

FOR RELEASE AFTER 6:00 P.M.  
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1, 1966

Office of the Press Secretary  
to Mrs. Johnson

THE WHITE HOUSE

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REMARKS OF MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON  
UPON ACCEPTANCE OF GOLD MEDAL AWARD  
FROM THE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Mr. Pace, Your Eminence, distinguished friends:

Thank you for your generous words. I am pleased and honored to accept the Gold Medal Award. It is an award that I will treasure, and it will always remind me of the millions of Americans across this land who have shown they care about the kind of country we are building.

The Gold Medal awards have a very special significance. Over the years, you have put a premium on extraordinary achievement for a better America.

Extraordinary achievement is what is needed today if we are to make our cities good places to live.

In our country, there is a new awareness that we must do something about the quality of our environment.

In an earlier and less tumultuous age, Thomas Jefferson spoke of the "pursuit of happiness." If man is to be free to pursue happiness, he must find it in his surroundings, in his neighborhood, be it in his towering city, or on his quiet farm, or in his travels.

The problems are immense and the costs are high. In the recent Senate hearings, concerned mayors from throughout the country gave staggering estimates of the high price of making our cities liveable. Ten Billion dollars was one of the cheaper price tags they mentioned. But money isn't the only obstacle. There are others -- social, political, and technical.

The enormity of the task can dismay us. But a recent personal experience reminded me of America's ability to get things done.

Two pictures come to mind which I saw right in my own front yard -- only nine years apart. They emphasize the most dramatic achievement of our century. Just a few days ago in Texas, I watched awards being handed out to the astronauts, scientists and industrialists who brought the Gemini program to a successful conclusion. It is the brilliant prelude to what now engrosses<sup>us</sup> -- placing man on the moon.

My mind went back to a chill October night in 1957 -- only nine years before -- when we heard the paralyzing news that AN object -- Sputnik I -- had been put into orbit. It was beyond comprehension, so staggering it invited silence. Our little group left the telephones and the television sets to walk down a country road, each wrapped in his own thoughts. To me, the difficulties seemed insurmountable.

But we made up our minds, and we went to work. We have now put more than 430 satellites into orbit. We are daily crossing stepping stones to the moon.

I never witness a ceremony such as the one I saw the other day without having two words thunder through my consciousness: MAN CAN. The astronauts are emphatic evidence that MAN CAN.

Just as we made the national decision that we would not be second in space, I believe that we are making the decision that we will not live in a second-rate environment.

I believe that Americans do want a better environment for themselves and their children. I believe they do want good housing, clean air and water, and green spaces to relieve the oppressiveness of concrete and asphalt.

Your awards, as well as the shining satellites above, dramatize that the essential ingredient of any achievement is not only money and laws. It is also the determination of man to say: WE CAN.

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