

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Friday, July 7, 1967 WND

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It was an off-beat day for life at the Ranch. I took a trip -- a miniature version of one of my well-planned trips. ~~This~~ This time mostly through the old 10th District that Lyndon had represented in Congress for 12 years, and the purpose was to see grass-roots beautification and restoration.

I had set the alarm for a little past 7:00, breakfasted and dressed and the obliging Mrs. Burg came over and combed my hair. And by 8:20 I was in the chopper bound for Austin.

This was the least advanced trip I have ever made. The idea had laid ⁱⁿ in the back of my mind ever since I had first heard of Round Top. ~~And~~ Jake Pickle had been the catalytic agent that had really brought it to life and we had set the date for Friday on July 4th when we had gone to Mrs. Patman's funeral.

In a great rush I had gotten Liz down from Washington and she had made a small advance run Thursday afternoon.

I met Jake and Beryl at Bergstrom about 8:45 and we set out in a car -- the bus with Liz and a fair size assortment of press for such a spur-of-the-moment trip had preceded us. There was AP and UP and two Houston papers and the Dallas News, a San Antonio paper and amazingly a Los Angeles one, ABC network, and of course the Austin paper and television.

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On the ride to Lockhart Jake briefed me incessantly, and I read my little press kit.

We stepped out of the car into the already baking bright sun in the upper 90's, and the Mayor greeted me with an armful of blue bells which got the day off to a wonderful start. Actually the whole visit to Lockhart was exciting and filled me with pride -- that the little Texas town of 6,000 had the determination, the spark, the "get-up-and-get to make the most of its Court House square.

In the center the focal point is the old white limestone victorian style Court House, described by Mr. ^{Chap} Zisserman, the restoration architect, as "a structure ugly enough to be beautiful." There must be at least 100 of them in Texas, built mostly in the 1890's -- unbelievable accumulations of ^{decorations} tourets and towers and gingerbread and columns and carvings. And it's always the focal point of the town. This one they have augmented by lighting it -- very artistically they assured me. And they were all so chagrined that I couldn't be there at night so that I could see the lighting effect. And then in the square around it, the merchants are striving to keep the original character of the turn-of-the-century buildings and still be modern.

A young University of Texas architect, student in community and regional planning, had spearheaded the idea along with Mr. Zisserman, had made a very impressive model of the town square in which all the old buildings -- circa 1890, 1910 -- with their rather elaborately decorated

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false fronts, were freshly painted in attractive colors -- buff and warm beige and a sort of an Indian red and a gray green -- and many of them had brightly striped awnings out front.

A number of the merchants had bought the idea and had gone to work painting. There were about six finished around the square. And then a row of live oaks down the middle of each street on the side of the square was planned. They will go in this Fall. Some planting had been done on the Court House square. And a series of tall flag poles flying the United States flag and the Texas flag were planned. One or two were already up. And we raised one in front of the best finished building -- Westmoreland's -- a drug store that had been in operation for nearly 100 years. It had a handsome new coat of beige paint. ^a And appropriately enough on top of the false front a decoration featured an ^{apothecary} ~~apothecary~~ jar. And the red and white striped awning practically said "Ice cream parlor - come in".

It was an hilarious visit -- warm of heart as well as warm of weather. They had only known I was coming for two days, but there was a sizeable crowd on the square and everybody wanted to talk at once and tell me what they had been doing. Mayor Dickens, Judge Wilson, young Garland Anderson from the University, and of course Sam ^{or} Glassman whom I take to be one of the real leaders of the community.

Jake was everywhere at once wanting me to meet "my old friend so and so, this good Democrat" etc. There were nostalgic moments

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when I met Mrs. Fleetwood Richards, Sr. Her husband had been Lyndon's staunchest supporter in the days when he represented the District. And a lady who had been Lyndon's secretary in NYA. And countless people who told me about campaigning with Lyndon in '37 and '46 etc. The real guts of the day is that the local people themselves had raised the \$6,000 for the lighting project of the Court House -- that they were determined to go on. They were proud of their town. Several of them told me with a big smile how many city managers and mayors from other cities had come to observe and to hear about what they had done.

We drove past the Emanuel Episcopal Church -- the oldest Protestant church in Texas -- still having services -- and there on the grounds I saw a quiet figure with a white mantilla. And someone mentioned rather abashedly that that was Mrs. ~~F~~^Halley and that she used to be my roommate -- Helen ⁱByrd -- how awful if we had gone on by and I had not had that fleeting glimpse of her. I asked them if they could stop and run back and get her. So we had the rest of the ride around town together on the front seat and a moment to hear about her mother who is very ill, Nancy her daughter who raises horses, ^aAnd the good visit she had had with Emily Crow about 2 days ago.

