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TUESDAY, APRIL 9 WND

I awoke to a gray and foggy world and my heart sank. Our wild flower day. Well, no need to worry about something I couldn't change so I worked on the speeches a little more with Liz. The last one will be important--to me at any rate. Then I got a comb-out, one of the ^uStephensons of Johnson City, signed pictures and autographs. This is always a part of every visit, and talked to Lyndon who is at Camp David and about to go into meetings. His voice was quite calm, the least flurried of any with whom I had talked in Washington. Then, about nine o'clock, I boarded the bus headed for Goliad. It was almost a two hour ride, with the rain misting the windshield and a part of everybody's mind I am sure--at least mine, was in Atlanta. I had heard just bits and pieces of what was going on. It sounded like a quorum of the Senate ^{was} there for the funeral of Dr. King. Every Presidential candidate except Wallace, even, I had heard Nixon and Hubert to represent the Administration, a vast throng. Later I learned it was 50,000 people. ~~I was not surprised that Senators Ted and Bobby Kennedy were in the group, but I was that [unclear] had~~

The country was low and flat and dotted with liveoaks and great splashes of wild flowers began to appear along the road in the pastures. Pale pink buttercups and wild verbena, coral paint brush and Indian blanket, and the skies began to lift. Joe Frantz took the microphone and told us about the history of this part of Texas, dividing time with a nice looking young man,

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one of the Welders of Victoria. He told us about the cattle-raising industry in this section.

The bus stopped and we picked up Zac Lentz, who had arranged to have a herd of cattle driven close to the fence. There they were--a huge herd, some five hundred it looked like, part Brahma, part Hereford, a motley lot--gray, white, spotted, red. Some had inherited the humps of the Brahmas and, as A. W. said--"mighty thrifty." They can get fat off of nothing. In fact, they are one of the success stories of the breeding business. There were a dozen or so cowboys herding them. I noticed that several of them wore chaps that looked like they had seen real use.

The foreign correspondents piled out of the car and went up to the fence, eagerly taking pictures. It looked like this was one of their favorite scenes of the trip. Several asked me to stand by the fence. Zac rode on with us. He was asked about his twenty years or more being one of Lyndon's "lieutenants," how sorry he was politically, how glad personally. He said "Now you all will have to come down and shoot birds with us and see our ranch." Meanwhile, the clouds lifted and every mile the roadway was more beautiful. I thought there was not another exclamation left in me and then we would come to another pasture, a field, a sea that was even vaster than the one before. Every shade of pink and red and yellow. I had read about La Bahia, all the brochures, the four years of restoration, but I was not really prepared for the sight. Suddenly in this flat expanse of land we came up over a slight rise and there across

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a solid blanket of ~~Paint~~ ^{Paint} Brush and ~~Gallardia~~ ^{Gallardia} and ~~phlox~~ ^{phlox} there arose ~~that~~ ^{the} old mellow ~~old~~ stone walls of the presidio and the church. It was breathtaking in its perfection. Not the least of its charm, the fact that you had a sense of discovery, so far was it off the beaten path.

As we approached the walls, the church bells began to peal, a perfect theater! You could see the little sentry post at the corner of the presidio from which the Spanish soldiers must have looked out for hostile Indians. It had been built in 1749 but had fallen into a mass of ruins and then over four years had been ~~faithfully~~ ^{faithfully} and painstakingly ~~restored~~ ^{restored} by Mrs. Catherine Stoner O'Connor at a cost of a million dollars. There, as we stepped off the bus to greet us, was the Bishop of Corpus Christi, The Reverend Thomas Drury, several other Catholic Priests, and Mrs. Catherine Stoner O'Connor, in her 80's, deaf as a post, lover of Texas history who had paid for this complete restoration and participated in it--every loving detail through the whole four years. You could see why the early Spaniards had chosen this spot for a fort because you could look out in all directions.

