

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

Wednesday, August 17, 1966 WASHINGTON

Page 1

It was a day of high adventure of my own very individual kind. In the morning, Dr. and Mrs. Donovan ~~Correll~~ and I went in search of flower seeds.

It all began when I saw some blue bells at the Christian Church in Johnson City. I had tracked them down as coming from Mrs. Gibson's [?] ranch, a part of the ~~Bruckner~~ ^{Bruckner} ranch.

Dressed in blue jeans and boots and sun hat, I set out on this carefree expedition. But it turned out that I had to go back and get Mrs. Gibson for a guide. She had known Lyndon all his life. She was a ~~Bruckner~~ ^{Bruckner}. She wore a sun bonnet. She had that delightful combination of dignity, friendliness and simplicity that I fondly and probably quite wrongly imagine to be possessed mostly by country people. She was glad to drive us over to the field to see the blue bells. Yes, they had been blooming all summer -- a vast sheet of blue. We went south through the pastures, gradually climbing til Johnson City was in the valley below us -- lovely pastures, dotted with large live oaks. And then finally we emerged on a wide, grassy meadow in full sunshine. There was a tank. The land was moist and rich. And there were hundreds, hundreds of blue bells still in bloom, though they had been ~~had~~ at their peak she said two weeks or a month ago. Dr. ~~Correll~~ ^{Correll} identified them as a member of the gentian family. Their Latin names defeat me ^{and} ~~The~~ repetition has not educated me yet.

He was excited. He got out and took pictures and looked. He said he had never seen so many before in all his searching for wild flowers

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Wednesday, August 17, 1966

Page 2

across Texas -- across, in fact, the United States. He cut open one of the seed pods with his thumb nail, but no, it was still wet and sticky and green. But you could see the dozens of tiny seeds that in time when they were dry might possibly be propagated by spreading them out in some meadow. We tried to pick ~~ed~~ a few. Consensus was they were simply not ready. Mrs. Gibson said we could come back any time and get all we wanted. There is a generosity of spirit in people who do not have a great deal. We were having a marvelous time. The sun was beating down and the day getting on. So since we couldn't gather seed, we took Mrs. Gibson home and left for the Diamond X Ranch.

I had talked to ~~Norm~~ ^{Nita} and she had told me we could come out and pick as many mountain pinks as we wanted.

As we rolled over the barren caliche hills we passed two air-conditioned carryalls -- a kind of giant jeep -- loaded with tourists. Melvin had some local boy showing them his Noah's ark of native deer and ^{at one} antelope and buffalo and long-horn cattle and wild turkeys and strange exotic deer and ^{Sika} ~~seeker~~ and axis and big horn sheep and the dinosaur tracks.

The mountain pinks which are like a little nosegay of tiny pink flowerets -- hundreds of them -- completely covering the straw-like stem so that it looks like a delicate pink powder ^{puff} grow in the most incredibly barren caliche soil ^{on} ~~infering~~ a hillside strewn with rocks. They are past blooming now. Just little globes of pure straw, with here and there a pink blossom. And

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Wednesday, August 17, 1966.

Page 3

Dr. Correll thinks they must have dropped millions of seeds where they are. So when we saw a hillside offering a few, we got out and walked and we found more and more and more. From each we took half of the little globe leaving the rest for ~~new~~^{rite}'s hillside to make sure that prodigal nature lefts its abundance. And we stuffed our trophies in envelopes labeled "White House" until we had about three bulging ones. And then hot, successful, and happy, we headed back to Johnson City, stopping at the boyhood home long enough to have some cool lemonade with Jessie and look at the grounds which were in really very good shape, except for the roses and westeria needing some iron ~~sulfate~~^{sulfate}.

We drove around Johnson City to the old Fort site, and I told him about our plans for it within the next year.

And then returned home for lunch -- ravenous, happily weary, but with that very pleasant weariness that comes from exercise outdoors under a hot sun.

~~Dr.~~ Dr. and Mrs. Correll told me about some of their adventures when he had been part of a botanist team in search of a plant that produced cortisone.

Cortisone
It had just been discovered and it was a good hunch that it could be produced in a plant. About other plants that he had found and isolated that were toxic to ~~stop~~ *stock* and that ranchers wanted to identify and get rid of. About the whole basis of Texas research which is financed by Bob Litzel, Bill Lynch, and some wealthy Texans that think that research is a key to better agriculture

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Wednesday, August 17, 1966

Page 4

and want to pursue it in their own way rather than just depending on the Government, though there is a great deal of collaboration and I expect of grants.

After lunch we drove through the Martin Ranch. And in the broad open meadow between Lela's and a tank that holds water fairly well and the curving road itself, I put out my few blue bell seeds. Along the ^{run} highway, an impossibly barren stretch of caliche, ^u We crumbled up and let fly the tiny little bouquets of mountain pinks.

And then back to the main house where Dr. Correll showed me some of the plants he had picked, pressed and preserved between sheets of paper. Thousands upon thousands of them. ^a And somewhere through it all running a thread of purpose.

When they left, I tried to take a nap unsuccessfully. And then about 4:30 I set out on my river walk. My own special self-indulgence. ^{But} ~~is~~ at this point it's something less than an absolute favorite with the Secret Service.

