

FOR RELEASE AFTER 9:00  
MONDAY, DECEMBER 2, 1968

Office of the Press Secretary  
to Mrs. Johnson

THE WHITE HOUSE

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MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON'S REMARKS  
ACCEPTING THE ELEANOR ROOSEVELT CANDLESTICK AWARD  
AT THE WOMEN'S NATIONAL PRESS CLUB DINNER  
DECEMBER 2, 1968

Thank you from the bottom of my heart for this award, and the words in the citation.

Thank all of you for remembering with such humor and tenderness all those places we saw together these past five years. I'll never forget them -- nor you, who were there, sharing them, writing about them -- and I think enjoying and learning from them, as I did.

When I go home and sit on the porch of the ranch, it is your stories of these trips that will be cherished most and read and re-read.

And let me confess something right now. The President is going to have a hard time talking me out of this citation and candlestick for the Library. I want them with me on my own mantleplace for a long, long time.

Wasn't it Marcus Aurelius who said that nobody is either the better or the worse for being praised? He was wrong.

I assure you I will strive to BE better -- because of your words.

This whole evening I have enjoyed, especially the company of friends from past and present. Dr. Reddick who guided me in journalism school to those two or three stories in the Daily Texan with the by-line -- "By Claudia Taylor." Does one ever read any story so much as his own? No one ever read my stories as much as I did -- unless it was my father.

And then, of course, Anna Halsted. The very name of this award -- for her mother, Eleanor Roosevelt -- turns back the wheels of my mind to a day when the shy, timid wife of a young congressman from Texas was invited to the White House to tea with Mrs. Roosevelt, along with other Congressional wives. She put out her hand to us -- strong, purposeful -- and Washington was the warmer for it.

One of the recent days I enjoyed most in the White House . . . one of the satisfactions I will treasure most -- was having been able to obtain the Douglas Chandor portrait of Mrs. Roosevelt and place it in the Great Hall of the White House. As much as any American, Mrs. Roosevelt taught us all how to turn the arts of compassion into the victories of democracy. In so many places I have been -- a tiny schoolhouse at Lick Branch, Kentucky, high in the mountains of Appalachia, Eleanor Roosevelt had been there 25 years before.

Hers are footsteps I am proud to follow.

Towns which she never visited are hard to come by. Jets have put more places within our reach. And only in places like Panther Junction or Canada Township was I unable to find that she had made a previous visit.

The process of leaving Washington after 34 years is a little like drowning. All your past flashes before you. We shall always love this town.

We came here in the high elation of the New Deal, when Tommy Corcoran and Ben Cohen were bustling in and out of the West Wing, and so many hopes of the Nation were in that briefcase they carried to the Hill each day -- as Grace Tully knows.

A whole revolution of government striving to open the doors of opportunity to all the people was underway.

I was too young and in/ <sup>experienced</sup> to know entirely what was happening, but the letters were pouring in from home. The banks were opening. Suddenly, there WERE jobs.

And at night -- with Bill White or Abe Fortas or Aubrey Williams -- we would sip coffee and read Doris Fleeson, or Ruth Finney, or Pearson and Allen, or Bess Furman and talk with awe and admiration about that man in the White House who was lifting us out of the depression.

As a Nation, we began to care. And that, my friends, I have found is what really makes the difference . . . for the man of that house to care. And for the man of that house to make tough decisions with firmness. Half measures may not offend as many people and sometimes they read better but they do not make a country strong.

We -- you and I -- have come a long way, together along the trails we walked across this land.

I had forgotten how many miles and places until the other day when I began sorting out all sorts of memorabilia of five years to pack for going home. Every program, every menu, every item prompted a memory.

. . . a trowel, left over from a planting on the mall. I should have saved the umbrella! It seems we never planted anything in sunshine.

. . . a menu from the Whistlestop Train, proclaiming a Happy Hour for the press. Can any of us ever forget those four days, 47 speeches, and 225 reporters? I can still see Frances and Helen and Isabelle disappearing across those cindered tracks to the telephone booths for a quick "bulletin" in a twenty-minute stop.

. . . I came across a postcard of the John Adams home in Quincy. What a fascinating meal with that historic family! I'll never forget the startled look on Nan Robertson's face when she heard the historic sherry glass shatter.

. . . a can of maple syrup given me on top of a mountain in Stowe, Vermont, where we gazed into three states. Dorothy McCardle and I spooned out the sugar and snow while Marya described this scene on television.

. . . a shell from Padre Island and that hilarious sight of Bonnie Angelo leading the Secretary of the Interior into the surf.

. . . a picture from the Big Bend and seven-hour raft ride down the Rio Grande River. Never was there such an armada since Dunkirk! Seventy rafts. I remember Nancy and her crew bouncing around the stream with cameras, mikes . . . Nancy with every hair in place!

What a night under the stars by the big bonfire in the Chisos Mountains. Both Norma Milligan and Betty Beale told me that campfire under the moon is one of their favorite memories of these years. Certainly, it is one of mine.

. . . an Indian basket from the Redwoods brought back a fleeting glimpse of Wauhatchie LaHay who abandoned us at that point for the Indian dancers.

And then I came upon a whole box of speech cards. Poor me! Poor you! I had to stand up and say them. You had to write them, long after everyone else had gone to bed.

Well, both of us are the better for it -- I hope.

We have had great times together -- you and I. Newswomen are a breed all their own -- hard-working, elastic, supersensitive to events, compassionate, not afraid to feel the human side of the situation, deeply sentimental, and usually blessed by a sense of humor.

That is the way I have found you, and while I went to the neighborhood health center in Denver or the Head Start class in Newark, New Jersey, it

was your stories that brought them to life -- that made it possible to find the volunteers and helpers so necessary to sustain the programs.

The hardest thing in government is to find the way to dramatize success enough to give it exposure. I hope our trips helped in some small measure in showing that, while this has been a time of extraordinary troubles, it has also been a time of extraordinary achievement.

If you would allow me two wishes tonight, one would be that you will go back to those places . . . continue to seek out where the action is -- no matter how far they are from the beaten path. It may take some doing on your part. It may take your own initiative to press your editors into sending you there to find the story. But I would like to think that from all the forty trips, all the 200,000 miles, all the thousands of stops at schools, and parks, and hospitals, you would be returning to them, or others yet uncovered where people are in action, and your stories would rally people and spur them to more action.

I ask one thing more.

I have learned something about the job of being the President's wife. She is not chosen by anyone except her husband and she really has no obligations except to him.

The media's wide lenses have made the First Family, in a way, public property. It would be very easy for critics and observers to fit one First Lady into a mold created by another . . . a mold which might prove uncomfortable to everyone.

There is no reason why one First Lady should have to be interested in painting china because another had this particular interest. There is no reason why, because I planted trees, another First Lady should have to water them. (Of course I hope someone will!)

I would hope our President's wife would always have the freedom to do what comes naturally. And I have no doubt this would always serve the public good.

I wish the very best to Pat Nixon. I know she will make a fine First Lady. She has much to look forward to. And I know you have some exciting years ahead as you meet and cover the new First Family.

It is going to be a little lonely without you. And don't be surprised if you get a call sometime from the ranch to come on down and see the landscaping in Johnson City, or drive through the pastures when the bluebonnets are at their peak!

Thank you for your talents and your friendship.

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