

MEMORANDUM

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Tuesday, November 12, 1968

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If there have been plenty of days in this Administration -- especially recently -- that were a draft of vinegar, today was a diet of honey. For me at least.

It began with snow flakes settling lightly on the Andrew Jackson magnolia and a very gray sky. But the Herbert Hoover oak, very red. And a few vagrant blooms on the crab apples. We had planned our Beautification meeting for outdoors on Columbia Island. It was lucky we had changed it to the Department of Interior Auditorium.

I spent a busy morning at my desk, very much on the phone, with Olivia Barclay and Jim Jones about a little gathering for them Friday evening to celebrate their wedding. And to Jane Freeman, one of my real favorites, to let her know I had tried to reach her so we could get together for a little private time, and let's be sure and save out some when they got back from their recuperation trip. And Arthur Krim about my diary, and George Reedy the same. We would spend most all of the day Friday working. And Jesse Kellam about staff matter at the Ranch after January 20th. And the tree surgeon who had already finished at the Ranch, but there was a little more to be done. There are so many balls in the air -- winding up our days here, getting ready to go back to the Ranch, working on the Library, and

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the diary, and always Lyndon and Lynda Bird and Luci.

I had a hamburger with Ashton on the tray in my room, and we worked in between bites. I hate doing that. One should eat at leisure. And I called Roy White about doing over the two servants' baths at the Ranch. And John Walker about coming to look at the Remington -- the bronze of the scalp -- to ensure its provenance.

And then about 2:30, there was the first official engagement of the day. Down to the Blue Room to receive a plaque from Laurence Rockefeller on behalf of the National Recreation and Park Association -- with some lovely glowing words from them, and meeting them all around, the fire crackling and cups of hot spiced tea and an album presented. And then very quickly on into the Library to join the members of the Beautification Committee where there was more tea and gathering together.

Then at 3:30 we left by bus for the Department of Interior Auditorium for the ceremony. To a light patter of clapping, I went up to the stage with Stew. And expeditiously we began with a welcome from him. And then the presentation of the dogwoods from Dale Miller, Chairman of the 1965 Inaugural committee -- \$40,00 worth of dogwoods, 220 trees, already planted on Columbia Island where more thousands of tourists come into this great city from the National Airport and from the highways leading south and west then almost any other entrance.

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What a superb legacy for the Inaugural Committee to leave a stamp of grace and beauty on this National Capital.

And then Carol Fortas, who is officially the Treasurer and Trustee of the Society for a More Beautiful National Capital, presented the gift from the Society -- Mary's 1 million daffodils and the 2500 dogwoods that come I think from both our Society and the National Park Service, and the 1-2/10th miles of "hike and bike" trails.

And then Nash Castro spoke in acceptance for the National Park Service. And next it was my turn.

I had practiced my speech at least a half dozen times and was able to talk it rather more than read it. And so I was reasonably pleased with myself -- feeling light and easy and that this at last was pretty well wrapped up, almost completed. And the audience even joined me in laughter when I said "I shall return some Spring to see the blooms on Columbia Island."

But mostly, it was thanks to Dale Miller and the members of the Inaugural Committee, to Stew Udall and to the Park Service. And closed of course with dedicating this entrance to Washington to the future generations that would enjoy it.

Next on the little yellow program it said, "Special Announcement - Secretary Udall". And this was the surprise. He said several times during these years, he and others had discussed with me the possibility

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of naming some Park or spot after me. And I had always said no. So this time they had not discussed it at all. And so Columbia Island was being named "Lady Bird Johnson Park".

His words were deft, graceful, a touch of poetry. He's quite a man. I was stunned. But it can't be denied -- pleased that they would want to.

Stew also at some time in the afternoon offered me an appointment to the Advisory Board of the National Park Service, as he discussed earlier in a letter.

And then we unveiled the plaque -- Stew and Carol and Dale and I -- the music of the U.S. Marine band who have been more a part of my life and times here than nearly any group. And then with that pleasantly overstuffed feeling of a circuit of good things happening sort of like you get after having eaten too much of Thanksgiving dinner.

