

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Tuesday, March 14, 1967

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Tuesday, March 14th, was the fullest, most dramatic day of our three-day educational trip.

We ~~walked~~ early in the lovely western Governor's residence.

Mrs. Moore had suggested that we have breakfast at the dining room table.

I was down a bit late for a delicious ~~and~~ ham and grits and hot biscuits, and could with clear conscience throw caution to the wind because I was going to need all the strength I could get today.

And then, down town to the Battery Park Hotel, riding with the Governor and Mrs. Moore. He seems more relaxed, happy, friendly, then when we last met at the Ranch. Maybe it's a southern gentleman being a host, though I hope it's that problems are abating. They were full/some in their praise of Hubert Humphrey, who had visited there recently and charmed them. And I was delighted. All the South needs is to know Hubert.

At the Battery Park Hotel was a small crowd and a lot of cameramen, and a little Girl Scout named Linda to present me with a bouquet of all things, variegated leaves called galax. They grow wild in the woods, and are utterly typical of the North Carolina mountains. What a charming, imaginative idea!

And then into a Trail Ways bus -- there were two bus loads of us, and I had heard the figure 41 for the press, but I think it must have been augmented along the way by a fairly heavy North Carolina contingent -- and of course Dick Graham of the Teachers Corps, and Dr. Sizemore and Mr. Buchanan, Teacher Corps, and school officials.

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It was more than a two-hour drive, and they briefed us as we went along. The history, purpose, operation of the Teachers Corps.

Dick Graham had come to it from the Peace Corps, and before that from a successful business.

The heart of it seems ^{to be} to put really good teachers in direct contact with the most needy students, such as you would find at Rio Grande City, Texas or in Harlem or in the ^{hard-locked} ~~hamlock~~ valleys of North Carolina.

Youngsters with a certain amount of raising and family background can get along all right with a teacher on a 30 to 1 ratio. But where the school is the only help, the only hope, you've got, you simply need more teachers, and that treadworn word, more dedicated ones, for the thirty.

One teacher said that since the Teacher Corps came, for the first time in his life, "I've been teaching -- not just policing a schoolroom full."

We stopped briefly in Silver, North Carolina, Governor and Mrs. Moore's home town. He did not go with us, but Mrs. Moore bravely went every mile. People were lined up along the street waving and smiling, and a great number of flags were out. Always, always, that gives me a lift of the heart.

And then when we came to Silver-Webster High School -- a consolidated school -- actually out in the country -- the entire student body was lined up along the highway. We couldn't bear just to pass them by, so we stopped, got out, waved, and shouted greetings to them.

The road wound up and up into the Appalachian Mountains -- breathtakingly beautiful, still in the grip of winter, thickly wooded with balsam and other

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evergreens I didn't know, and hickory and hardwoods and whole masses of rhododendron and laurel and rushing mountain streams that came tumbling down in cascade, and then flowed down the valley in swift, clear, little rivers, sometimes spanned by walking bridges leading over to a house across the hollow. The maples were just budding in the valleys and half way up the mountains, and a red tracery, a promise of Spring.

There were a few houses along the road. All in one moment, we passed such time-spanning signs of man, as a well in the front yard obviously still in use with its pulley and bucket, and a TV antenna atop the house and a wagon in the shed and a sleek motor boat named "Some Kind of Cat" ^{parked} ~~parked~~ on a trailer in the garage.

AT CANADA Township
The paved road ended and we got into three yellow schoolbuses for the winding, narrow dirt road to the Mathis' house. This was the family we were going to visit to see just what effect the Teachers Corps had on individuals, to show the raw material the Teacher Corps students had to work with -- the background they came from.

At first I had flinched at the idea. It sounded like an insensitive exposure of their poverty -- ^a ~~it~~ cross use of them.

Marsha ^{and} Liz, had visited ~~Canada~~ Canada and had ~~talked~~ talked with *Gertie* ~~Grady~~ Moss -- she's the principal and a wonderful person, the lifeline, the real heart and center of the community. They had come back convinced, and it had convinced me, that if we were ^{really} ~~ready~~ to show what the Teachers Corps did, this was the best way.