Twice when the occasion ⁱrose I found myself quite fluent in being able to describe my delight in this visit and reminded them of Lyndon's

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ties here. Not only had he been their Congressman for 12 years, but his grandfather and his grandmother had lived here.

And then we were back in the car and headed for Praha -- an old Czech community of which I -- a professional central Texan that I am -- had never heard until the day before. It turned out to be a jewel.

We left the main highway and went down a narrow winding country road until suddenly before us we saw the two graceful spires of a large imposing church -- quite alone in this serene pastoral setting. Praha which is named for Prague, the Capital of Czechoslovakia, had been settled entirely by Czechs between 1850 and 1870; and had been at one time a community large enough to have 700 families who worshipped in this church. It was built in 1890. Now all that remains is a general store at the crossroads -- the Post Office is there also -- and two or three neat white farm houses and the beautiful church to which thousands of ~~Czechs return from Texas~~ Czechs return, Jake told me, for an annual summer celebration. It is the mother church of all the Czechs in Texas, called St. Mary's.

The landscape had become increasingly lush and pretty -- rolling, verdent. They must have a great deal more rainfall around here than we do in the hillcountry. With live oaks here and there. Several times in meadows we had passed beautiful stands of blue bells. But it was sparsely populated. So it was almost surprising to come upon this beautiful church

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out in nowhere, to see several hundred people around it -- many of them in bright colored Czech costumes and then the tall, imposing figure of the Pastor -- Reverend Marcus Anthony Valenta -- about 6 feet 4, a handsome strong face, a real commanding figure of a man. He had been on active battlefield duty longer than any other chaplain, from Pearl Harbor to Okinawa. Alas, the poor priest was dressed in his chaplain's uniform which must have been made for the coldest post he ever had. And as we walked around in the baking sun -- it must have been 98° -- there was sweat dripping off his nose and off his chin, which in no ways detracted from his dignity.

A large woman rushed up and pinned a white orchid on me. The priest's sister gave me a handmade sun bonnet -- blue and white checked. All the little children in their Czech costumes giggled and crowded around and shook hands. And Jake was introducing me in all directions at once. And then Father Valenta took me into the church, and once more there was a surprise. Its high vaulted ceilings made of narrow strips of wood was painted a delicate pastel blue. And completely around the four sides was a [^]garland of flowers and trees in delicate ²soft colors. ~~Not~~ a one native to central Texas! An ^{Itinerant}~~itinerant~~ artist, long since gone and forgotten, had painted it with considerable charm and skill. But whether the flowers belonged to the Caribbean or the Mediterranean or France or ~~just~~ from some book I could not tell. There were lillies and ferns -- many romantically

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tropical looking ones that may have just been his imagination. And then there were large portraits of Saints done in a varying degree of skill. One by a former Pastor, and one very interesting by a communicant there or some soldier who had been in World War I and had returned to paint his impressions of it.

The size and beauty of the church startled me, all the more so because I had never heard of it and it was in the middle of nowhere. Father Valenta has been here since '55. He showed me the chalice his mother had given him when he was ordained, and it was a beautiful piece of workmanship combining religious figures that had a special meaning in his life. I was pleased as I recognized a head -- a copy of Leonardo da Vinci.

And then we were back out into the brilliant sun.

Little vignettes that I remember -- a line of Head Start youngsters. They were everywhere today. A scrubbed faced little Boy Scout who pressed something in my hand. As I moved on through the surging crowd, I looked down. It was a dollar bill folded dozens of times. He had said, "This is for your beautification project," The band that played under the live oaks. And the cemetery itself. Not a name could I read -- all in Czech -- the ~~earliest~~ earliest date -- 1855. Many of the crosslets made of pressed metal and elaborately decorated -- a Czech custom I understand. And nearly all the graves decorated with artificial flowers. There was one

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special little plot that contained only the graves of veterans. They included one Civil War soldier.

I said goodbye and crawled into the bus this time. We were briefed along the way by a member of the historical society in the early history and the early culture of this area, the influence of the Czechs and of the Germans on it. It is a section rich in history. He kept on saying a signer of the Declaration of Independence lived here and a veteran of ^{San Jacinto} ~~Sandy Semmer~~ lived right there. You would almost ~~think~~ think you were in the "Virginia of Texas" -- so full of early history it was. The land itself looked like Virginia -- rolling, verd^aent, beautiful.

