

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Friday, August 25, 1967

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Friday, August 25th, began early -- coffee with Lyndon about 7:15, the last packing, goodbyes, and out at Dulles over the beautiful George Washington Memorial Parkway. But Saarinen's great building was suaved in fog and I began to wonder what would happen to our plane. Sure enough, it didn't fly. And there we sat for almost three hours with a new departure time announced every 15 minutes, and finally the plane canceled and then a decision to wait for the one that left at 12:15.

I used the time in a little office to make telephone calls and worked on the contents of ^{my} ubiquitous straw basket.

Dale was waiting for me in Dallas, and we flew on to Austin. My work time at the Ranch had been cancelled out by the long wait. So instead, I had a pleasant hour and a half at Luci's. The gold coach and the ball gown have disappeared and Cinderella is indeed back by the fire-side. For the first time really, Luci is finding out what it's like to wash the diapers and fix the formula and put supper on the table and clean the house. And if things had been done with a lick and a promise here and there, as Aunt Effie would have said, the major ingredients were very much present -- a joyous, laughing household. Lyn weighs 14 pounds and an ounce. And he is getting hard to hold. He practically wants to stand up in your arms.

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A little past 5:00 I drove over to Salado for the ceremony placing the "Historical Marker" on the old Sterling Robertson Home -- Liz's birthplace. And dedicating another "Historical Marker" to Liz and her career. And with these had been combined an exhibit of Texas crafts.

A crowd that the paper estimated at 5,000 was gathered on the grounds of the old house. Liz's Aunt, Mrs. Robertson, was at the gate to meet me. We walked down the long alleyway between the arborvitae. There were 12 of them representing the 12 apostles -- a custom in old southern homes.

Nellie Connally had driven right up behind me. How I wished we had had the trip together. And we took our seats on the front porch which served as the stage along with John Ben Shepherd and Liz and Congressman Bob Poage and officials of the Texas Historical Foundation and the Federation of Womens Clubs and the Historical Survey Committee and the Museum Association. What a burgeoning interest this is becoming in my part of the country.

John Ben presided. He's the catalyst in so much of the historic preservation-conservation-art related fields in Texas. And then there were brief talks about all the facets of the program, the placing of official markers, the outstanding women of Texas series, a warm and colorful history of the old house itself by Mrs. Robertson. One of the interesting things to me is that there is a room on the front porch that was called

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"the stranger's room". And it was there, available, for whoever came to spend the night. And there was no thought or fear or harm. It was pioneer hospitality.

So much for the house. And then we got to Liz. *Gerry Van der Heuvel* ~~Vanderhevel~~, the President of the Women's National Press Club, gave an hilarious little talk on Liz Carpenter - Washington Journalist, followed by DeWitt Reddick on Liz Carpenter - Texan, and ended with a very few words impromptu by me that could have been called, Liz Carpenter - Can-Do Woman.

Liz's speech was excellent, leavened with humor but full of solid meat about today's world. Her springboard of course, "Yesterday's history and how it applies to the problems we face today." She said -- and this is where my thoughts went homing in -- "It will be so much easier for the President not to concern himself with stopping communism on the other side of the globe, it would be so much easier for Mrs. Johnson not to take all of these trips in the interest of beautification and conservation." That easier approach has a rainbow appeal.

It was a short ceremony, and then Nellie, looking so young and spritely, cut the ribbon opening the crafts show, and I began going around on the big lawn from wood-carving booths to sketching to spinning. There was a 90-year old lady from the delightful town of Mountain Home who used a 200-year old spinning wheel. The stitchery booth -- absolutely beautiful some of them were. And Jeanette Shook's needlepoint was a real dream. There were ceramics and pottery. And one booth used the

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cores from oil wells to make bookends and lamp bases. I could hardly take five steps without some little freckle-faced child putting in front of me a grubby piece of paper and a stubby pencil saying, "May I have your autograph please?" Almost the first time I got provoked at it because I either had my choice of seeing the crafts show or doing the autographs. I hope I held onto my serenity as I quickly gave them an "L. B. J." and a smile and went on to see the next booth.

My respect grew as I walked. There was much that was highly creative in excellent taste. And it was genuine, truly of this soil and this history -- the roadrunner on the side, the knawled mesquite route used as a centerpiece, the little ceramic figures of an owl or a quail. Sometimes taste and creativity and market appeal were marvelously combined as in Janet Shook's needlepoint. And sometimes, oh, unhappily not.