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And for the Mathis^f, and all those like them in the hills and hollows, they ~~was~~ were, for all their poverty, proud, hospitable, highly interested, not in the least overwhelmed at the thought of our visit.

So, there we were, walking down the little trail among the hemlock and rhododendron -- ^{Gertie} ~~Curdy~~ Moss and I leading the crowd -- stepping stones over Needy Creek -- well named -- bending over to go through a rail fence into the yard where the Mathis^f were lined up to meet us.

Mr. Mathis, a grizzled wood cutter in his forties. And Mrs. Mathis with scarcely a tooth in her head, greeting me with lively interest. Her seven children, from about 6 to 19, lined up around them in front of their two-room wooden shack in the hollow.

A hound dog ~~was~~ lounged into the yard, a few chickens scratched. There was one lone apple tree and some discarded rubber tires in which flowers had grown last summer.

They had a ten-acre farm and they made less than \$2,000 a year -- that ~~made~~ so work, wood cutting. But they had kept the seven children in school most of the time. They range from Rosemary, about six, and Eunilee, with thick glasses and orthopedic shoes (she read all the time, they proudly told me -- but when I asked what, they only said books, anything she can get).

Then Earl, who ~~was eight and looked thirteen~~ looked eight and was thirteen, I believe, on crutches from a burned leg, and Wanda, who could have been pretty and was taking typing, going down the mountain to high school.

All of them were smaller than their age, and all of them had bad ~~mouth~~ teeth. Everytime a mouth opened, you knew that to go out into the world and

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get a job, they would have to have not only training, a skill, but also a dentist.

Mrs. Mathis asked us in, very brightly and comfortably. They really were glad to see us and apparently did not feel invaded by the army of 50 or so TV and press in the front yard.

Inside, there were several sofas covered with throws, all with the springs nearly out, a pot-bellied stove, her elderly mother, in her 80's, she said, Mrs. Millie Alexander, and a curtain that led to the back bedroom where, presumably, were beds, although I am sure 4 or 5 of the 10 must have slept on these sofas.

I had feared the conversation would be strained. It wasn't. I asked if there were fish in these beautiful mountain streams. Mr. Mathis said, yes, mountain trout.

There was a TV set. We talked about each other's favorite program. And Mr. Mathis said, "When the President came on, we just kept him right on, listened to him just ~~as~~ ^{like it was} though it were a program."

Earl told us how he got burned in the woods helping his father with the wood cutting and had backed into the fire.

Mrs. Mathis told us what a job it was to get the children off to school in the morning.

And then, most importantly of all, she talked about the Teachers Corps. "It's grand. The children like the ones at the school. We met them when we were up there at a meeting one night." And then her only original question. "Do you have a garden on your Ranch?" And I talked about our corn and

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tomatoes, and she about their corn and cabbage and beans.

Each of the children had a chore when they got home from school. Some helping in the garden, some washing dishes, some chop wood. "My children, all seven of them, catch the bus at the same time every morning. They walk up at the top of the hill and catch the bus at seven."

There were John Gardner and I and Liz and a pool reporter and all the Mathis⁴ in the tiny room. I ^{gave} ~~showed~~ her packages of preserves and honey from the LBJ Ranch wrapped incongruously in the elegant embossed paper of the White House.

And then we were out in the front yard having our picture made for TV. And Mrs. Mathis told me with a lively spirit that I ought to see the country in the spring time when the apple tree was in bloom and later when the rhododendron was out.

What keeps them in the hills? It's beautiful country. But probably it is not love of the land, but fear of the outside.

Then we all walked up to the schoolbus and the Mathis³ piled in with us, and we rode back to to the long, low brick structure that is the result of having combined six, one-room schoolhouses in as many hollows and brought together 105 students where all eight grades were taught by four teachers.

As we came up the hill ~~and there was~~ -- and there was the flag, and the flag of the State of North Carolina -- I felt a sudden, fierce elation. This was the hope of the community -- probably the only hope either to acquire a skill

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or the ability to get along with folks that would enable you to go out into the world and make a living. And if you acquired a skill and wanted to stay here in these beautiful hills, what was there to do? School teaching, but what else? It was a grim, ^{up}racking problem. We looked at the people and the houses, and you felt it was dead end, that several generations of living here had a self-defeating, brutalizing affect.