It was a little past 12:30 when we got to Monument Hill Park. And along the banks of the Colorado River the local people ^{had} put up tables covered with red checkered table clothes, and a fish fry was going on. The live oaks in this region are hung with long moss. And there was at least an impression of coolness, which was helped along by great mugs of icy beer -- very welcome -- along with the fried catfish and black eyed peas and fried chicken and thick slabs of homemade bread. And winding up with a typical speciality of the area -- ^a ~~ch~~olaches -- a pastry that has a center of dried fruit -- apricots or prunes. There was a German band going "um-pa" down on the banks of the Colorado. Jake took me around and introduced me to everybody, and I think the Court House must have been deserted that day because every Commissioner, Judge, officials of all sorts ~~were~~ there. And

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everybody interested in historical restorations. ^{And} the woods are full of them these days in Texas. We're having a renaissance of interest it seems.

I sat next to Judge Petris and Jake, and ate ^{bountifully} ~~bountifully~~. In ^{spite of} ~~spiral~~ heat I find I'm famished on such a trip. Can it be that just receiving and giving out feelings in itself is exhausting? ,

But the high points of the day were still to come. So we hurried on.

^{Any} The next part of the trip was in a sort of jeep and it was as dusty and difficult as anything at the Ranch. We climbed a steep hill on the side of the river through almost tropical thick vegetation, and Judge Petris kept on pointing out a sheer-rising cliff, heavily ^{ily} ~~ly~~ screened by vegetation and saying, "That's where we are going to have our amphitheater." And he went on to explain that this area, through the Early Texas Heritage Foundation, hoped to raise some \$350,000 to build a 700-seat outdoor theatre to show a pageant about early Texas history. Paul Green had been there and was interested in writing the script. Sam Selden, Emily's husband, had visited just 2 or 3 days before and assured them -- their young guide told me -- that it was an ideal spot for an amphitheater. And as the scenery and the tale expanded I could agree that the potential was great and so were the obstacles. ^{for} ~~The~~ one thing -- it's so far off the beaten path.

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We wound our way up the mountainside to an early Texas brewery, long since deserted and overgrown by vegetation. It had been started there around Civil War time by a German pioneer family. They were excellent stonemasons, and the remains of their building, office, vats, store rooms, can still be seen. The site was chosen because of the clear, good springs where the water comes rushing down the mountain. And it also furnished power for whatever they needed. They had taken out their product by ox wagon and flatboat down the Colorado to be sold in San Antonio and Gonzales and all over central and south Texas. And it had been a flourishing business for four or more decades. The old patriarch of the family believed that beer was at its best at room temperature. And the advent of refrigeration and the coming of the railroad closeby making it possible ~~ga~~ to get in other brands did not change his mind. He refused ~~to~~ refrigerate it and gradually his customers dropped off and his brewery became a ghost house. He closed down with rooms still full.

And as we climbed the hill, we came to his home which was a very impressive building of stone, the work beautifully done, a long porch running along its front. It's almost at the top of Monument Hill. And there was a drop-off behind it, clear down into a beautiful rolling valley where you could see the Colorado River curving along and a bridge arching over it. What a sight this would be for an eating place! I am not the first person to have thought of it. Mrs. ~~Bybee~~ ^{Bybee} said later that

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they had urged her to go in and restore it. But putting a restaurant there poses so many problems.

~~But~~ The end of the old German family -- the Krisches -- was weird indeed. After their business closed, the father of the family died soon after, and the mother kept all of the daughters at home, refused to let them go anywhere. And so they lived out their lives, recluses.

And then we were in Monument Park -- dedicated by Sam Houston himself -- ^{or} the first Texas State Park. I am not sure just when -- I believe in early 1860. It's called Monument Park because the bodies of the men who had been on the Dawson expedition and the Mier expedition -- both those who had drawn the black beans and had been shot and buried in Chico Solato, Mexico, and those that had returned to live out their lives in this area, were buried here. And over them there is a tall obelisk resembling but smaller than the Washington Monument. And on one face of it are painted -- I don't know the medium -- the faces of the pioneers that are represented there. It is quite interestingly done. But the setting is what makes it great. ~~To~~ stand there on this bluff and look down in the valley. Right down below us, half way along the bluff they told me, was the back-drop of the amphitheater -- the perfect shell or hollow where the seats could range around it.

Once more I thought the potential was exciting and the doing of it very fraught with problems.

