

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

Tuesday, July 12, 1966.

WASHINGTON

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I met the full impact of all the piled up work of a ten-day absence.

In the morning, signing and autographing, the final assault on the wedding list with Margaret Deeb and hopefully a last talk with Luci on remembering and adding any more of her friends, with Bess about flowers, bills, cloths, the Israeli dinner list. And we had just finished work on a luncheon list for Mrs. Holt of Australia on the boat on Thursday when we got word that she would not be accompanying her husband after all.

Then the great luxury of two hours at ~~the~~ <sup>JEAN</sup> Louis' -- nothing more taxing than the "read and file" envelope and the psychological boost of walking out looking much more attractive and on top of the world.

At 2:00 was my main meeting of the day.

Mary Lasker had come down from New York and Nash, George Hartzog, Ralph Becker, Liz and I sat in the Queens' Room and looked at plans for turning the west part of the Ellipse into a jewel of a garden, centered with a fountain and glowing flower beds and walks, and perhaps a little kiosk or tea room down close to Constitution Avenue.

Mr. Becker has a possible patron -- the great granddaughter of the first Park Commissioner -- who in memory of her ancestors' love of Washington and his work here might give enough money to make this possible. ~~And~~ nothing is ever simple.

George Hartzog soon convinced us that any changes in the west side of the Ellipse must be an integral part of what is planned all along the Mall, what is planned for the Ellipse, for underground parking, for the new depressed

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routing of E Street. It's like picking up a vast ball of knitting yarn and trying to find the piece where the thread begins.

I asked George Hartzog the question that hangs over my head all of the time, "What about maintenance?" Suppose we put in 24 more triangles and circles in the year '65 and 47 the year of '66 -- how much can we take care of well on our budget?

That harrassed man fixed me with a weary eye and said, "Mrs. Johnson, hand labor is so high, it costs us about 1/3 of the cost of the Park to maintain it annually."

I can't believe that means the total cost -- brick work, stone work, fountains, curbing, and everything. But it is still a staggering figure and sobered us. How did we ever get as far as we have?

In midst of our talk, Lyndon came in as though he were riding a whirlwind. He has a way much of the time of breathing excitement and life into any group that he walks into -- even in the midst of ~~talks~~ talking about training people for gardening -- a national Horticultural school, perhaps a "Tregaron." He said we ought to start a pilot project in San Antonio with largely Mexican labor in some depressed area. Rewrite the job descriptions to say landscape engineers instead of litter gatherers.

Of all that's happened to me in the White House when I get beyond the basics of Lyndon, Lynda Bird, and Luci, nothing is more important than my involvement with beautification. But I want a new word for it.

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The final decision was to try to keep Ralph Becker's prospect interested while we waited for some overall plans, not too long, from Nat Owings. The more one deals with groups of people, the more one understands how it took a Caesar to build Rome and a Napoleon to build Paris!

After more than 2 hours of talk, George and Liz and Ralph Becker left, and Mary and Nash and I rode around to see the two miles of MacArthur Boulevard where we hoped to put Azaleas in the median strip. Electric installations lie too close to the surface to make any tree planting feasible -- just shallow-rooted things can be used.

And the lovely mile of ~~Belle-Carrie~~ <sup>Balecarrie</sup> where we hope to put a long line of pink and white and deep pink crepe myrtle for July and August splendor. It goes right behind my old house -- the Elms. And we looked at Katie <sup>Loucheim</sup> ~~Lockheims~~ little triangle for which she had given \$4400. It looks quite shabby. I was disappointed. All the money went into basics -- like retaining walls and side-walks and just the remnant into plants. But Nash promises some specimen planting in the fall to replace it. Katie must be disenchanted -- devoted though she is -- and I want to correct that feeling.

All of us purred whenever we drove past the demolition sight of a temporary building.

We talked about the prospects of a rose garden on the 27 acres of land down by the Potomac that had been set aside for the FDR memorial. It could be the setting for a jewel of a monument or maybe the monument itself.

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And then we dropped off Mary for a 6:00 appointment and I went back to the White House and looked once more at the lovely paintings that Mary had brought for Luci to choose from for her wedding present. A Riöl de fe, gay and bubbly, blues and pinks and whites. And a charming Grandma Moses. A farm house with little figures and animals and fall foliage. What a dream of a present -- either of them.

I was saying goodbye to Mary until the Fall since she is leaving for Europe on Monday.

I worked with Ashton for another hour and a half and with Bess who told me a hilarious story of how she and Simone had gathered 25 startled tourists from the sight-seers line this morning to see if they could stand in a little roped-in closure in the East Room where we proposed to put the press for the cake-cutting.

They were very obliging, though they had no notion of who they were stand-ins for.

The funny things and the sad things that have happened in putting this wedding together would make a long story.

And then the big event of the day. Lyndon was to deliver a speech to the American Alumni Council Meeting. He expected to fly down to White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, for it. And I would have gone along, but there was bad weather. So he gave it by TV down in the theatre at 8:00.

The whole substance was "Asia - partner <sup>or</sup> problem" -- a reassertion of our determination to continue our willingness to negotiate.

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Lyndon looked very bronze and hearty. He had come back bouncy and attacking problems -- injecting adrenaline in all those around him, searching for answers. I love to see him like this. It's a reassurance to me as a wife and as a citizen.

Jake and Bill went upstairs with us but didn't stay for dinner. But Luci, who had sat beside me during her Daddy's talk, and Pat came in. We discussed the possibility of Pat's registering for school in September, when we should give out the word that they had found their little apartment and would live in Austin and would continue their schooling, and the unsolved problem of how to reach their honeymoon destination. If they go commercial, they will be met at the other end by a reception committee of press and reporters.

We were in bed and Lyndon attacking his night reading at the fairly reasonable hour of 11:00.

I picked up the first three full-page stories from the Washington Post about former White House weddings. There will be a series of 12 such stories. Maria Monroe, the first. The two Wilson girls today. And of course on Sunday the whole splash had begun -- the most fabulous and glamorous of them all -- the wedding of Alice Roosevelt to Nicholas Longworth.

I finished feeling a little shaken at the three weeks that lie before us.