There was a ceremony in front of the school underneath the flags. The Glee Club sang "America, the Beautiful" and naturally, "Nothing Could be Finer Than to be in Carolina". And then a square dance. I looked behind me for the old man with the fiddle and saw unhappily that it was a tape recorder.

And I greeted the Head Start students -- flaxen haired youngsters, for whom somehow you felt the most ~~lack~~ hope. They gave me a popcorn painting -- a red rooster made of colored corn kernels and beans glued to a board. And everybody filed by and I gave them a pencil and asked their names.

Astonishingly, the same name kept on appearing over and over and over. There must have been thirty or more Owens. There were quite a few Whitmire's.

Incidentally, one of the Job Corps teachers was named Whitmire, and he had come from the adjoining county. What ~~ex~~ better motivation than to know it this well and return to it. He had gotten out, had been a tobacco salesman, successful, for 16 or so years. He was a youthful 36 or 38, I would say, and wanted to do something more significant with his life, as he expressed it. So he had come back here to work with his own.

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The high point of the day was introducing the Job Corps Teachers -- three men and a plump, sweet faced woman, Mrs. Ramsey, who was their leader.

Geetie
~~Sandy~~ Moss made a welcoming talk, and I answered, haltingly but earnestly, trying to look into the eyes of first one youngster on the right and then another one on the left, or some bearded father in overalls out front. I am sure Liz would say irreverently that he had come down from the still for the day.

I tried to tell them how important it was that they stay in school. "There is no more important journey you can take than your daily journey into the classroom. There is no more useful or profitable work you can do than the work of learning."

And then, the purpose of the visit -- the Teachers Corps.

"But the real story of this day is not that a great many ~~of~~ reporters and officials from Washington came to visit Canada for we can stay only an hour or two. The real story is that these dedicated ~~teachers~~ have come to Canada, and they can stay for many hours, many days and weeks. *Their* ~~there~~ work is helping to change ~~the~~ America's future. With well over 1200 members in all the far-flung places like Canada Township, it's a mighty little David for a mighty big Goliath."

But the ~~bill~~ *bill* is coming up soon, and unless Congress votes the \$12 million appropriation, the Teachers Corps will expire in June. And this is my attempt to expose it to the public and win it, hopefully, support.

We went inside, and I saw the Teachers Corps in operation. In one room they were using visual aide machines for fast reading. It was stepped up to

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250 words a minute, And I found myself struggling to keep up. My respect increased.

And then in another room, Mr. Whitmire was cutting the hair of eight-year old Bobbi Carol Owen. He knew how to barber -- and we're a long ways away up here -- ^{Dorrie} ~~Sandy~~ Moss had told me the nearest telephone is eleven miles and nobody in Canada gets a newspaper. So after school hours, he cuts the hair of the little boys and even trims bangs for the girls, Mrs. Moss said. She laughingly said it made the girls sit up and take notice when the boys got all spruced up.

One intern was giving remedial reading. Another working with cards with the primer class.

Mrs. Moss led me into the cafeteria, and I had a full plate of tasty chicken casserole, and green beans and salad and a roll and desert. Nearly all the children had milk -- I had iced tea. I sat at a table with four children and Mrs. Moss. They were very shy. It was hard to talk with them, and the photographers did not leave us, so I'm sure I looked like a chipmunk with full cheeks because I was ravenous.

Mrs. Moss said to me, as though the food were coming to her or her very own family, "Oh yes, that is one of the things the Government has done. We give them a good hot lunch here. And then we serve oatmeal and milk to about thirty of the children who don't have anything at home before they come."

One of the children, I had heard, walks two and half miles before he catches the schoolbus at 7:00. Often he leaves home by lantern light and has

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to use it again before he reaches home in the evening!

I had worn my green wool dress with the jacket. The temperature soared. It was 80 before the day was over. I gratefully skinned off the jacket.

Just as I was about to leave, ^{Gentle} ~~Carol~~ Moss gave me a rhododendron right out of these mountains -- a perfect touch! And then Nancy and all of the TV people asked me to come and stand on the hill and summarize my morning's impressions. I did, groping for terse, strong phrases, to get to the heart of the problem, how to prepare these youngsters locked in the hills for a useful, wider life.

