

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Saturday, July 22, 1967

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I awoke early at Luci's house about 7:00 and decided I might as well get an earlier start. I dressed and had coffee and juice by myself, and knocked on Luci and Pat's door to say goodbye. The baby was in having his breakfast as content as a plump kitten. I drove myself -- the Secret Service following. It is very relaxing to me. And the sky was full of heavy, rolling clouds. Surely there must be a rain in them. The country is sad -- bone dry and poor -- little squares of green velvet along the road. And even the sunflowers have about given up. And the great meadows full of them, so ^{brilliantly} ~~brilliantly~~ golden in late June and early July are now withered and ^{? bare?} ~~sear~~.

I stopped at the Johnson City house and had a talk with Jessie Hunter and a cup of coffee. We spoke of doing over her own bedroom, in something of light colored and small scale and very bright and gay. She is such an asset. We are so lucky to have her. And it is carrying things too far to have this huge golden oak bed like Mr. Johnson used to have in 1912 in her small bedroom.

I reached the Ranch about 10:00 just a few minutes after Neva West. I had called her the evening before, yearning for some companionship and someone to help me make decisions and put together the beautiful colors for our two life-time rooms. And so I turned to Neva. Dale had flown down early and picked her up. And together from 10:00 until mid afternoon we worked away.

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Herbert Wells arrived about lunch time. We stopped to have hamburgers and iced tea. And then continued. We put together colors that laugh and dance and sing to me for the sitting room. An ivory or off-white rug, and yellow linen curtains, rather heavy, that have a little plaid of white in them. And a heavy cotton of bright yellow for a small sofa. And above it either a gay contemporary picture with some yellow in it, or a ~~Salinas~~ ^{Salinas} scene, soft gray greens and orange and blue skies and some yellow.

We tried both. I walked down the hall, and the room beckoned me in. It was so cheerful and gay. I think of it full of books and Lyndon's big brown leather chair. And I am satisfied. Not so, alas, his bedroom.

Sometime in the middle of the morning Mr. Dement came out, and we planned how to enlarge the dining room table with another leaf so that I can have my life-time chairs -- either old ones or good copies -- rather Queen Anne -- ^{with} ~~the~~ needlework seats, each of them a different wild flower of the Edwards Plateau done by a favorite friend and signed with their initials. And then went upstairs to look at the old spool bed which I bought for Happy Hollow Lane back in about 1936 -- 31 years ago. And have had it lengthened and widened and lowered over the passing of the years. We talked about lowering the footboard and doing over all the furniture -- it and the double dresser and the high chest in some soft, lighter brown, mahogany shade. So far so good. But then Mr. Wells and Neva and I

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began to try to put together color schemes, starting with the blue rug like Mariallen has and that Lyndon has expressed a liking for. And we took the ~~Wythe~~ painting with the covered wagons passing along the road and the great blue sky above and put ~~it~~ in the room and imagined off-white walls -- perhaps ~~putty~~ colored woodwork. And then we tried a natural linen, heavy, for the curtains, with a very beautiful wide handsome white embroidery and put in my two matching chairs covered in a lovely soft tobacco ~~and~~ ^{brown} velvet. They have lived with me at 30th Place and the Elms and the Solarium at the White House. And then in Luci's first home, and then her home on Macken Street and now back here. I like it but I am not entirely sure of it. So we chose a second and a third grouping. And by that time Neva must leave because of a thunder shower down toward Houston.

Sometime in the afternoon I went upstairs and had a long and wonderful talk with Lyndon. He was lonely; he's called me twice now. I told him how sad I'd felt -- the sense of opportunity missed -- when I had noticed that all the signs about Melvin Winters' wild animal place had disappeared from the road. And then I came across the big billboards that advertised his tour of the Diamond X. And they were blank. And then I arrived at the house. It was shuttered and there was a sign up "For Sale". So many times I had had the instinct, the real intention, to suggest to Cactus or to somebody at the station that they ought to do a short feature on a trip through Melvin's remarkable Ranch. I hadn't

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done it and now it was too late. That's one thing Lyndon seldom does is wait too long for a kind or thoughtful act. He grabs opportunities by the forelock the minute he sees them. He squeezes from them the last they have to offer.