The ceremony took place in front of the presidio, the six flags of Texas flying behind us, the sun at last breaking through the clouds. We looked out over the rolling pasture land spotted with the unbelievable green of early mesquites and great splashes of wild flowers. And over on our left, the plaque that marked the birthplace of Mexican General Zaragoza, the hero who defeated the forces of Maximilian on ~~Cinco~~ ^{Cinco} de Mayo in 1862. There was a lot

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of history wrapped up right here. And to our right, seats for some of the VIP's, citizens of Goliad and Victoria. I glimpsed the Bill ^{over}Bowers and the Zac Lentzes and all through the crowd forty or so young high school girls, who were the guides for La Bahia, dressed in the costumes of the 1830's. That, of course, 1836, is the date branded on the memory of Texans in the more than the two hundred year life of La Bahia, the date that Colonel Fannin and his three hundred or so men were massacred during our war against Mexico. It was a brief ceremony. Bishop Drury gave the prayer. (I doubt if these foreign newsmen had ^{ever} been prayed over as much as in these five days.) And then the Master of Ceremonies, I think it was Father Kircher, introduced Congressman Kazen and everywhere that Chic spoke it was ^{with} the rousing warmth of Lyndon and me. And then Stewart Udall was introduced. He always speaks eloquently and earnestly of the things he loves--recreation, wilderness, restoration. He recognized Mrs. O'Connor very gallantly. [#] I made my short speech, really relishing it. The theme combined so many of the things I loved--history, restoration, homefolks and the most beautiful Spring I have ever seen in Texas. And then we turned to unveil the plaque at the entrance of La Bahia behind us which said, "The Department of Interior designates Presidio La Bahia as a registered national historic landmark." And just at that moment, a cannon from the bastion over in front of the chapel boomed out!

The architect responsible for the restoration, and part archeologist he is too, took us through, showed us the artifacts that had been dug up during

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the four years, cannon balls, shoe buckles, spoons, a part of a pistol, and an exhibit of seven levels of habitation from early Indian tribes on down to the present. He showed us the room where Fannin and his three hundred Texans were imprisoned, packed so tight there was no room to sit down or lie down, before they were taken out and shot, the officers quarters--a big long room with an open hearth kitchen on one end and a heavy oaken dining table stretching down the middle where they had all eaten--and the old carved doors of the original presidio.

The restoration is beautifully faithful. ~~The~~ hardware especially handsome. And it has that mellowed look of all of its two hundred years. This architect-archeologist, I wish I could remember his name, took from his pocket a rather worn picture of himself and Mrs. Roosevelt when they had worked together on a project more than thirty years ago involving another restoration. And then he and I posed so he could have another picture to join it. I liked this moment. ~~Then~~ Then out in the courtyard there were tables loaded with hot tamales and steaming coffee and sweet little Mexican pastries and here began the always recurring battle on these trips, whether to eat, or talk and shake hands. On every side Jane Young or Chic Kazen, Zac Lentz were introducing me to their friends and I was trying to be gracious, speak, pose for pictures, shake hands and gulp hot coffee all at the same time. I liked everything I was doing. To do it all at once was impossible.

We walked over to the Chapel of Our Lady of Loretto where Mass has

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been held every year since before the Declaration of Independence of the Thirteen Colonies. Mrs. O'Connor was my guide and also Father Kircher, the Parish Priest, who had first interested her in this restoration and who had just given us, outside in the courtyard, a wonderful little capsule of history that I had earnestly tried to take in while signing an autograph or responding to a greeting. On the altar there was a doll sized statue of the Virgin Mary--the oldest image of the Virgin in any Church in Texas I was told--dressed incongruously in sort of a peach colored taffeta of the day. And then he told me the story. Old as she was, she got a new dress many times a year. Every bride who was married in this chapel by tradition was entitled to have a small replica of her wedding dress made and dress our Lady of Loretto in it and so she would stand until the next bride came along!

