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Office of the Press Secretary
to Mrs. Johnson

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON AT THE
LUNCHEON FOR CONSERVATION LEADERS -
THE WHITE HOUSE.

Friends:

Welcome to this house! This luncheon is one I have anticipated with great delight -- for the language of conservation is for me -- I think for all of us here -- a language of love.

I look around this room and see so many participants of that one word, conservation -- people who love to climb mountains for the sheer joy of it, people who fight the organized battles to preserve greenery or roadsides, people who give voice to it in books or on the air.

It is a many-faceted bond we share. And I believe that in our time in this house all of you here have helped that word become a more vital part of the political language.

For all of us that word has special meaning. To me, it is sometimes a conference in the Grand Tetons or Portland where you find so many kindred spirits that you go home exhilarated.

But very especially it is days that gave you the religion -- which spurred you on.

It is places and days that sparkle and sing in your memory. For me, it was climbing rocky cliffs in a canyon of West Texas. Indians had been there first -- 500 years ago -- and left their pictographs painted in the limestone ledges. They first had seen the madrona trees and felt closer to a power larger than any of us.

It was walking along a lonely beach where Cabeza de Vaca had preceded me some 400 years ago, and that sense of great excitement you felt in coming upon a blue glassball -- washed by waves from some Portuguese fisherman's net three thousand miles away.

It is -- when you get down to it -- peace of mind and the quality of the world that surrounds us.

All of you have had a share in trying to improve that quality.

This afternoon, I would like for us to hear from two of our guests -- who in quite different ways have tried to do something about the cause of conservation.

I have asked Mrs. Helen Fenske to tell us the grass roots story of why the people of New Jersey wanted to preserve a place called the Great Swamp in its natural state. Mrs. Fenske was director of the Great Swamp Committee for eight years and now is director of the North Jersey Conservation Foundation. She has been described as a "one woman army" that saved the swamp, but I believe her real talent has been in conveying the values of a swamp to the public at large and galvanizing people from inertia or indifference to all the skills of conservation citizenship. Mrs. Fenske...

It is possible to practice the art of conservation in words-- to create the open skies and green spaces -- that make our spirits ride with the wind just to hear them.

One of the greatest practitioners I know is our next speaker. I come from a part of the country that has only 28 inches of rainfall a year, and I know so well how much that shapes the land and the men who must cope with it.

Perhaps that is why I feel a special kinship with Eric Sevareid who grew up in the Dakota and was marked by it in a very special way. He has a feeling for the land, for the freshness of the American West -- and he has expressed it so vividly in books like "Not So Wild a Dream" or "Canoeing with the Cree."

Like all of us, he does a lot of soul searching on how we are going to keep this special spirit that only land and sky can give.

But that is his story -- Eric Sevareid...

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