

FOR RELEASE AFTER 1:00 P.M.
TUESDAY, MAY 7, 1968

Office of the Press Secretary
to Mrs. Johnson

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON
AT THE DEDICATION OF THE BUCHANAN SCHOOL PLAZA
- WASHINGTON, D.C.

Mrs. Astor, Mayor Washington, children, and many friends:

Thank you for inviting me here today to share a moment very important to this school, to this neighborhood, and to the whole city of Washington.

What an exciting place this is! I have been coming by here ever so many times in the past months, watching Buchanan Plaza grow and take shape, but not until today could I have imagined the full transformation that has taken place.

I remember so well a couple of years ago when a very outstanding and perceptive citizen of this city -- he was housing commissioner at that time, but you all know his name, Walter Washington -- took me by this building. The building itself was good in design, but it was surrounded by a sad area of broken concrete and weeds.

He took someone else there, too, a lady who is an outstanding friend of children -- Mrs. Vincent Astor -- and she decided right then that Buchanan School should become a place of variety and delight -- a place where children could play and invent games; and adults share and enjoy -- a playground for all ages.

Mrs. Astor not only gave the very generous sum of money to create the Plaza, but she tried to put herself in your place -- what would a child at Buchanan enjoy? She was a wise and skilled adviser in every phase of the Plaza's development. She selected designers of talent and imagination who could invent a world of high adventure and challenge -- child-size.

Many people had a hand in making Buchanan a very special place. One of our Congresswomen -- Julia Hansen -- tells me how proud she is that your climbing posts are made from Douglas Fir timber from the woods of the great northwest.

There is lots and lots of soft sand -- two feet of it, I believe -- underfoot, and daring young climbers will find that they can travel up high around the entire play area without touching ground.

No fences are needed, because the basketball court is sunken -- here -- below ground level. And this is not only a basketball court. By its very shape and facilities, it can be used for theater, dancing, for music, for water play, for producing your own programs.

For while Buchanan Plaza belongs first and foremost to this school, it also belongs to everyone in the neighborhood. It is a place where all ages can come together, and find when they get there that there is lots to do.

Since our Committee for a More Beautiful Capital was formed a little over three years ago, we have devoted particular attention to improving the physical surroundings of public schools in the city. We have done so to make the school a place of pride in the neighborhood. We have done so out of the belief that children will respond affirmatively to improvements they can see, and touch, and take part in.

Most of all, we have done so to demonstrate the practicality of excellence in school and recreation facilities. Who can put a price tag on boredom? Who can add up the cost of unchallenged energies?

A long time ago, I married a school teacher. And one of the many things that he has taught me is that children grow best with the best facilities and the best instruction.

Buchanan Plaza is the wave of the future. School yards must not be locked at 3:00 p.m. They must not have forbidding fences that shut the community out and shut the children in. Outdoor time is learning time, just as much as the hours spent in the classroom. Play facilities must offer wide variety, and lots of challenges, so that young people stretch and grow -- emotionally, as well as physically. They must be attuned to the tempo of our times -- and how fortunate we are to have the people who see this need and are filling it.

This kind of round-the-clock community playground is a new and constructive answer to the urban problem.

And so, to you and children like you who will come here after you, we dedicate Buchanan School Plaza to your growth and happiness.

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