We walked out of the chapel and then up the steps to where on the wall of the presidio the cannon was mounted--Mrs. O'Connor and I. By this time we were in a hurry--^{to load the bus?} by busload--numerous pictures and then down we came, shook hands all around and so full of history but not, alas, of tamales or coffee. We loaded onto the bus and drove on through Yoakum and Cuero to Gonzales. It was nearly a two hour ride and I have never seen a more beautiful one! At one point as we went under an underpass, there were huge yuccas lining both sides of the road, creamy white blossoms covering a four foot stalk. As you would look down the highway, all along the right-of-way an unbelievable expanse of pink Phlox, fading into deep red Phlox or

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Paint Brush that finally became mixed with Bluebonnets or Indian Blankets or Coreopsis or Wine Cups much taller than they grow in the Hill Country.

Our buses had been decorated with paper flowers all across the front which hung down some foot or so on the windshield. I couldn't bear to miss a glimpse or scene so I finally stood up and began to take them down with some gentlemen soon coming to my aid. We had been joined by Mr. Lester Pruitt, one of the landscape men with the Highway Department and he took the loud speaker and told the newsmen on my bus about the wild flowers of the area. Knowledgeable as he was, ^{he was} but not as enthusiastic a salesman as I imagined myself to be. [#] At one point I took the loud speaker and told them I wanted to add three vignettes of the day. One, ^{they} had probably noticed when we stopped back there to see the herd of cattle that I had gone on ahead and entered another bus that had drawn up beside us, stayed a few minutes and returned. What I had been doing was to meet a group of migrant school children that were enroute to the ceremony at Goliad. They were being taken as a sort of field trip to see some history that was past and a tiny little bit of it as it happened. ~~This~~, ^{the} migrant school children, were one of the problems of our day. Their parents traveled, and they with them, to the citrus orchards of the Valley, the ^{best} ~~wheat~~ fields of Michigan, wherever there were crops to be harvested, but for six months they went to school, a special school, in Robstown, Texas. How did they crowd a whole year's education into six months? They went from 8:30 in

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the morning to 4:30 in the afternoon. They had been nearly all Latin Americans, nearly all bright eyed and smiling. This was no perfect answer to their education, but it was a recognized problem and a good try. [#] Another vignette, a courtly old gentleman that I had met, and I think several of them ^{had met} also, in the courtyard back at La Bahia, obviously a Latino, was introduced by Chic Kazen with the ^{Unapologetic} ~~respective~~ title of Don (I do not remember his name). The story was that he had fifteen children and that he had sent them all through college! I had asked him who do you work for? It was only later that I thought with chagrin I might have sounded condescending. He said with dignity and grace "for myself." I said I think it is just wonderful that you have given them all ~~of~~ this education. And he said, "I do my best". And I pointed out to these correspondents that that was a great citizen. [#] And then I motioned to the side where there was one of the Texas Highway Parks and told them that there were a little over a thousand of these dotting the roads from one end of Texas to the other, that Lyndon had built some of the first ones back in the days of the NYA. [#] On a little traveled stretch of road we made a stop. Everybody got out and there on our left was the most solid blanket of bluebonnet, paint brush--all the whole wide palette of colors. Somebody in our party had asked permission the day before of a Negro woman who owned the property, if we could stop and take pictures but had not told her who it was. She came out of her little house, a very modest one, apologizing for her dress. We shook hands all around and then with a background

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of liveoaks we took pictures of me and all the Germans, me and all the Italians, group after group, sitting in the bluebonnets, Every now and then somebody ^{was} saying watch out for rattle snakes. It was a glorious scene. I, myself, could not have conjured up more in my imagination. And then we drove on to Gonzales, By this time almost unable to exclaim any more.

It was two o'clock when we reached the Lexington of Texas, Joe Frantz having briefed us well beforehand on the "come and take it" story of Gonzales, on Travis' letter from the Alamo, and the only men who responded-- the little band from Gonzales who had actually fought their way into the jaws of death at the Alamo. And here on the courthouse square at Gonzales was the wrap-up scene--sort of an official goodbye for our five day trip. I have had a long love affair with the courthouse squares. To a Texas politician of our time they are what ^{the Agora} ~~Theogora~~ must have been to the Greeks. It is where you stand before the public and state your views and look them in the eye and they look you over and they decide whether you are the man that they want to represent them or not.