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This time we drove on in the car -- Jake and Judge Petris and I -- and barely stopped at the old Faison House on the outskirts of La Grange. The Garden Club ladies have done it over, and it is a charming example of a victorian cottage reminding me at once of Lyndon's boyhood home, except a much fancier one -- delightful gingerbread. I did take time to run quickly to the door and congratulate the hostess of the Garden Club ladies and tell her how much I wished I could go inside. And then it was a rush back to another Court House square scene. This one is equally victorian, equally bazaar. This time the Court House square which is already graced with some very handsome live oak trees and pecan trees has a completed and rather impressive planting to which I added one more thing -- a pine tree. It's one of the "lost pines" that begin about Bastrop and continue down this way, separated by many miles and also by the variety from any other stands of pine -- of great interest to the botanist.

Here there was a sizeable crowd, much meeting of the officials. I was presented with a history of Fayette County. And there was a group of Head Start children. And a lot of Negroes in this crowd as there had been at Lockhart. There was a brief speech under a Treaty Oak, and I remember the photographers kept on looking at a thermometer on a building which said 98° degrees, and wanting to get that in the background.

I spent a part of the day ~~urging~~ urging all the men in sight to take off their coats. But actually we hadn't yet arrived at what was the main

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destination of the day! And so we hurried on.

The next stop was in Warrenton. And here Mrs. Bybee met me in front of the William Neece home. I had considered omitting it. I am so glad I didn't. This old house -- abandoned, dilapidated -- still had about it an air of gracious elegance -- two story with a veranda running the full length of the second floor. It became more and more interesting as I explored. The whole second floor was a ball room. It had been a sort of a community meeting place. ~~And~~ ^{was} the elaborately painted and stenciled ceiling ^{was} by Mathias ~~Malkiore~~ ^{Melchior} -- a German craftsman of the 1860's I believe, ^{or} And his three sons have also been stencilers and painters.

The ceiling had representations of the four seasons -- delicate and elegant. It was interesting to imagine the life lived here by the William Neece's and their neighbors. What ^{did} the ladies ^{were} ~~were~~ as they danced under the candle chandelier? ~~And~~ ^{later} it must have been coal oil. I walked out on the balcony to the ^{wrought} ~~red~~ iron railing. What ^{did} they talk ~~ed~~ about and ^{do} ~~did~~ for a living.

I believe it was in this house that I saw the signature full of ~~early~~ ^{early} cues of Mathias ~~Malkiore~~ ^{Melchior}, carefully preserved where he had put it on one of the walls to attest ^{to} ~~the~~ future generations that this was his work.

Mrs. Bybee goes about this in a very scholarly fashion. She has done research about every phase of the workmanship and has trained

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workers in restoring it in the way that it was done 100 years ago. Texas is fortunate to have somebody that knows as much, cares as much, and has the money to do it. This is one of about 10 or more houses that she is currently working on. None of them have reached completion, and what she is going to do to make them available to the public is not clear to me. Perhaps not even to her yet.

Mrs. Bybee accompanied me on to Winedale which was just a few miles down the road and had been completely, perfectly restored by Miss Ima ^{Hogg} Hall who met me, complete with hat and ~~g~~ gloves, at the front door -- 85 years old and very active and articulate.

Winedale is a long, two-story building with verandas running the full length and columns -- soft beige in appearance and little brown trim. It's a restored stage coach Inn -- a stopping place for travelers 130 years ago. Miss Ima bought it and supervised the restoration and presented it to the University of Texas as a center for the study of ~~architectural~~ ^{Architectural} history and particular of the German settlers in Texas and their intellectual and social impact on Texas.

Here Wayne Bell, the restoration advisor of the University, took over to brief the press. But it was Miss Ima that I followed through the house as she pointed out the exceedingly wide boards of cedar. It doesn't grow that big any more. It was used in the walls. The ~~Betermyer~~ ^{W. Betermyer} furniture -- much of it made locally -- some they had brought from

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Pennsylvania. The bright, elaborate quilts on the beds. One of them she called the "Yankee quilt". It was made during the Civil War and was full of patriotic figures of the stars and stripes -- such insignia. And in an upstairs room on the wall there was a very ornate wreath of silver and another of gold, framed ^{and} glass covered, of course that had been worn at the silver wedding anniversary and the golden wedding anniversary of the family that had owned this house. They had been brought from Germany, and it was a custom of that day.

Here too there was stenciling and painting on the wall -- evidence of the work of the same ^{Meichner} Malkiore family. I asked the young lady who accompanied us and had been introduced as hostess how many visitors they had per day. And I was distressed to hear that they had about 120 a week, and that it is open four days a week. But of course it has only been open a year or less. It is part of what will be a little complex. There is another old restored home, air-conditioned we heard, available for students in residence doing research on German architecture and early settlers. And there is also a barn equipped for a theatre-in-the-round and any sort of public meetings, ^{And} at present housing a rather wonderful collection of ^{SP?} ~~Schwart's~~ ^{Schimmert's} drawings of Texas scenes.

