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WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17, 1968

Office of the Press Secretary
to Mrs. Johnson

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON
AT THE BEAUTIFICATION LUNCHEON, THE WHITE HOUSE

Welcome to this house! This morning you saw some of the charms -- and the challenges -- of this city.

This is the third luncheon that brings us together: the Committee for a More Beautiful Capital, and its generous backers.

This luncheon has special meaning for me It affords me an opportunity to thank Mary Lasker and all of you friends of the Society for a more Beautiful Capital.

Over the past three years, the people in this room have produced nearly \$2,500,000 to take steps toward making this Nation's capital more livable and more beautiful.

Not only is your handiwork enjoyed by the 3 million people who live and work in this city, it can be seen also by 17 million visitors who come here each year, and our work here has inspired other cities across the country.

This has been one of the most lovely springs I can remember in Washington's history. It has also been one of the most poignant and grave. That fact underscores the urgency of improving our environment for all people.

On our tour this morning, we saw Buchanan Playground. Though work there is not yet completed, it is clear that Buchanan is a vital and significant answer in a neighborhood that has had more problems than solutions.

We can see at Buchanan, and completed playgrounds like Syfax, patterns of what should be done. The same is true at places like the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum, and those little vest pocket parks made by the children in Project Trailblazer last summer.

There are other wonderful playgrounds and neighborhood facilities in the planning and construction phase now: at Anthony Bowen School; at Bryan; and at Kingsman. These are the building blocks for a better Washington; they signal a pattern of quality that we want to see everywhere, and this room are many of those people who made them possible.

In my own experience, one project, one step, leads to another. I remember so well the first small triangle that was transformed from wild onions and broken benches to a real garden spot of azaleas, dogwoods and evergreens -- a mecca for government workers at lunch.

On Saturday, March 30th - on a glorious sunny day - I went out walking in the parks with a few friends.

I wish each of you could have been with me. For everywhere we saw the impact of your gifts on the happiness of people.

In one park, an art class of youngsters was sketching. We went on down to Hains Point where your 1,846 trees were blooming. And the Mexican playground equipment was alive with children from all over town. An old man was fishing in the sun. Family after family was picnicking -- one, a group of travelers from the Philippines, shared their rice cake with me under your cherry trees.

There were bicyclers galore -- with lunch baskets or babies bouncing along behind. Joggers passed us by. There were golfers and some youngsters who were Little League material with their balls and bats.

One young couple, picnicking on the grass, looked up very startled and said, "Oh, Mrs. Johnson! We were just talking about you!"

I thought to myself, it is not I, but you that they should be able to meet and thank for the sheer joy of that Saturday afternoon. The place that drew them was the place of beauty.

If we have changed this city just one iota, it has also changed all of us -- to be catalysts for better neighborhoods, better cities, a better America.

I know that all my life, wherever I am, I'm going to be working on just this kind of endeavor.

My criteria of a project are that it receive the fullest use, in that it be easily maintained, and that the desire for it emanate from the neighborhood and its people.

One of the greatest needs, reflected in my mail almost every day is for development of Anacostia Park. Eleven hundred acres! That should be an exciting recreational outlet for thousands where need is great.

The first steps are under way. They will lead to a huge fresh-water swimming lake -- Kingman Lake -- the equivalent of 100 swimming pools! This is a large-scale solution to one of the greatest needs of our city.

I hope everyone of you read the Washington Post last Sunday which proposed we celebrate America's bicentennial in 1976 by a great effort to achieve our goals for housing, transportation, for recreation in the Nation's Capital -- in the most creative way. The project might be called "Mission '76."

It is an exciting, provocative and hopeful proposal. It is important, I believe, to set goals and a target time.

One of the happiest experiences of these past five years has been working with you -- especially with our next speaker. Together, he and I have been frequent visitors at schools, housing projects, and in the neighborhoods of Washington. In the most recent anxious hours for this city, he proved to all what many of us already knew: that he is a wise, compassionate, understanding leader.

He epitomizes what I think makes a great public servant. For him, no task is too big or too small.

Threaded through everything he undertakes are zest and enthusiasm, and a belief that you can wrest from the troubles some constructive forward action.

I take great pride in introducing Mayor Walter Washington.

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