We filed back out to our bus. And it might be surprising to someone just entering the White House as First Lady that a bus would play such a big part in one's life. And we rode by Columbia Island, looked at the trees already in and those that were sitting bald beside the holes dug, thought of how great a fountain will someday look in the circle, and drove on out to ^{the} ^{Lawrence?} Nelson Rockefeller's home -- a most surprising house -- lost in the woods off Foxhall Road. How like the Rockefellers to have found it -- seclusion and beauty and a

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very personal life, completely away from its neighbors, surrounded by forested hills and reveries. But even the Rockefeller's are subject to troubles with a dinner party. A storm the night before had blown down a big tree across the power line. There were no lights, no electricity for the stove -- the house was immobile. They had gotten it repaired just a few hours before the 30 or so of us arrived for the committee meeting and dinner.

The house was charming. Some ^{Landscapes?} (of Nelson's) very modern paintings and sculptures mixed with early American antiques -- the central part of the house itself very old -- a revolutionary farm house I think that had been added on to through the years. And there was one tiny room -- the very core of the house -- with old pine flooring and lovely blue colors.

We had hot tea and thin sandwiches. And then we settled down for our Committee meeting, and John Hechinger and Jim Kaise of Urban America gave us a brief report on National Street Hardware Study in which about five towns were participating -- among them, Dallas, I was pleased to hear -- a study sponsored by Urban America. The goal is to try to make such things as trash cans and mail boxes and street lights and direction signs nailed together with some taste and charm rather than a "salt your senses" with their separate ugliness.

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I was pleased to hear that the Mayor of Dallas was one of the most imaginative and able Mayors participating in it. It's just a beginning, but maybe in a decade the idea might take with manufacturers and city managers.

And then Larry Halpern reported on plans for Anacostia Park. The freeway is still the villain. To some extent it still hangs in the balance. But the engineering possibility of making a lake where you can swim that's bigger than 100 swimming pools has now been proved -- or that is what I got from Larry's message -- and what stands between this city and that happy achievement is a very sizeable amount of money that it will be hard to persuade a Congress to allot. And then at the end of the committee meeting, Laurence rose for another special announcement. He brought in a big water color rendering. He pulled back the veil, and there was the spot on the grounds of the Lyndon B. Johnson Library in Austin, charmingly painted -- a high place under the live oak trees, beautifully landscaped with some benches for quiet contemplation. And this, he said, I was going to have to be the real architect for. This was just a tentative design, and this was going to be the gift of my Committee to me as we all said goodbye to each other. There couldn't have been anything more aptly chosen, more absolutely delightful, for our future. Very likely, it is Laurence's own idea and own gift. But to

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have it come from this Committee with which I have worked for about four years now is a very dear and wonderful thing.

Then cocktails began coming by, and soon we went into the next room to round tables where I took a seat by Laurence for a delicious meal of pheasant and wild rice, and ending with chocolate mousse.

The whole evening prevailed with a warm feeling of camaraderie and work we had done together.

Then after dessert, there were champagne toasts that in variety and beauty I have never seen the like of. Walker's was the most sentimental, and I feel a quite special bond with him. Lee Udall's the most surprising. I never felt she thought of me one way or the other. But she said a very nice thing -- something like I had set an example that all the ladies of the Cabinet liked working with. And another thing that needed to be said -- that here we all were, talking mournfully as though the end of our whole beautification effort was about to take place when all we needed to do was hire a room, get one smart person like Sharon Francis and keep on, even in reduced fashion. And Mary Rockefeller made a quaint and earnest and dear toast. Larry Halpern one that was off-beat and yet to me straight to the point which tied our whole beautification-conservation-

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recreation efforts to youth, to their aspirations, to their inheriting of this country however it is. And then Brooke Astor who had arrived in the middle of the cocktail hour, looking dazzling in a black and white lacey outfit, rose in her fresh, breezy way and made the toast that any woman would cherish most. She simply said that while working a good deal, I had still managed to be attractive.

There must have been 8 or 10 or more in all.

And finally I rose to try to thank everybody -- especially Mary and Laurence, goodbyes all around, and I was out the door -- this time into the big black limousine and not the bus -- and back on the second floor of the White House by 9:00.

Chief Dunn came and I had a rub, feeling that it had been a big enough day to warrant it. And then Mary Rather called from Lyndon's office where he was still working. And a little after 10:30 he and Mary came over. I sat with them while they had dinner, and we talked about the day -- Columbia Island -- and about my diary, which he has taken a swift, decisive steps to get transcribed, whereas I am sure if left me, we would have walked out of here with about a third of it done. He is curiously proud of it, and I am touched. And he talks more about it than I ever would.

And a little past 11:00 we both went to bed.