentrate on those hard ^{Caliche}~~caliche~~ surfaces that are bare now.

We found ["]the garden ["] in my 80 acres in the northwest corner next to old Mr. Lyndigs. And I had a fiercely proprietary feeling as though they belonged to me and not to God.

We stopped at the Rocks and walked over it. The yucca are still raising their stalks of white bells to the sky. But some of them are falling like large ^{fat} snow flakes. My goals are to use all the wild flower seeds we can harvest to fill in first the bare spaces on the runway. Then to scatter among these rocks because I think they will never tempt a rancher. They are too rugged for any machinery to shred or plant grama grass or oats. I think it can just be left to me and nature. And third to sprinkle over the ashes where brush had been burned. Fourth -- and that will be some other year probably -- just toss out along the roadways in the Martin or the Danfz or the Reagan.

Last year, we collected three truck loads full. This year I have my sights set on six.

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Mr. Bowen stayed for lunch with me -- ham from the Ranch and black-eyed peas fresh from the garden, wonderful tomatoes from some neighbor. He told me that the Highway Department had just signed a contract for 71 miles in three East Texas counties for landscaping.

Then in the afternoon we had calls on the crisis about Luci's wedding dress -- the delightful Mr. Dave Dabinsky -- he and I are both suffering through this. And a call to Bess. And to Liz about the speech for next Monday -- the first draft I've read and tried to digest and change. And a rather fruitless call to Berge. I'm seeking ~~Luci's~~ Luci's help. I'm writing a script for volunteers when we open the old Sam Johnson house for a month during the summer vacation season.

And then it was time for the big event of the day. I was going to walk the river some more, beginning at the Sharnhorst. This time I took my camera. We actually got down to the river about 5:40. On our side, tall cliffs towered, broken sometimes by a Texas persimmon or a cactus or mountain laurel or cedar. Some times with deep faults or crevices. And several times springs bubbled out from between the rocks and made their way down to the river.

We walked along a heavy grassy shelf between the cliffs and the river. Clarence first with his snake gun and this time a flashlight. Me and my camera, and Jerry with his thermos bag of beer and ice.

In a quite conversational voice Jerry said, "Clarence, here's a snake. I don't have any idea what kind it is. Maybe you had better come look."

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Clarence turned around and peered down into the thick grass. A few feet from Jerry was a rattlesnake -- very quiet. He shot. He nearly shot his head off. The snake had been lying not more than 6 inches from the path the three of us had trod! Apparently his own desire was to be left alone. And mankind -- we did not return his treatment in the same way. In a quick rationalization Jerry said, "Well, maybe we saved somebody else by killing him."

Then after that we felt a little less cozy about walking in the high grass. Suddenly up above us on the cliffs there were a whole group of goats stepping precisely along. They are very intriguing animals. And then one moment there was ^{the} curious clown-face of a goat looking out over the edge of the cliff surveying our progress with interest. And on the overhanging ledge above us we saw a colony of cliff swallows' apartments -- highrise apartments -- three dozen or so. No sign of the birds. Had they hatched and flown? Or were these last years dwellings?

It was bad walking. The high grass persisted.

Across the river for a mile or so was gravel beach and sand bars. We made our way across, following partly the line of faults -- the uptilted rocks -- making a dry-foot passage for about half the way. And then we waded in the delicious cool water. It was open but heavy going along the sand bars and we shared it with herds of cows. And several times in front of us we saw the white tails of deer who had come down to the river to drink

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and went bobbing off into the brush at our approach.

And Clarence's pedometer said two miles. I sat down on the sand for my bottle of beer.

This part that we were approaching was a high wall of cliffs on our side of the river and there was a tumbling wilderness of boulders as though all the mad power of a dozen floods had stacked them there. And in them had grown, miraculously, man-high brush so that it was bad going. But we made our way across the river once more and tackled it.

Suddenly we came upon a Vitex tree -- I can only call it a tree because it was huge -- three times as big as any as I have ever~~x~~ seen growing in someones garden. I took a picture of the lavender blossoms. Just like the one we have in the cemetery.

Sunset was approaching. And on the cliffs on the south side we could see the openings of caves. I remember what Calvin Sultemeier told me about some little boys finding such a cave and going in and finding water with good sized catfish in it. They had crawled out to get some fishing equipment and returned. But half way in they got too scared. Someone must have told a snake story. So they hurried out and never visited another cave again.

Across the river we could see a hunter's camp. This was the only sign of man we had come across in the whole afternoon. Except of course man's stock.

As I stepped up, following Clarence on a huge boulder, Jerry said, "There's a ~~TARANTULA~~ ^{TARANTULA}." I looked below me and down on the ground at the foot of the

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boulder was a huge, hairy, hideous, tarantulae -- about 4 inches across.

But alas not enough light left to take a picture.

Last Friday we had walked twice as far in the same amount of time.

But finally we saw through the trees ~~x~~ the yellow body of the truck. All of us, I think, with a bit of relief though we had only traveled 3-1/4 miles.

Ch We were in Mr. Ering's ranch, and as we drove up past his house he was there at the gate opening it for us. I thanked him for letting us go through his property. He had the open western hospitality as though it were a perfectly normal thing to do -- to let strangers walk down your river and ride through your pastures.

There was a little silver ship of the moon -- 3 nightold -- as we slipped down the country road past the Sandy Cemetery -- a neglected forlorn little spot. And then on to the Ranch.

I had dinner on a tray while I made a half dozen calls. Among them, one to Mrs. Hill -- a Blanco County neighbor who had given me some Ladies Home Journals of 1908. How perfect for the magazine rack in the little house where Lyndon was born. Their contemporaries probably were there.