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MONDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 1968

Office of the Press Secretary
to Mrs. Johnson

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON
REDWOOD NATIONAL PARK DEDICATION
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This is my first trip to the redwoods. I've been wanting to see the redwoods for years and ever since October second, when the President signed the Act establishing the Redwoods Park, I've had it on my travel agenda.

I think all of us here are a fellowship of people who love Nature and who revere these great trees. For us, this ceremony is the crowning moment of a crusade which has lasted two generations.

Someone told me a story about one of the redwoods crusaders of many years ago, Congressman William Kent. Mr. Kent was disturbed when he heard that the governor might not sign a \$300,000 redwoods preservation bill. The governor was hesitant because the state then was poor, and the school budget was inadequate.

Congressman Kent -- and this is the measure of his zeal as the true believer -- said to the Governor: "Shut the schools down! The children would enjoy it, and it would take them only a year or two to make the work up. But if these trees all go, it will take two thousand years to make them up!"

Fortunately, the governor was not forced to make such a choice. He signed the bill.

And today, our thriving nation, busy in its efforts to educate the young, heal the sick and conquer poverty, recognizes also that we must save our natural heritage. We have declared these trees to be a precious part of that heritage.

The crusade to save the trees has involved school children, conservationists, congressmen and concerned citizens all over America.

In fact, if the letters crossing my desk are any indication, support for the Redwoods Park has been world-wide. Many people were disturbed by the spectre of a freeway slashing through Prairie Creek State Park. Others were rallied by the Redwood League and the Sierra Club, whose magnificent photographs and publications dramatized the possibilities of this forest.

Now, the dream of conservationists and nature-lovers is a reality for all the people.

Many of the redwood trees we see today are over 2,000 years old. Their race goes back far, far beyond human memory: a hundred million years. They came before the great glaciers. They have survived volcanic eruptions and the upward thrust of mountain ranges. Here on the north coast of California, the ancient and awesome redwoods make their last stand.

Surely, 1968 was the year to act. Land prices were rising. The harvest operations of lumber companies were coming nearer and nearer. Time was running out.

It is one of my husband's proudest achievements that in a time when other pressing needs were crowding in, his Administration and the Congress were able to designate \$93 million dollars for the redwoods; acquire timber trading lands; assure that there would be a Redwoods National Park.

Today, I want to express very genuine appreciation to the redwood lumber companies. They have shown great generosity in carrying out the intent of Congress. The change from timberland to parkland is causing a major alteration in many businesses, and I, as one citizen, am grateful for the cooperative spirit in which they are approaching these transactions.

There is, of course, a great deal of work left to be done, by all of us.

There has been -- and I am proud of it -- 300 conservation bills passed in the last five years ranging from ^{anti} pollution to parks. The application of laws by local people makes the difference.

In these coming months, as this area makes its transition from a timber economy to a tourist economy, officials of the counties, the state and the Federal government have a great opportunity to cooperate -- to plan for the growth of this region.

What a tragedy it would be if tomorrow's tourists find a repetition of yesterday's mistakes -- neon strips and honky-tonk development. How

wonderful it will be if the planning of tourist facilities here brings compliments -- if the things man builds here seek to match the beauty of what God has wrought.

The gift of the redwoods is peace. Here in the woodland, one can sense the great contrast between the slow, steady life of trees, with all their majesty and solitude, and our pell-mell daily life; our headlong urban bustle with its taxi rides, red lights, and jet-powered mobility.

People who seek tranquility -- a chance for reflection -- will find and love this place.

They will try -- and probably fail -- to capture this solitude in words; it is impossible to find praise that is adequate. Perhaps the best tribute anyone can offer is to walk away from these forests a little straighter, a little taller, embracing life a little more calmly and joyfully for having seen this place.

The Latin name for the great redwoods -- sequoia sempervirens -- means, "the tree that never dies." Let us be thankful that in this world, which offers so few glimpses of immortality, these trees are now a permanent part of our heritage.

I'm glad to be here -- to share this moment, and to dedicate this spot to the happiness of the people.

Thank you.

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