We went to the outside kitchen, complete with the usual items of churns and waffle iron on a long stick. ~~And~~ ^They've even started growing grapes once more. This was named Winedale because the Germans had grown grapes and made wine in fairly sizeable quantity in their early

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days here, though the industry has long since disappeared.

The most interesting of all to me I think was Miss Ima herself, her knowledge and devotion. We are really pretty sophisticated about the whole thing -- we Texans! For instance, the young University of Texas architect, Wayne Bell, is leaving tonight for Wintert^{her}~~ure~~ for continued study.

And then ~~at~~ last came what we had really started out to see -- Round Top!

I drove back with Mrs. Bybee, and we spent an hour and half in this small community of about 100, in the center of which there is a little town hall where complete with flag and Boy Scouts and bands, we had yet another welcoming ceremony and a few words by the Mayor and me. Then a walking tour with two guides -- Mr. Banick and Mrs. Bybee. There was one little complex that Mrs. Ledbetter had restored -- the only really complete thing there -- three buildings, one of which was a charming antique shop in which I could have lingered. And there was the old volunteer fire department, the ancient equipment out front. The most interesting thing was a house in the process of being restored. Again Mrs. Bybee's handiwork. There was a room here in which the entire walls were covered with stenciling. Out front craftsmen that she had trained were doing the work in the manner of the mid 19th century craftsmen. She has them go to the woods, cut down trees that fit their

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specifications, call them in and do it right on the job in the manner of the ^{Melchior}~~Malkiere~~s of 1850. She is establishing a scholarship in John Ben Shepp^{ard's}~~ard's~~ name to train young men in ~~xxxx~~ restoration work.

Interestingly, some passing artist many years ago had done a sketch of this house. And it shows a small oak tree in the front -- a mere sapling -- and now this tree is enormous in girth. The old picture is the outside of the little brochure about Round Top.

Several Houston people -- Miss Ima, Mrs. Bybee and a family named Neilson spend their summers in restored homes here. We went into Neilson's where the Ladies of the Garden Club welcomed us. The Neilsons were not at home. ~~And~~ It's a ready subject for House and Garden -- a charming blending of the authentic picturesque old with the very livable new, ^{And} a view out the window of pastures and meadows that would haunt you when you went back to Houston. Everywhere there were blue bells. And then we went on to the Lutheran church, over a hundred years old, where someone was playing the pipe organ made entirely of cedar -- a German craftsman in the area a hundred years ago had made five such organs. This one at least still worked beautifully. Then we stopped by the community's social hall where the ladies had set out big bowls of punch and pots of hot coffee and all sorts of delicious German cookies -- coffee cakes and pastries. Everything here was as German as it had been Czech at Praha. There were at least a dozen ~~●~~ vases of blue bells in the

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room. Once again I was famished and had some of everything. I did a little tape about the day's journey for the Editor of the Brenham paper whom I recognized from the days that Lyndon had been in Congress.

And then we made our last goodbyes and John Ben Shepperd and I got in to the car and drove straight to Bergstrom -- an hour's journey. And then by chopper to the Ranch, arriving a little after 7:00. What a full and marvelous day it had been. One ^{vignette} ~~thing~~ that remains in my life is the painters up on ladders busily painting away at the store fronts in Lockhart. We waved at every one of them -- most of them didn't even wave back they were so busy.

We took John Ben down to the Cedar House to see Patrick Lyndon. Luci had gone into Austin to make preparations for Patrick's birthday which is Sunday. And then ^{in Maria} ~~in mae~~ we went to the Hill's for dinner -- Lyndon and I and John Ben, Jim, Mary, Marie and Ashton. It's really been hilarious. When anyone out here asks ^{us} for dinner, we come as a package, carrying from 6 to 12. Our hosts, the Wests and Krims and Hills and Moursunds, seem to find that ~~is~~ quite natural. A. W. and Mariallen were there. There are few lovelier settings in the hill country than this house on a bluff overlooking the Pedernales. And sunset is a marvelous time there.

We sat on the porch with drinks and hor d'oeuvres and the twilight waned into dark before we went into the living room where eight of us

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sat by candle light around the long, imposing table that must have come from a Spanish monastery. And the rest were in the dining area. It's always a good dinner and a completely uninhibited appetite -- poor Lyndon, poor me! When we get back I shall have to live off of hard-boiled eggs and black coffee. But for now I'll live it up.

We watched the news on TV and left the Hills a little before 11:00, arriving at the Ranch for an early and very welcomed bedtime.