And then about 1:30 we were in cars leaving Canada Township. All that marks it is the Mountain Ridge Baptist Church, Brown's General Store, and ^{the} heart -- the school. I felt like I was saying goodbye to a real friend, a real experience, when I shook ^{Gentle} ~~Carol~~ Moss' hand. Not many people do that much with their life.

And we were off down the mountain to Western Carolina College at Cullowhee, a delightful Indian name which means valley of the lily.

We stopped in front of Hunter Library where the President, Dr. Reid, met us, and went inside for a receiving line which consisted of a large part of the staff of the 3600 student college. And amazingly, a contingent of the North Carolina Legislature -- Senators and Representatives. Their own Congressman in Washington, Roy Taylor, had been with us most of the day.

As usual, it was one of those receiving lines that was supposed to be 10 and turned out to be 50. But I didn't mind. I was glad.

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And in the crowd there was Ruth Graham, beautiful, smiling, quite proper in her hat and gloves.

We rode up the hill with the Reids and Ruth to their home for what had been billed as ^a ~~his~~ rest and turned out into one of those quick changes -- fifteen minutes to change cloths and gulp some lemonade and a delicious sandwich. Because all of the lunch at Canada had been good from the looks of it, between trying to talk to the 8-year olds on my right and left and escape the photographers it hadn't been exactly a ^{hardy} ~~hearty~~ peaceful meal.

And then downstairs for a ride across the campus with Dr. Reid. Everywhere you look, a building is going up. A few years ago it was 600 -- now it's 3600. It turns out mostly teachers. 65% of the teachers in the mountain schools of this state are from Western Carolina College.

We took our places on the stage of the gym. I looked out on the three or four thousand students and citizens around us. Ruth Graham gave the invocation. And then brief introductions. An excellent short speech from John Gardner -- what a great traveling companion he is! And then it was time for my speech which I thought was rather good -- probably the best of the 3-day trip. I liked the lines: "But for too long, public education in America provided a good, free education if a local school board could raise enough funds, for enough teachers, if you lived in the right section of the Nation, if you were born to the right race, if there was a good library nearby. Until recently, there were just too many if's."

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The whole reason of this trip is to bring exposure to the 18 major measures that Lyndon has been able to pass, to advance, education. A brief reference to the fact that Federal participation in education is not exactly new, showing others as far back as 1785 in the Land Ordinance. And in the Land Grant colleges of 1860's. And then in the G I Bill of Right of our own day. So that these things that we are seeing -- the Teachers Corps, Federal funds for Hunter Library, and new student loan programs, all these programs are in an old and honored American tradition. And references to Lyndon how whenever he is asked, "what of all the things he's done ~~he~~ is he the gladest of?" He always says what he's been able to do for education.

And the reason to be here: a dedication of Hunter Library. I like the expression that what librarians try to do today is get young people hooked on books. I remember when libraries used to be considered a sort of cold storage locker for books. No more. Actually, books are the ~~magic~~ magic carpet of the mind.

I ended with a quote from Thomas Wolff: "To every man his chance, to every man regardless of his birth, his shining golden opportunity, to every man the right to live, to work, to be himself and to become whatever thing his manhood and his vision can combine to make him. This is the promise of America."

For once, I was pretty satisfied, ^{and} as I looked out on the students I thought, there's probably not a draft burner or a placard carrier in the crowd. Earlier, there had been one great big placard which said, "Welcome First Lady." They

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had asked me to autograph it. I had gone briefly into the crowd to put my name on it while the cameras clicked.

So a little bit past 3:00 we were back in our cars headed for Asheville. This time we decided to drive through the National Park -- a continuation of the Blue Ridge National Park going on down to the great Smokey's -- not open in the winter because of the danger of snows.

There followed two absolutely beautiful hours which we were almost too tired to appreciate. Mrs. Moore on one side, I on the other, looking out at every great vista that unfolded below me, around every curve a view more gorgeous than the last, of soaring wooded mountains and swift streams and little intimate valleys. And poor John Gardner between us, yearning to go to sleep. All I could do was to tell him to just pull down the curtains, imagine that we were not there and sleep sitting up if he could.