We stepped off the buses to a familiar scene, the ornate old courthouse--part Gothic, part Victorian. Six little Brownies lined up to present me with a wild flower bouquet, boy scouts, girl scouts, FHA girls, the Gonzales High School Band, Liz' brother-in-law, County Judge John Romberg, the Mayor and all the officials. We mounted the platform. There was an invocation and the band played America the Beautiful, what else, and we all joined in

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singing, welcomes and introductions. Chic Kazen saying good things about Lyndon and more things about me than I deserved. And then Stu Udall who addressed himself to just what I was going to say and in a similar tone. # And then it was my turn. Seldom can I honestly say that I have enjoyed a speech[?] - this one I did! I aimed it at our thirty-eight foreign editors and our own too, especially from Washington and the East. "There are across this land seventeen thousand towns about the size of this one. To discover America you have to know them, as well as the cities like New York, San Francisco, and Washington. " And then a brief resume of our trip and of the melting pot we had found Texas to be. Then to me the point. " Our visitors have come at a time of anguish and turmoil in our country. They saw our ^{frictions} ~~frictions~~ laid bare, but I believe they have also seen that the crashing headlines that shook us as much as they did the world are not all the story of this country. They do not blot out the progress that has been made across this great Democracy. Behind the smoke of our troubled cities there is a great wide land of strength and confidence and warmth and the many cities where work continues and there is fellowship and understanding. Our tears for our country's troubles are deep, but deeper still is our confidence in the future, and our ability to meet and master man's basic problems, to live in peace. " # For once, I was almost proud of myself and very, very glad that all of the hard part of the trip was over. But I was topped! The star of that day was not me at all but Hector Legg^o of Dublin, Ireland, sort of Dean of the traveling journalists, a towering figure

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about six feet five with a Lincolnesque face rose to deliver a sort of farewell on behalf of all of his colleagues and ended by making a better foreign policy speech than I have heard any American make in a long time. "I think all countries owe a great ^{debt} ~~duty~~ to the American nation and the American people. They tax themselves, they endure, they suffer in the cause of freedom--in Vietnam or wherever else it may be. They made a stand to stop the onslaught of Communism, that evil thing that is trying to destroy the souls of men all over the world." And he went on to say that in his view many in this country and in Europe are forgetting events that happened not so very long ago, "but I suppose eating ^{and} bread is soon forgotten." Excellent line. He noted that Australia and New Zealand are supporting the U.S. effort in Vietnam. "Because they are close to this peril, they know that this peril is there and it would annihilate them and their people but for the power of the United States of America." And then we went on to say some very gracious and over-generous things about me. He had said all of this to me earlier and privately. I had by no means thought he would say it publicly and I was absolutely glowing.

On the Courthouse Square the three garden clubs of Gonzales had done some landscaping. At the foot of the platform I met them and thanked them and then together we planted a Spanish oak. We said goodbye all around, climbed into our buses and were off for the last stop of the day and finally lunch.

Choosing a dress for a day such as this is an important part of the

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planning. I had worn my yellow ottoman with an easy skirt and a coat and it proved just right--coat off when it was hot and a white mantilla for my head when we went into the chapel at La Bahia. Great color in the reds and blues of the flowers and I had stuck flat heel shoes in my straw bag for excursions into the fields of flowers and into a Palmetto State Park. ~~and~~ Here was a change in the terrain so startling and interesting that if I had been a botanist I would have been full of excited queries. It was almost a swamp, a wilderness of trees and vines and undergrowth, a jungle too thick to walk in. Here and there a tall clump of yellow wild iris and they told me they were orchids of many colors. Moss hung from the trees and there were ferns and you expected at almost any moment to see an alligator stick his snout up out of the swampy water. ~~#~~ We went to the rustic community building and there was a sight to behold--a long table loaded with a huge tub of fried chicken and then potato salad of a dozen different kinds and fruit salads, pickles of every description, homemade breads. I told the foreign correspondents it was like ^{//}all day singing and dinner on the ground, ^{//}which, of course, meant nothing to them until I explained that it was ~~somewhat~~ a church meeting of my youth in rural America. The Home Demonstration Club of Otte^{ine}en, population 100, had furnished this wonderful meal, together with the officials of Gonzales; and the Wolf Hunters Club--yes, they are still in business and much needed they tell me--furnished the tables and benches. ~~#~~ Everybody loaded their plates and we sat down without any formality and ate like the starving travelers that we