Another thing happened yesterday that might have made me sad. It didn't. It was the first step down off the mountain -- the "Tower of the Fairy Princess" disappeared into thin air.

Ashton called me about a letter she had had from the managers of the Carlyle Hotel. They have changed management within the last few months. They had appreciated the opportunity to be of service to the White House. But they were no longer able to justify to their stockholders the expense of retaining the apartment for the use of the First Family as much as they regretted it etc. etc. However, if we cared to reserve it by the year, it would be -- and here was the overwhelming figure -- \$100,000 a year! I told her to write them back the most gracious thank-you. And actually we should write the former management for it was their generosity that had made possible my several trips a year to the "Tower of the Fairy Princess" from January of '64 until now. Sometimes one never knows when things end. So I shall never go back there again unless perhaps sometimes as a visitor. And it was marvelous and I loved it and I always knew it would disappear. And I shall not miss it.

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By the time we got to my bedroom Mr. Wells and I were both ready to give up. One firm suggestion that he made that I shall follow: Roy White had put the whole life-size drawing of the mantel -- the one copied from the mantel in my room at the White House -- up on the wall exactly as it would be. Neva with her good eye had pointed out to me that it might be too large a scale for this room with its ceiling of only 8 feet - 2 inches. And this from the plans before she had ever seen it up on the wall! And when she had seen it this morning she had practically backed out of the room. Mr. Wells confirmed it, and in somewhat scathing language. So we both reached the conclusion that I should have to look for an older one or copy some new design quite different from the White House. Farewell to that also.

It was past 7:00 when we quit work and went out on the front yard to enjoy a gin and tonic and look at the stream of cars that poured by on Ranch Road 1. There must have been a tremendous crowd at the birthplace house today.

Jessie Hunter had come out at my request and we talked over upkeep and house keeping matters at the boyhood home. I had really been delighted when I stopped by there for a few minutes this morning and had met Juan, the Mexican yard man, to see how at my unexpected visit I found the yard really looking so nice. And the tools, oh joy of joy, in perfect clean array in the tool shed.

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Mr. Wells and I said goodbye. We had made some headway. But it was far from the wrapped-up job I had hoped for. And nothing -- nothing -- for my bedroom. Well, it will stay bare until I find something that I dream about at night and wake up in the morning yearning for.

I drove with Jessie over to the Ranch House, and we talked about our hostesses and the problems and the opportunities of keeping a house like this open ^{compared} to the houses that she had visited in Virginia. ^{Quinn and her hostesses} Actually, ~~they~~ cope with larger crowds than any except the most well-known and well-loved historic houses in the country -- far more than Adam's house or Coolidge's house. And many, many times the Stage Coach Inn at Winedale, which I described to Jessie too. I would love for her to take the opportunity to go everywhere that she can to learn about this. It would be impossible to find somebody in our little sphere as dedicated, devoted, intelligent, with as good community relations. And I want her to enjoy it and to learn from it.

We had Cecil Presnell's good barbeque and wonderful beans and a cold bottle of beer, and really a very pleasant evening sitting on a wooden bench eating off a paper plate. I wonder how many people would expect to find the First Lady of the land in that setting on a Saturday night? But then I've never gotten that "First Lady" out of quotation marks.

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Suddenly, in walked Melvin and Neva. They practically shouted a welcome. They came over and joined us and Melvin told us all about closing up his wild animal place. And that made me sadder than ever. He said that some of the people who came had it confused with the LBJ Park and thought it was supposed to be free, and were incensed because there was a charge of \$2.50. He is such a good man -- so good for the community, for his family and his friends. I was hurt that ~~sk~~ this should in any way hurt him. But Neva talked so happily of the people she had met and how she had kept up with some of them. Some of them even write and tell her about weddings and the family or a death. And they know people who might visit when they take trips. They seemed really quite happy, and we talked more than we have in any visit in a long time. And it was very good ~~x~~ to see them.

It was long past "Gunsmoke" time when I reached the Ranch -- actually 11:00. So I read awhile and went to bed.