There was tunnel after tunnel, and I was overwhelmed at the amount of work and money that the National Park Service had put into building this road. It must be a joy to travel from April to November -- great masses of rhododendron in the woods and laurel. And in September and October, the parade of golds and crimsons against the evergreens.

Mrs. Moore talked about their beautification Committee, and how she had taken a five-day bus trip clear across the State with all the Committee to see and advertise the beauties of North Carolina, and to point out the needs for junkyard legislation, billboard legislation, and to give impetus

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to anti-letter campaigns. She's a highly articulate, very forceful woman, good to have on your side.

We were back at the beautiful Governor's western residence a little past 5:00. And gratefully I went to bed, looked at newspapers, once more drank lemonade and ate ham sandwiches. I am always ravenous on a trip like this.

Ch. sp. I had a real rest -- more than an hour. And then up and dressed and ready to go with Secretary Gardner and Mrs. Moore to Lee Edwards High School for the last event of the day, to visit an adult education class sponsored by the Asheville-Buncombe Technical Institute. Yes, Buncombe is a well-known name around here. This talkative, old time politician, was a native of this area, and he added a word to our language.

We walked up the high school steps through a crowd of schoolchildren and their parents. And into the Federal sponsored adult education classes.

I walked into a class in basic English which was in progress -- some 30 or so students, surprisingly mostly white. The principal had told me they range in age from 18 to 82, and that in the last two years, 5500 Asheville citizens had enrolled.

Here the teacher was Mrs. Mildred Smith, a Negro, bright, unruffled, who kept right on drawing diagrams on the board and getting her class to parse sentences while the battery of cameras and writers moved in. Really quite a performance. It was a hopeful, moving 10 or 15 minutes. My eyes roved around to all sorts of people. Some young, but mostly middle-aged. All quite attentive, and many responsive.

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After about 10 minutes, Mrs. Smith asked me to come up and say a word to the class. And it was ^{easy} ~~easy~~ to salute ^{their} ~~the~~ determination and their get-up-and-get, to go back to school, to make a richer life themselves and probably a better job. One of their members stood and responded. He asked me to take back their thanks to the President for this program.

And then we were out in the hall where all the other classes had turned out and were lining the way. Here, I saw a great many Negroes -- a majority, mostly middle-aged -- some old. The women outnumbered the men. Liz asked one of them what she did. She said, I'm a ~~domestic~~ domestic, and I need to know how to read to do my job better.

We went to the airport a little past 8:00. I walked along the fence shaking hands. And then with a last goodbye to Mrs. Moore, was in the plane ready for that drink and some dinner before the hour flight that brought us to ~~Memphis~~ Nashville. And our oldest and dearest friends among the Governors, except for John and Nellie, Buford and Katherine Ellington.

There was a small crowd. Buford and I walked along the fence, smiling and waving and reaching for hands. And then we were whisked off to the Mansion. How well I remember it! A winding road along a stream, beautiful houses and spacious grounds, and then up a hill to the Governor's Mansion. The State of Tennessee planned well.

We went to the upstairs living room where I remember long sessions before 1960 ^{with} ~~with~~ Buford and Lyndon and Senator Bob Kerr and old friends of Senate days.

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And then gratefully to bed. What a day this had been! I wondered about the Mathis¹ and where those 7 children would be thirty years from now. Sadly, you almost think the only solution is to get educated and get out. And you wonder why man has managed so ineptly -- some of the most beautiful country in the world -- and yet to those who live there generation in and generation out, into marrying, somehow it has had a stultifying effect.

And I thought of the ride back where John ~~Gardner~~^{GARDNER} had more of National Parks than he had really wanted to see. And the 80° sun, and the sudden banks of snow in the shady ravine.

I hoped it had been good for the newspaper people -- their seeing the face of America. It certainly had for me.

A young journalism student at a North Carolina College who had been along with us had asked me the inevitable and variable question, "What is it like to be First Lady?" This is just about the most important thing it's like. One gets to know one's country better in a cram course of geography and sociology and customs on a day like this.