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were. It was three o'clock and a long time since breakfast in Corpus Christi. I explained to those nearest to me that black eyed peas were "the staff of life" in Texas and when we started back for desserts, which were arranged on another long table and in great variety, I recommended the German chocolate cake and a Texas specialty of pecan pie, but for myself I had to choose the blackberry cobbler. Nobody paid any attention to calories. The ladies who were our hostesses hovering everywhere to bring us more coffee or ice tea. They were all so warm and hospitable. Liz' sister, Mrs. Romberg was, of course, one of the chief hostesses. And when at last we had had our fill, there was a brief ceremony. This time it was the foreign journalists who took the lead. They came to the mike and thanked the ladies, thanked everybody. And then, one delegation after another gave to me a present as a memory of the trip. By this time even the most sophisticated French and somewhat frozen Swedes were warmed up I think. The Italians had long ago become completely convivial. And I think one of the nicest of all was a single member from Portugal, Dr. Manuel Rodriguez. By now the clouds were lowering and there had been so much rain in the park the day before that we all abandoned the idea of a trail walk through the park though the park naturalist was standing hopefully by and I felt so bad, but I think everybody had absorbed every emotion, sight and scene that they could. The foreign journalists piled on to their bus. They were headed for a different plane in San Antonio--an earlier one--said goodbye all around with hopes to see each

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other again and then they struck up, of all things, "Auld Lang Syne" and that was the last I heard of them as they drove away. It will always be one of my favorite trips during my years in the White House.

There were pictures of me and the ladies of the Otteen^{and} Home Demonstration Club and the Gonzales officials and the Wolf Hunters Association. And then, wearily, with the Washington Press and Joe Frantz and Mark Gosden of the Texas Park Service we crawled on our bus and headed for San Antonio. Somewhere along the way I had made one stop to see briefly the youngsters who had come with their nurses from the Gonzales Warm Springs Foundation. Nobody talked much on the way to San Antonio. We were all simply too tired--I, a little, to Joe Frantz. We got to San Antonio. There was about a thirty minutes' lapse before we boarded the commercial flight to Washington, drinks and dinner enroute for those that could eat any more. [§] And here I had my only real talk of the trip with Stu. He had spent a good deal of the time with his son and had a far-away look. Now he sat down beside me and I felt that he wanted to talk. He asked me if the reception for McNamara and Gardner and Trowbridge was still on. I said sure. I was uncertain what day it was. He seemed, oddly, a little surprised. His conversation went something like this and I cannot recall exactly the opener. Some months ago he and Postmaster O'Brien had talked about the election and he had said he hoped he could stay out of it and continue to work for the things in conservation in which the President believed and which he had spent his time trying to push

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forward. And then he said something about Bill Wirtz who had, he knew, reservations about Senator Kennedy which he did not share. [#] He is a very articulate man. But I sensed that he could not quite get out all that he wanted to say. I feel there is a withdrawal from him in his enthusiasm for the Johnsons. I would not be surprised if he got out of the Cabinet or if he stayed in because there is a very real dedication in him for all the work of conservation and I think he gives ⁱⁿ credit [^] how useful and effective Lyndon has been in that field. He talked about the things that might be done in the next months to further nail down the conservation program. I was very, very tired and it was somehow a rather sad conversation that left much unsaid. But when we reached Washington, close to eleven, I could only say that this was one of the best trips I'll ever have and I would in no sense make it the last hurrah. It will be hard to top. My homeland, my home people had lived up to every hope.

I drove from Dulles to the White House with that sense of expectancy that you might have on a battlefield looking for trenches and gutted buildings and, of course, saw nothing except very silent and deserted streets. The curfew was still on. [#]