My progress across the lawn was broken by shrieks of greeting, hugs, and a quick exchange as I saw Bobby Dickson or Carol Maverick Webb or the Editor of the Gilmer newspaper or Rowland Boyd from McKinney. And there was the oft-repeated, "Tell the President we are praying for him," "How's LBJ? Give him my love," "We hope he has a happy birthday." "You tell him I've been voting for him since 1937." So many interesting things happen to me in a crowd. There was moment of frozen pain when I found myself face to face with a young woman who reached out to shake my hand. Her face was appealing but

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strained. She said haltingly -- it was hard for her to get it out -- "Mrs. Johnson, tell the President my husband is missing in Viet-Nam. But we believe in him." Suddenly we were like two frozen statues all alone in the yard while I groped for something to say to her. Raw and impotent at this closeness to grief, I said, "Then I'll just return what people have been saying to me all afternoon -- 'I'll pray for your husband.'"

I walked on and there was Jessie Hunter with her wild flower seed booth. And who but Flora Rita Shriver who has been following my footsteps all over Texas. I fear to pick up her story. And then a bitter-sweet moment when Nash stopped me in front of the last booth, and there was just about the strangest concoction of all. It was a picture frame about 30 inches square, and in it was an old bird's nest, a dirt-dobber nest, a cocoon from which some little creature had long ago crawled, a fossilized shell, a wasp nest -- all put together in a sort of collage. And for good measure, a horned toad. There were wood carvings of birds and leather items, and all of a sudden the nice looking couple who presided over the booth picked up the strange concoction and said to me, "It's called 'home for someone'. You see, everything in here has been home for something except a horned toad. And if you have just the right place, we'd like to give it to you." This is a problem that happens over and over in public life. And I still do not know the right, kind, wise answer.

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Sometime back I started making a little resolve that I would not accept things for the White House or the Library or ourselves that I really couldn't use. And so I began to babble what I hoped sounded convincing, that it was so very artistic and it would be just right for some little boy's room or the den in somebodies home who was a naturalist or a scientist. But I just didn't think I had the right place to show it off. And meanwhile the man was saying something like "We just wanted you to have it if you had the right place." And a look of fading hope was going over the woman's face and I felt like a dog. Repeating my thanks, I walked on but all evening tasted the feeling of cruelty, of rebuff, and wondered what I should have done.

I had been fighting for the last 10 minutes of daylight to go to the cemetery to see the gravesite of George Washington Baines, Lyndon's great grandfather. And there was just about that 10 minutes left when I got in the car with Paul and Virginia Kinnison -- he's Lyndon's first cousin. And we drove to the cemetery and got out and walked and presently behind a neat little rod-iron fence, there it was a shaft of stone about as high as a man. I think there must have been an angel on top of it once, and the brief legend of his life, and two smaller grave markers -- nicely kept and very impressive.

Virginia had been going around with me quietly. And then she said, "If you would like to stop by my house, I have something I want to give you

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for Lyndon's birthplace home." She has an antique shop. And her house too has one of the historical markers. Salado is an old, old, Texas town with more than its share of charm and history. And together with the legendary Stage Coach Inn, they have combined to give it an economic renaissance -- a picturesque but modern Motor Court along its clear river, beautifully landscaped.

Virginia brought out of a cupboard, carefully wrapped, an old sugar bowl, part of a silver service that Mr. Johnson had given Mrs. Johnson when they married in 1907 so she told me. She did not know what had happened to the coffee pot or cream pitcher. She told of the habit of Mr. Johnson who every time any of the kinfolks came for a visit always wanted to give them something when they left. And of how one time he couldn't find a thing to give them except a sack of onions. And then she showed me two hats that had belonged to Mrs. Johnson. One of them I remembered, -- elegant, beautiful hat which Lyndon had bought for his mother when she visited us in the '40's. I think Lynda must have been one or two years old. It was a sort of a ^{mauve} ~~mauve~~ pink. He had bought the hat and the suit as her Mother's Day present, and I had spent all day with her shopping to select it. And she'd really looked queenly. The other was even older. It had been redecorated by Aunt Josepha who always had that feminine touch with clothes that Mrs. Johnson had set little store in. I accepted all three gifts with gratitude. Some day they

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will have a place either in the birthplace house or the family portion of the Library.

And then I went back by the Robertson house because I had not had a really proper "thank you" and goodbye to Mrs. Robertson. And also I wanted to take a second look at some of the things that were there. I kept on remembering little drawings of wild life -- quail, an owl, a raccoon by an Art Professor at Trinity University.

Inside the party was just breaking up, but there was just time for me to have a drink and a little visit with Nancy Negley and the Cattsos. And another look at the paintings. I bought one -- the blue crested quail. It will be Lyndon's birthday present, and I'll hang it in his new bath.

Woody, whom I had seen hours earlier when I changed planes in Dallas, had invited all of the exhibitors and the principals in the program and I expect everybody that was left over to come to a reception and a buffet at Stage Coach Inn. But it had been a long day and I didn't think I had that much vitality left. So I congratulated Liz and told everybody how wonderful I thought the whole program had been -- especially the crafts show. And then I was on my way to the Ranch with a brief stop at Bertram to get a hamburger which I ate in the car, and it was after 11:00 when we arrived at the Ranch.

And so to bed.