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Office of the Press Secretary
to Mrs. Johnson

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON AT
SOUTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY, GEORGETOWN, TEXAS

Thank you, Dr. Fleming.

Faculty, students and friends of Southwestern:

I'm delighted to be honored with this degree. And I'm proud to join the ranks of those friends who have received degrees from this wonderful old university. Indeed, my husband treasures the Doctor of Laws degree he received from Southwestern in May, 1943 -- the first honorary degree he ever received.

This month of October has been filled with university visits for me -- some of them noisier than others, as you may have read. While I was preparing to come here, I had the fun of reading some of the early history of Southwestern in the Texas handbook.

Several intriguing highlights caught my eye.

I learned, for example, that the university opened here on October 6, 1873 -- "despite a financial crisis and a yellow fever epidemic."

Take note, college budget officers!

In the first year, according to historians, "the lack of a Methodist Church in Georgetown and an unruly element in the small student body were early difficulties."

Of course, I know that Southwestern's roots go much farther back than its opening here. Indeed, one of your several "ancestor" colleges -- Rutgersville which opened at LaGrange in 1840 -- was the first Protestant and the first Methodist College in Texas.

Another of your ancestor institutions was John Witherspoon Pettigrew McKinsey College at Clarksville, where -- parents take note -- "tuition, board, room and laundry cost \$180 for 10 months."

Sometimes in those days, tuition was paid with produce -- or "with horse and saddle which the student used to reach school." Prayers were at 4:00 a.m. daily -- with compulsory attendance!

But I think the thing that most impresses all of us who love this historic old school is the wide range of its influence: how far-flung are the footprints of your graduates.

For almost a century, a graduate of Southwestern was most likely to be a leader close to home -- in the pulpits or the business and civic life of San Antonio, El Paso, Texarkana, or Dallas. The hardy few who went abroad were usually missionaries.

Today, it's remarkable how many parts of the world have been touched by Southwestern alumni. Today's graduate may just as likely be a Peace Corps Volunteer, a builder in Djakarta or Dahomey, a Methodist minister in Vietnam, or an Ambassador -- as witness Ed Clark.

Southwestern's traditional missionary spirit is still very much at work. And I feel sure that your graduates go into the world with a deeper insight, a special sense of values, a certain equilibrium gained right here.

Southwestern's horizons are widening. Its responsibilities are growing. And it is not a quiet outpost, but a place vitally involved in the world. And what is true of your university is true of our nation, too.

When John and Abigail Adams -- the first occupants of the White House -- lived there, ours was a brand new republic. Washington was a tiny, shaky, courageous little capital in a mudhole of a town -- with very few friends in the world. There were fewer than half a dozen foreign missions accredited to the United States.

Thirty years ago, my husband went to Congress to represent Georgetown -- and Williamson County -- from the Tenth Congressional District. That was 1937. Interestingly enough, Washington that year had sixty foreign missions doing business with our nation.

Today, the number has grown to 110.

In the past twelve months alone, 36 kings, presidents and prime ministers have visited our country.

No one can live in the White House and meet the parade of visitors from around the world without realizing how greatly our responsibilities have grown -- and how much our world has been shrinking. No country today is more than 17 jet hours from Washington.

On our trip to Asia last fall, four of the countries we visited -- New Zealand, Australia, Malaysia and Thailand -- had never been visited by a President of the United States. In 17 days, we traveled 31,500 miles -- to a part of the world where two-thirds of its people live.

I returned from that trip with a great sense of awe and excitement -- and with a real feeling of optimism about the future.

What gave me that feeling?

Not our wealth or power -- but our people: their concern, their technical know-how that they are willing to share, their eagerness to involve themselves in building a better world. You might call it their missionary spirit.

Americans have made that spirit a vital force in the world.

When the wife of our Ambassador helps run an orphanage in Recife, Brazil; when a businessman's wife organizes an adult education center in Chad, a special kind of communication takes place.

Ann Clark has proven that to literally thousands of Australian visitors to our Embassy in Canberra, Australia. School and civic groups, Red Cross workers, charity and art organizations have learned, through her good work, that American openheartedness and hospitality are good diplomacy -- often as good as official messages and formal state visits!

All over the world, Americans are making that clear. I've met some of them: businessmen in Bangkok, school teachers working with educational television in Pago Pago, Peace Corps volunteers in the Philippines.

Knowing about those thousands and their good work makes me appreciate my country a little more. And it makes me grateful for institutions like this one: For Southwestern is arming young Americans with the knowledge -- and the values which can truly change the world.

I suppose our country will always have its criticism -- even some extremes and excesses. We always have. But throughout our history, another force has always been stronger in our land: not the spirit which destroys, but the spirit which builds. I see it in abundance here.

It's good to come home. Part of my heart will always be here. Thank you for this joyous day!

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