I wore tennis shoes but carried my boots to appease Jerry who worried about a rattlesnake biting me.

We drove for miles ~~thru~~ through rough country to Claude Voyle's Ranch. He has a marvelous crop of wild Texas persimmons, and the deer are getting fat on them, Clarence tells me, as well as the goats. It turned out to be one of our best river walks.

We began on Claude Voyle's ranch where the best estimates were that it was between 3 and 5 miles to the Hill house. And by the time we started it

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

Wednesday, August 17, 1966 WASHINGTON

Page 5

was about 10 minutes past 5:00. When we were walking on a sandbar ^{sinking} ~~seeking~~ up to our ankles or crossing the long and expansive shale and fault and tumbled boulders, I wore my tennis shoes. But when it came to the deep grass, I stopped and put on the boots which grew heavier every mile when I was carrying them. We saw no rattlesnakes this time. Clarence saw a water moccasin and then presently we saw another snake which he could not identify doing something I had never seen before. He had caught a small catfish about three to four inches long. He had him crossways in his mouth, and he was swimming in his graceful undulating curve, heading for some quiet spot to swallow his prey. Clarence said that the fish was probably already paralyzed from the bite if not dead. ^{That} ~~That~~ the snake wouldn't eat again in several days. It was a large meal.

Once we saw a turkey hen flying across the river with its great bronze wings wide-spread. And then in just a moment in succession following her, four small turkeys -- perhaps two-month old poults. Often we saw deer coming down to the water to drink. We were in the part of the river where the sound of rapids accompanied us almost all the way -- either behind us or in front of us. Then once we came to a long stretch of clear, beautiful deep green water. It lasted for nearly a mile. But we never heard the great roar of rapids that would have indicated that we were really approaching the John Hill Ranch. And we tossed out the three-mile estimate as the sun kept sinking and the pedometer kept on registering 3-1/2, 3-3/4, and still no sign of the high cliffs and the rapids.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Wednesday, August 17, 1966

Page 6

But presently up in front of us, far in the distance, we saw a house with a tall TV ariel on a hilltop. It must be the Hill house. But how far? The sun was rapidly sinking. It would be dark in another 30 minutes. And what's more, we were on the far side of the river and had to cross. Once there had been a delightful adventure on the path that we were walking as it grew narrower and narrower and suddenly ended with a huge boulder that ~~jetted~~ ^{jutted} out over the water, and there was nothing to do but to step into the water and wade around. Clarence first ^{found} it only knee deep. But then he could take a long jump first. And I ^{thinking} of all the water snakes we had seen along the way ^{stepped} in on a slippery rock and was soon wet to my waist. But in a moment we were safe on the other side, and it had only added to the pleasure of the adventure.

With dark approaching there was no time for ~~delay~~ ^{delay}. We must get back on the other side of the river and find the road where the agent, who by this time had picked up the John Hill's foreman, could make their way in the jeep down close to the river.

Just before twilight I saw a beautiful green slope covered with huge cypress and pecan trees on the other side. But between us, a long deep pool. Down ahead of us we could still see what we thought was the Hill house. But it grew no nearer and dark did grow nearer. We were in touch with Ben Blossaman. Yes, they knew the place we meant. There was a road down to it. They would be there in about 20 minutes. So we walked as fast as we

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

Wednesday, August 17, 1966 WASHINGTON

Page

could over the rugged boulders, downstream to where a fault had laid an almost perfect angular row of stepping stones across the river. There were little shallows, little rapids, which you could jump or wade through. And a long fault -- probably one or two city blocks long, -- cut across the river at an angle so that we were heading almost back west into the fading sky. And if you had been a good jumper, you could have made it dry-shod. On the other side, as we approached, the grassy slope which I had seen became more and more suprising as we saw a barbeque pit, a table made of a huge stone placed on two upended stones, some benches, beautiful pecan trees and some giant cypress trees like patriarchs that had withstood the flood of '52.

I went up to the largest ^{cypress} one, and at my chest-height stuck out my arms to see how near I could reach around it. I asked Jerry to see if the two of us could make it around the trunk. Clarence stood off and watched and said, "No, it will take four or five."

It is so surprising along the river to see any touch of mankind, and we wondered when and by whom this charming spot had been used.

The ultimate touch was [^]swing hanging from a limb of the cypress tree. So I swang like a child until we saw the lights of the Bronco coming down the steep hill to the river. Then we started walking and by the time we met the Bronco part way up, Clarence's pedometer said 4-3/10 miles.

I looked over my left shoulder and there was a perfect little silver sickle of a new moon -- the final blessing of a perfect day.

I was home by 8:30^{PM}. Jessie Hunter had come out to join me for a dinner by the pool by candlelight while we talked about plans for a party

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Wednesday, August 17, 1966

Page 8

for the hostesses at the Johnson City house, and at the old Johnson farm house. We decided we would get all of the ladies together for one party, even though it would be too large to have the intimacy I like best. We would show them a movie of Luci's wedding.

She is full of her ~~job~~ job -- she does it so well -- we are so fortunate to have her.

And so ended the day that had brought its own particular bounty to me -- of sunshine and exercise and adventure and scenes to remember.