

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

Saturday, July 9, 1966

WASHINGTON

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With only one more day left in Texas, we are reaching for the sun.

In the crisp cool morning I took a cup of coffee out to the swimming pool to sit with Lyndon and talk and swim and watch the flag flopping in the breeze. And then hungering for a real walk I asked the newspaper people who had spent the night in the Cedar House -- the Gills, the Youngs, the Horners -- if they would like to have a long walk in the Reagan with me.

Mrs. Young joined me and we walked about a mile and a half around the circle past two of the deer feeders. It's so much more an intimate relationship with the earth to walk than to drive or fly -- a different perspective.

We passed the field of Sudan grass and saw the young buffalo -- three females -- feeding contentedly with their dark backs just showing above the green of the grass. We did not see the young bull who has come down from Oklahoma, but I hear that he has made a couple of runs at the fence bending it but not making his way through.

After an hour or so, Lyndon and all the rest of the newspaper people came up in the convertible with the top down -- Lyndon very bronzed. And we looked for ^{"Big Blue"}~~big blue~~ and the English reds and the ^{Sika}~~seika~~ deer. And Lyndon frequently getting Dale on the phone to tell him things that needed to be done -- the Canadian deer looked in bad condition -- did they have worms -- were we feeding them antibiotic in the salt -- the pipe ought to be hooked up to the tank -- it was getting so low the fish might die.

The country is still refreshed from the 2-1/2 inch rain. But it will soon be gone.

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Back at the Ranch house, Don and Jessie arrived and the Horners and the Youngs and the Gills lingered for lunch.

As usual the table was bulging -- Jake, Marie, Vicki and George Christian. When ever have I sat down at this table ^{as} with a family of four or a couple of two? [#] Social life in the hill country is at a peak this weekend.

Mariallen had called and invited us to a buffalo barbeque this evening, but we couldn't go. I said we would go over to the John Hills to see their Ranch and have dinner.

At the beauty parlor I got a description of what the buffalo barbeque would be like. The [?] post training would start at 4:00. People would drift in from all over the county -- about 200 in all. (I saw Dale Meeks all dressed up wearing a string tie and bouncing along in the pickup). A young buffalo, corn-fed, was being barbequed all afternoon and would be served around 6:00. And afterwards a band from Stonewall would furnish music for dancing. Later I heard that the dancing lasted until 2:00!

In the cool of the evening, Lyndon and Jessie and Don and I went in the chopper to the Hills. It was an experience I shall remember.

The John Hills have bought the house rather recently. It was built ~~by~~ ^{by} O'Neil Ford some years ago for a person with taste and understanding of this country. It is beautifully sited on a hilltop with a view of the winding river and the distant hills -- of stone with a long low porch that ^{Jo} ~~John~~ Hill says is her favorite spot about 5:30 in the morning just as dawn comes up to drink her coffee and watch the deer.

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Mr. Hill is about 6'6" and delights in showing the place, as I would.

He is a weekend, summertime rancher who makes his living in another way, ^{but} ~~that~~ has fallen in love with the country.

The lawn I loved almost most of all. And ~~was~~ especially the Texas persimmon trees with their ashy white trunks and twisted artistic branches. They look quite Japanese, rather like ^{Bonai} ~~buneye~~ trees -- scorned by ranchers and bulldozed out. They are really jewels in this setting. They had a snake-proof play yard for the children, a ~~sw~~ swimming pool, and an enormous beamed living room furnished with outsize old Spanish antiques -- one wall full of paintings. [#] It was the ranch itself that intrigued us.

We rode and rode inside his deer-proof fence. There is a multitude of the native white-tail, and I was delighted that he liked them best of all. He has exotic game too -- something called ^{Quail} ~~Irish~~ sheep, antelope -- quite a variety.

The real big moment of the day was when we went down to the river. I had never known there was anything like this on the Pedernales! Huge, folling falls that cascade over the limestone rocks into a deep~~x~~ clear pool. He called it the best catfish hole in the Pedernales. His ranching neighbor had caught two 18-pound catfish there last week and given them to him. He often spoke of catching a 35-pound cat. And there were tales of outrageous size catfish.

There was a cave in the limestone cliffs, he told me, that had Indian pictographs in it. Once however during high water it had gotten clogged with trees and branches and debris coming down the river ~~xxx~~. So when they began the cleaning-up process, the foreman had set fire to it -- blackening the

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pictographs. That was the easiest way to clean out the cave.

I yearned to go and see it, although they warned me it was probably rattlesnake infested.

For once I willingly, even joyously, passed up Gun Smoke while I looked at their collection of fossils, ate a delicious steak dinner, and then met their three little girls all dressed exactly alike in green print, long dresses, with their long blond hair flowing over their shoulders -- for all the world like three ^{Balticelli} body-shelled maidens straight from dancing in ^{a dell} ~~Adole~~. And their one rambunctious little boy.

The Hills are a part of what is happening to the land around here -- wealthy people from outside coming in, sometimes luckily making the most of its natural beauty. And here that is the case.

It all reinforces my desire that some part of this river, some part of this countryside, must be saved for the public. And so I love all the more Lyndon's idea of a Park along the river, ^{but} ~~now~~ giving someday -- perhaps upon our death -- our riverfront, our house, some sizeable portion of our land, for a Federal Park.

*Ch
Tape*
Ours has a clean history, but it is tame. There are no towering limestone cliffs, or rushing rapids or deep pools or Indian caves.

I do want to walk the river, not only to Johnson City, but well beyond past the Hills and on down to the Colorado.

Meanwhile in the papers the wedding goes on. The invitation was printed today in the Washington Post -- it's handsome. I'm proud of it.

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How amazing to think that some day these may be collectors items!
The treasure
~~which measure~~ what we have from the other seven weddings of White House
daughters, and there is not enough.